

EXPERIMENTS
IN SILENCE

POINTS OF ENTRY

THE JOURNAL OF THE
CALL-OF-THE-TIME
DIALOGUES

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The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) focuses on understanding the self, its inner resources and strengths, and developing attributes of leadership and the highest level of personal integrity. The University is known both for its grass-roots work in spiritual education and for its role as a convener of international projects and dialogues dealing with the issues of world transformation and change. The BKWSU is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The University has more than 4,000 centers in 78 countries.

The Fetzer Institute pursues its purpose in three ways. First, it supports scientific research into subtle energy, consciousness, spirituality, and the mind-body connection. Second, it supports research and exploration into certain individual spiritual practices such as meditation and centering prayer, and certain group practices such as dialogue and appreciative inquiry. Finally, it convenes small interdisciplinary, multi-cultural, intergenerational gatherings of leaders from around the world in a variety of disciplines including law, education, health care, science, governance, and social action.

The articles presented in this journal reflect the personal experiences of individuals who have participated in the Call-of-the-Time Dialogues. The views and opinions expressed are strictly personal and are not necessarily those of the Fetzer Institute or the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University.

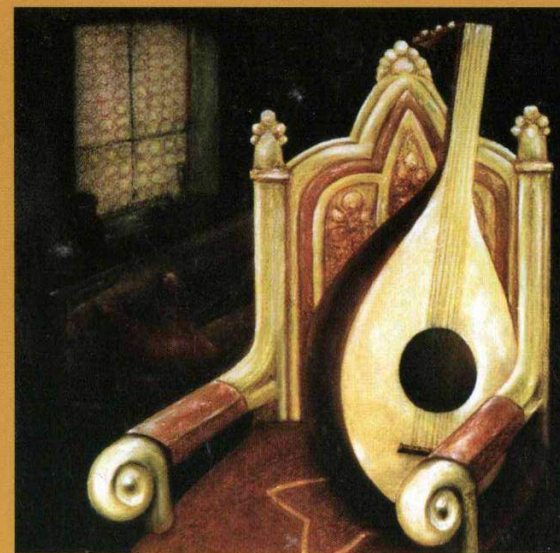
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For more information on the Call-of-the-Time Dialogues:
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EXPERIMENTS IN SILENCE ISSUE NO. 1:

POINTS OF ENTRY

DOMINIQUE PECCOUD,
from dialogue in Uruguay:

“It is something like an appeal for never-ending progress. You never fight against your cello. You play with a feeling of going from painful strangeness to mutual complicity. It is not so far removed from a human relationship. Going from silence to music and music to silence ...”

IN THIS ISSUE

IN A WORLD SO COMPLETELY FOCUSED ON action, why publish a journal on silence? Because at this time much of the action in the world is reaction. What the world is calling for is action born from reflection. We deepen our awareness of the call of our time by reflecting in an inner space of silence. Mahatma Gandhi subtitled his autobiography *Experiments with Truth* because he felt that the actions he took in his life's work were experiments with truth. We have called this journal *Experiments in Silence* because we believe that the seeds of the actions we take in the outer world are first germinated in the inner world.

Those who have led humanity in innovative ideas and revolutionary change have almost always had a rich inner life. For most of us, however, our reflective life is compromised by the pressing demands and commitments of a busy, active life. *Experiments in Silence* is inspired by an ongoing worldwide dialogue series known as the Call of the Time. Because the dialogues focus on self-transformation and world transformation, they are as much about silence as they are about speaking.

The theme of this first issue is "Points of Entry," the ways we segue from the world of action into the world of silence. We begin the journal with a message from Peter Senge and Jayanti Kirpalani, facilitators of the original international dialogue. They set the tone for the dialogues by creating a natural and comfortable space of silence, an important principle of any true dialogue. The Call-of-the-Time Dialogues were the inspiration of Dadi Janki, the official host of the Dialogues. Her article, "Instruments of Peace," explores the mysterious source of the power of silence.

The voices of the journal are the voices of the dialogues. Thomas Odhiambo gives us a glimpse of the silent, dynamic world of the chrysalis stage of the butterfly. Mohini Panjabi shares the types of subtle awareness we can hold as we prepare to go into a period of silence.

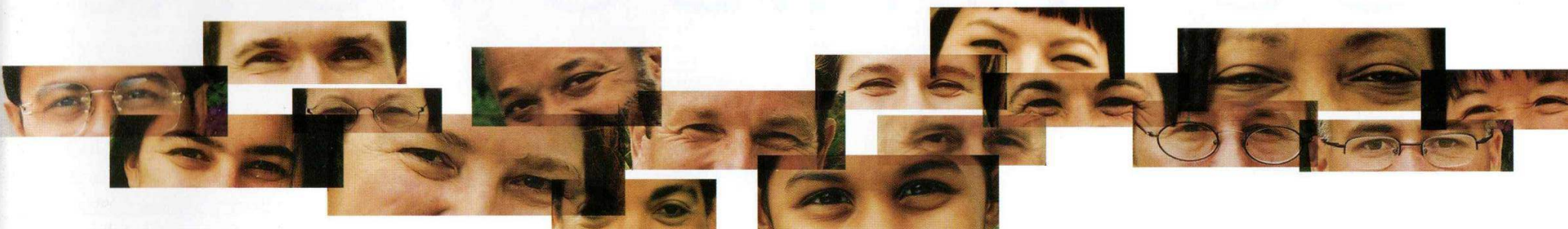
No two people approach the transition into silence in the same way. For some it begins with visualization; for others it is something more tangible – running, sitting in front of a candle, or playing a musical instrument. A photo essay on "Points of Entry"

presents methods used by dialogue participants for entering into silence.

Anyone who has spent time in a retreat setting knows the challenge of carrying back into life and work the deep sense of inner peace they have touched while away from the world. Farah Daghistani and John Williams offer very different insights into their own inner churnings on the process. We also hear from Robin Ludwig about the moment of silent prayer and meditation that begins and ends each session of the United Nations General Assembly. Finally, we close with our first "experiment in silence," the practice of giving and receiving *drishti* (the vision of love and good wishes shared between souls).

We hope you enjoy reading this journal. Our intention with *Experiments in Silence* is to support those of you who are just beginning to explore the subtle dimensions of silence as well as those for whom reflection and meditation are already integral to your life. Whatever the case, this journal is for all of you who are hearing the call of the time. ■

Editorial Team



MESSAGE FROM THE DIALOGUE FACILITATOR

■ PETER SENGE AND JAYANTI KIRPALANI ■

THE CALL-OF-THE-TIME DIALOGUE SERIES represents a continuation of our own personal journeys of inquiry and discovery. Many memories from these dialogues stand out as turning points in the group's shared spiritual journey – especially those that occurred in our experiments with silence.

Although we came together for dialogue, we would often allow silence to envelop the group so naturally that all felt comfortable sitting in silence. When there were pauses in the dialogue, we would embrace the silence and allow the participants to enjoy its treasures. The words that emerged afterward

brought everyone in the room closer to a shared understanding, which is the aspiration of any true dialogue. As the group became more comfortable with silence, we initiated longer segments of silence within the core of the dialogue experience. Many might have said that maintaining a period of silence for six hours would be difficult for those unaccustomed to it. However, we knew it was the right course to follow.

Some participants stated at the outset that their intent was to find others who were bringing the spiritual dimension to their work so that there could be a

support network of friends. This has definitely developed. People from across cultures, religions, and races have come together with honor, respect, and appreciation of the intrinsic value of each one present.

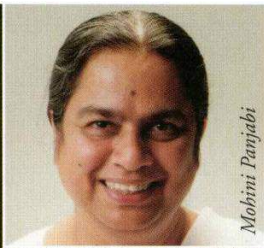
Together we have been exploring the crucial territory where personal and collective cultivation meet. We are convinced that such explorations will prove vital to the larger issues that lay ahead for the world.

We are delighted that this dialogue is being expanded so that more people can become engaged in this living conversation through this publication. Few activities are more important to our common future. ■

CONTRIBUTORS



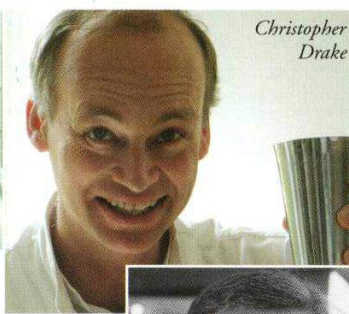
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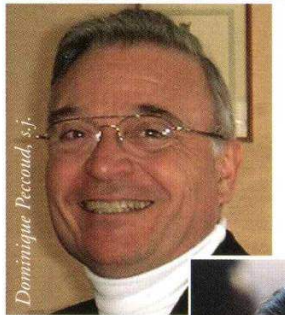
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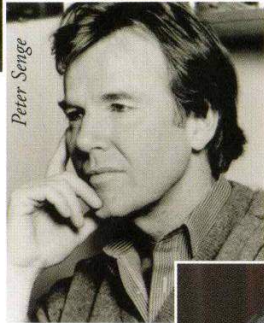
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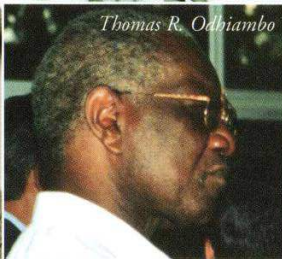
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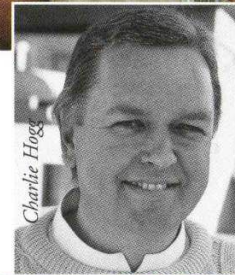
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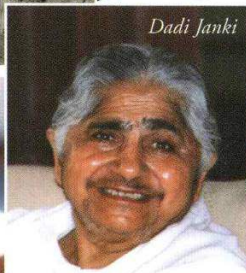
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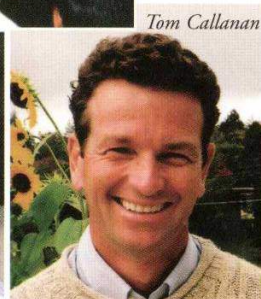
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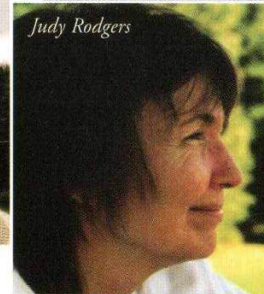
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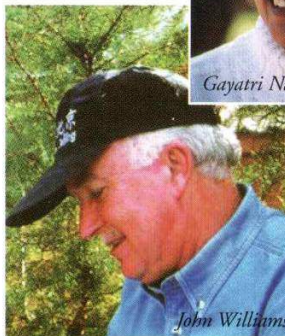
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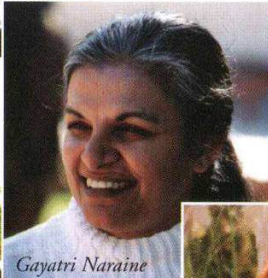
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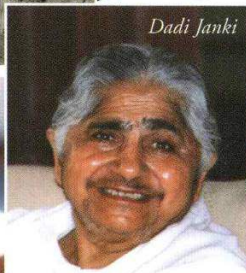
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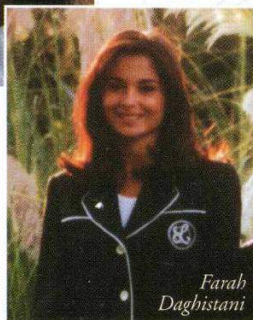
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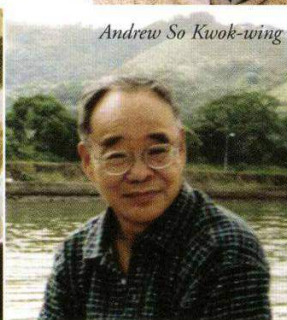
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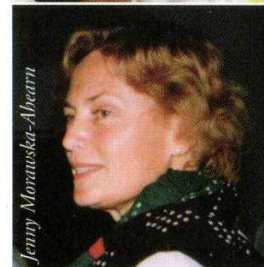
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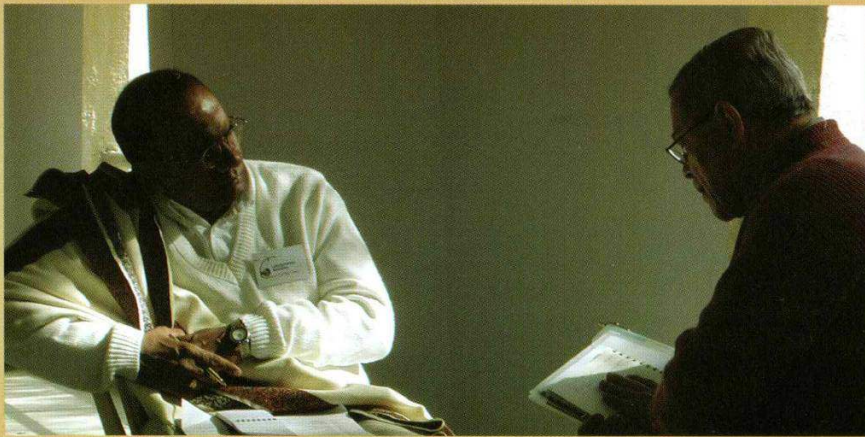
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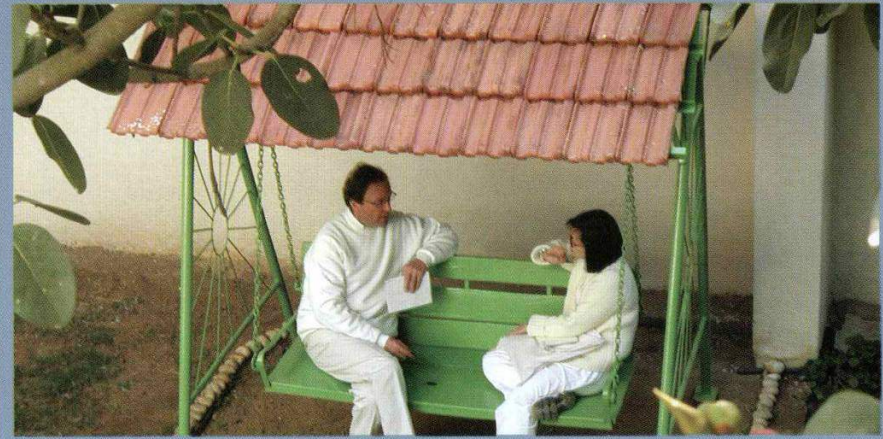
John Williams is an executive in the power industry, specializing in strategy and business development. He is exploring the practice and application of his Christian faith in the workplace, in business, and in all aspects of life. He is actively involved in the church and serves in small group ministry and the mentoring of young people. ■



Setting the Context

by Judy Rodgers and Gayatri Naraine

This is a time that calls many **compassionate people** and **natural leaders** onto the field of action for **world transformation**. Yet many seem more puzzled and frustrated than ever before about the failure of treaties and coalitions, conferences, and programs to address the problems of the world. None of these interventions has slowed the **drift of the world towards deepening crisis**.



IT IS THE NEED FOR PERMANENT TRANSFORMATION in the world that prompted the Brahma Kumaris to consider convening a dialogue among those who are on the field of world service and who have some spiritual dimension to their lives. In August 1998, the Brahma Kumaris convened a dialogue in what was to become the Call-of-the-Time Dialogue Series. The first dialogue was held at Oxford on the sprawling grounds of the Global Retreat Centre with over 40 people from Europe and North America in attendance. The subject, “Self Sovereignty and World Transformation,” attracted a wide range of participants from management theorists to United Nations experts.

This dialogue was the inspiration of Dadi Janki, co-administrative head of the Brahma Kumaris. Peter Senge, Senior Lecturer at Massachusetts Institute

of Technology (MIT), and Jayanti Kirpalani, Director of the European Region for the Brahma Kumaris, served as facilitators. While transformation was the topic of the dialogue, the focus was almost entirely external, remaining in the familiar territory of the world of outer action. Anything at the Retreat Centre that might have distracted dialogue participants from their intense conversation was removed. The music that normally plays at selected moments during the day to call people to a few minutes of silent reflection was turned off so that the dialogue could proceed uninterrupted.

There were occasional reflective moments. Actor Robin Ramsey pulled excerpts from the books of three authors who were in attendance, and turned them into dramatic readings: Charles Handy’s *The Hungry Spirit*, Peter Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline*, and Joseph

Jaworski’s *Synchronicity*. The authors were touched by the impact these selected words had when reflected back in this context. As the dialogue came to a close, many expressed a desire to return for another dialogue. As the last people were leaving, Dadi Janki stated, “The next time we get together, we will talk about time.”

Several months later, Dadi requested that a few key members of the first dialogue come together to consider the possibility of a dialogue in India. Dadi began the conversation: “We have been serving the world with such good intentions and feelings, but have we been successful? We are facing a time even more fearsome than 60 years ago. Think about the conditions that existed at the end of the 40’s. It feels as if those same conditions exist today. The method to transform the world, we had been told then and are



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being told now, is through the power of silence and the deep relationship with God. How can we develop spiritual power in ourselves and in our world? How can we move out of the spiritual bankruptcy that exists? It is my desire to convene a small group of individuals who have been thinking about these things for some time and who feel that it is now time to show the practical proof of the power of spirituality as a living reality in this world. Some of you may have the question: ‘Why do we need to come to India for this?’ There is a place, Mt. Abu, where we have been creating the atmosphere for transformation. A place so peaceful that you will be able to feel it, become it, and share it with the world.”

Those present were moved by Dadi’s offer and voiced their own perspectives on what we needed

to address. One person expressed a desire to explore issues around human rights and human security and how to locate the true creative potential of human beings. Another said it was important to tap the spiritual wisdom of all religious traditions. A third said he was not interested in listening to speeches, but in looking at the spiritual dimensions of transformation. We began planning for the dialogue in Mt. Abu with an eye toward integrating a spiritual dimension.

In September 1999, some 30 people from all over the world converged on Mt. Abu to look at the spiritual dimensions of world transformation. The group seemed to pick up where they had left off in Oxford -- focusing on social and political issues such as globalization and third world crises.



Leticia Shahani, former senator in the Philippines, urged greater awareness of the impact of business practices on the developing world. Chilean economist, Alfredo Sfeir-Younis, talked of the number of people who do not have safe drinking water and the number of children who die of diseases for which there are known cures. Scientist Thomas Odhiambo expressed sadness that scientists have been told to confine to the material world their search for the truth.

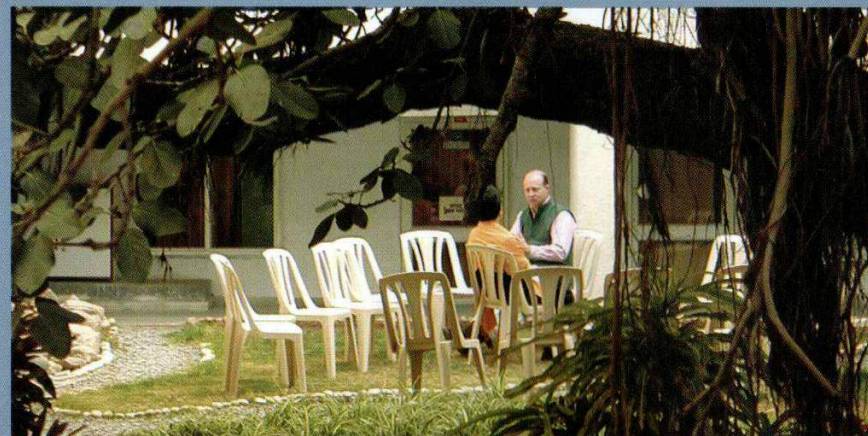
The conversation grew quite heated at times. Some became entrenched in positions around political and social issues. In these moments, Dadi Janki would address the group and, when she did, would consistently urge them towards the inner world of soul consciousness and reflection. Some wondered if she was

hearing the issues they were raising and if she understood the complexity of the problems. She never raised her voice or grew impatient, but she also never abandoned her message -- that spiritual methods do not look or feel like secular ones.

Finally, to break from the intensity of the dialogue, we decided to devote an afternoon to a pilgrimage of sorts to the spiritual places of Mt. Abu. The participants were taken by bus to Peace Park, where a special tea had been prepared and served in an outside gazebo. Later they were taken to the white marble compound called Madhuban that housed the Brahma Kumaris community. They paused at a small hut and a special meditation room that had been the focus of meditation for over 60 years. Participants, who had been in animated and sometimes tense discussion ear-

lier, traveled to these various meditation places in silence. Then, as the sun set, they settled into a hall for silent group meditation. All 30 dialogue participants and three senior yogis of the Brahma Kumaris sat in pin-drop silence for one hour. The room was simultaneously dead silent and utterly alive with a charge of peace and deep feeling of love. The time in silence was magical, dissolving whatever vestiges of frustration had separated the group before.

This was a turning point. As participants climbed into cars the next day to head down the mountain, it was this time of shared silence that they spoke about most. They sensed that the political and social problems that proved so intractable in the outer world of action might yield to this gentle and powerful force of spiritual transformation. Peter Senge, who



co-facilitated the dialogue, reflected on the dialogue many months later in the following way:

“It is impossible to account for the changes that take place in oneself from such a time. As I look back today, a few simple thoughts come to mind, none of which do justice to the experience. First was realizing the aim of integrating meditation into a dialogue, something I have wanted to do for many years. Because dialogue is, at its essence, about a deep listening to what is trying to emerge, it can benefit significantly from being more disciplined in quieting the mind. I think we saw that clearly at Mt. Abu.”

The decision to move forward with the dialogue series gained new resolve. It was decided that a dialogue would be held the following spring in Oxford to look more closely at the spiritual dimensions of trans-

“ULTIMATELY WE AGREED
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FOR THE SERIES ...”

formation as they might apply to the major issues of world concern.

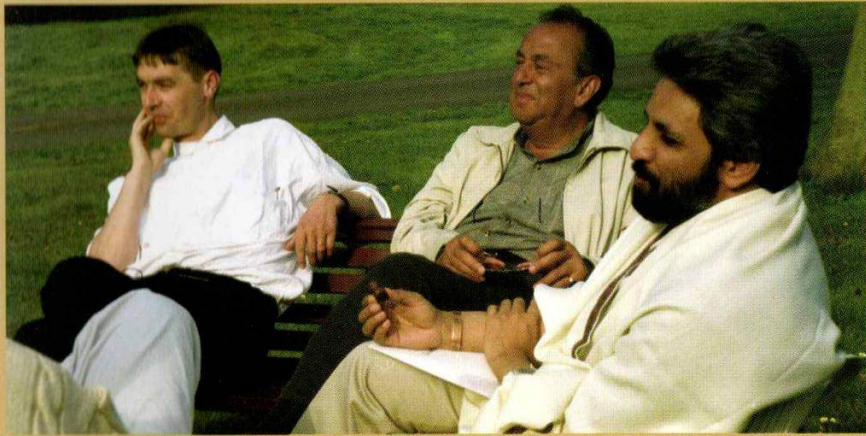
Since then, the Call-of-the-Time Dialogues and Retreats have spread to all continents and, although the subjects of the individual dialogues have varied, they have all revolved around the idea of transformation and the umbrella question, “What is the time calling us to do?”

We have moved more deeply into the territory of silence with every subsequent dialogue. Ultimately an

entire day of silence was introduced. However stimulating the conversational part of the dialogues and retreats, these forays into silence continue to touch participants most deeply.

The original group that gathered in Mt. Abu in the fall of 1999 and the following spring in Oxford has continued to meet, requesting a “deeper track” to explore the most subtle aspects of inner transformation and the way those changes manifest in the outer world.

Recently, Tom Callanan, program director at the Fetzer Institute and a founding dialogue member, said that Fetzer would be interested in supporting the dialogues in ways that would extend their impact and allow more people to benefit. That offer gave birth to this publication series. When we thought about how to focus the series, we decided that to be true to the spirit



of the Call of the Time, we would need to look at the practices of silence and how they support transformation at both an individual level and in the world at large.

We reflected on the various practices of silence and the different experiences they disclose. We interviewed people who have made meditation practice their life's work, to clarify how they think about the different practices they do. Ultimately we agreed on eight "experiments in silence" as a foundation for the series. Each one is discreet, varying in length of time from an instant to several hours or several days; in time of day, from early morning to meal times to evening; and in application, from strictly reflective within an inner space to informing action in the outer world. However, all practices involve something, which in Hindi is called "*Manmanabhav*," considering oneself to be a spiritual being linked to God.

These experiments in silence offer a subtle architecture for the spiritually centered life. They interrupt our automatic patterns of thought and action and draw us inside to reflect on our inner self and on the link between this inner being and the divine intelligence of the universe. They are based on a few assumptions:

- Each of us has an eternal form that is spiritual, a tiny spark of conscient energy that contains what is most divine within us and that travels through time.
- This eternal form of the self, called a soul, enters a material body to perform in a material world.
- All of the people of the world are children of a Supreme Being, a divine intelligence,

who is the embodiment of knowledge, peace, purity, love, and happiness.

- Our relationship with this Divine Being, with God, is the source of our renewal and our strength.

We think of this publication series as an extension of the dialogues themselves, a way for those who have attended and will attend the dialogues to share their experiences and insights with those with whom they live and work.

Our host for the publication series, as well as for the dialogues, is Dadi Janki. Partners in the series are the Brahma Kumaris and the Fetzer Institute. And our thinking partners and invited guests are those who are exploring the ways that spiritual practice and inner transformation can strengthen our contribution to the world. ■

“Like a perfectly calm lake when all whispers of wind have stopped, the inner being shimmers, quietly reflecting the intrinsic qualities of the soul.”

Instruments of

THE CALL OF THIS TIME IS A CALL FOR PEACE. In my early morning meditations, I can hear the call of the peaceless world for peace – not just for an end to conflict, but for a deep inner stillness and calm, which all souls remember as our original state.

If we are to find peace, first we must teach ourselves to become quiet and then we can become peaceful. Becoming peaceful means seizing the reins of the out-of-control mind and bringing the runaway thoughts to a halt. Once we have the mind's attention, we can begin to coax it to take us into silence, a true silence; not the place without sound, but the place in which we experience a deep sense of peace and a pervasive awareness of our well-being.

It is not an empty mind that elicits this state of peace. To move into this state of profound silence, we must train the intellect to create pure, good thoughts. We must train it to concentrate. Our wasteful thoughts burden us. Our habits of creating too many thoughts and too many words exhaust the intellect. We must ask, “How can I cultivate the habit of pure thought?”

Who is it that yearns to go into silence? It is I, the inner being, the soul. As I detach from my body

and from bodily things, and turn away from the distractions of the world, I can face inwards to the inner being. Like a perfectly calm lake when all whispers of wind have stopped, the inner being shimmers, quietly reflecting the intrinsic qualities of the soul. Feelings of peace and well-being steal across my mind and, with them, thoughts of benevolence.

I let go of all thoughts of discontentment and am reminded of my oldest, most intrinsic state of being. I remember this inner calm. Though I have not been here recently, I remember it as my most fundamental awareness, and a feeling of happiness and contentment wells up inside of me. In this state I know every soul to be my friend. I am my own friend. I am deeply quiet. I am silent and utterly at peace.

This deep well of peace is the original state of the soul. When I am in this state, I feel the flow of love for humanity and I feel a state more elevated than what I would normally call happiness, a state of bliss. It is when I attain this state that something truly miraculous can happen. When I am in this state of complete soul-conscious rest, I become aware that

another energy is beginning to flow into me. I feel strength and a power so expansive, that in this moment I know there is nothing I cannot do, nowhere I cannot reach.

When this happens, I am experiencing the connection with the divine energy and the flow of God's power into my inner being. If I stay focused inwards, connected with this stream of divine power, even the way I use the physical senses will be different. When I look at the world, I will see through my original nature of benevolence and experience compassion for the world.

It is in this experience that I know what silence power is. It is this power that transforms me inside, making me pure and powerful. When the soul and God are linked together, there is a power that reaches me and then reaches invisibly across to others, bringing about transformation in them, in nature, and in the world.

The secret of this power of silence is that I don't have to do the work of transformation. Divine power automatically transforms. Let me do the inner work. Let me go deeply into that experience of the original state of the self, and let there be silence so that God is able to do His work through me, His instrument. ■



Peace by Dadi Janki



R e f l e c t i o n s

by Tom Callanan

I HAVE BEEN PART OF THIS DIALOGUE SERIES SINCE the first dialogue at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Rajasthan, India, in 1999. The global diversity of those present at this gathering challenged many of my beliefs and assumptions about being an American. Knowing that I was sitting in a place of pure love, beauty, and safety, I felt I was in an environment where I could open myself to deep transformation in my way of thinking. I left this conversation knowing that I would never be the same.

In the fall of 2000, I facilitated the Call-of-the-Time Regional Dialogue for North America at Peace Village in the Catskill Mountains in Upstate New York. The theme of this conversation was “Globalization, Leadership, and Love.” Again, this

experience provided many opportunities to challenge my current thinking. One essential learning from this experience was that magic happens when you are working with a design team that is applying spiritual principles as well as process skills in creating the tapestry of an experiential conversation.

In 2001, I went back to India to serve as a facilitator for the International Call-of-the-Time Dialogue, again on “Globalization, Leadership, and Love.” We spoke about how at this time in history, when there is so much suffering in the world and so much to do in service of its healing, it is essential that we gather together and connect to spirit for guidance, strength, and inspiration. We began to understand the importance of the linkage between our inner and outer

worlds. With spiritual guidance from the senior members of the Brahma Kumaris, we entered into profound spaces of silence, spaces of learning, and spaces of laughter and love.

The Fetzer Institute, a private operating foundation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, is honored to support the Brahma Kumaris in the Call-of-the-Time Dialogues. Fetzer’s purpose statement reads: “To awaken into and serve spirit for the transformation of self and society, based upon the principles of wholeness of reality, freedom of spirit, and unconditional love.”

This journal is like a letter home from a journey to distant shores. It is aimed at chronicling the insights gained from these dialogues and putting them out to the world in service of its transformation. ■



A Good Analogy

by Thomas Odhiambo

THERE IS AN IMPRESSION SOME PEOPLE HAVE that during silence nothing is happening. There is no movement, no engagement. My own experience is that a great deal is happening during silence and that, in fact, it is a profound experience. A good analogy here is that of the butterfly.

Scientists who have studied the life cycle of the caterpillar becoming a butterfly can tell you that they seem to be almost entirely different species. A caterpillar is a voracious feeder -- a massive eater, eating almost continuously 24 hours a day. It eats several times its weight in volume of food. It feeds so fast that

those who are studying it closely can literally see it grow in the 10 days or so that it is a caterpillar.

In contrast, a butterfly is a very selective feeder, flitting from one flower to another, feeding on nectar, which in some cultures has been referred to as the food of the gods. The butterfly is a very delicate animal.

In between these two -- the voracious feeder and the delicate feeder -- is the pupa, the chrysalis. It is totally immobile -- totally. It does not feed at all for the three or four weeks it is in that stage. It does not move at all. Maybe it will wiggle its tail, but that is the extent of its movement. My point is that bio-

chemically and physiologically a profound transformation is taking place during this period. The whole organism is being transformed into a totally new animal. That is why in the old days people thought that a caterpillar and a butterfly were totally different animals that didn't share anything. But now we know that it is the same animal ... transformed in the silence of the chrysalis.

The point of my analogy is that during silence, when you have gone inside, a transformation takes place in you, and by the time you finish the silence you are a different person -- transformed profoundly. ■

Preparing for Silence

by Mohini Panjabi



“SILENCE IS A DISCIPLINE,
NOT OF DOING, BUT OF
BEING.”

ONE OF THE TRUE GIFTS IN A BUSY LIFE IS AN extended period of silence, a time when we intentionally turn our attention away from the rush of conversations and commitments, images and messages, and lists and obligations, and quietly attune ourselves to an inner space.

- For some of us, imposed silence has been a punishment in our past; for example, a parent may have admonished, “Close your mouth and go to your room.” The silence we are entering here is a choice. This silence is a chance for discovery, to find out new and different things. The absence of talk is quite different when we are choosing not to speak.
- Silence is not a lack of communication. There is a subtle language that connects us to one another through the eyes, with a smile, or a gesture. Fluency in this subtle language calls for our ability to observe the small details of life. As we develop our facility with this subtle language, we find that we are less dependent on the

mechanical devices that can connect us but that can also make us feel more separate.

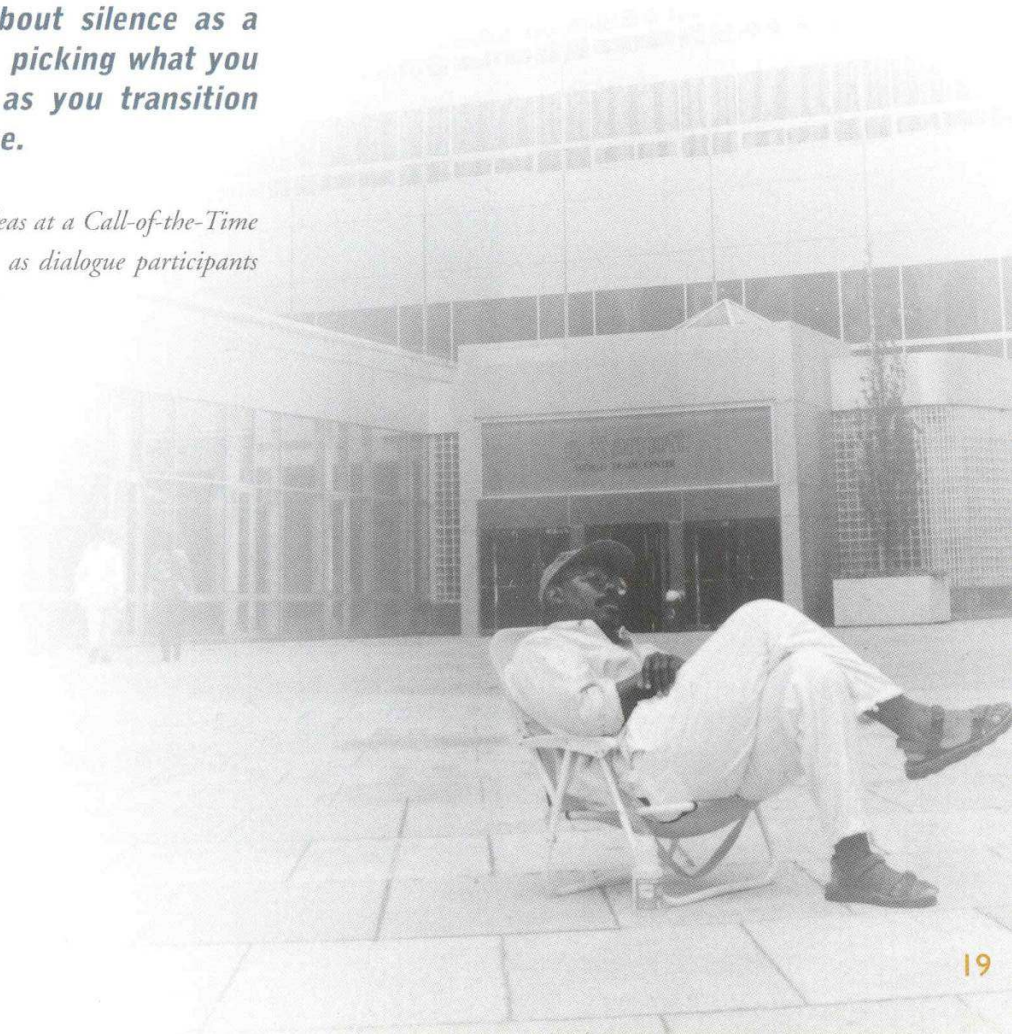
- In moving into an inner space of silence, we are attuning ourselves to the spirit of nature and letting go of the tendency to be critical.
- Silence provides the opportunity for me to identify the qualities in myself that have the capacity to transform me. In silence I can connect to the highest quality of my lightest, clearest thinking.
- Action emerges from the seeds of thought. Actions are the fruits of these seeds. What is the soil in which I choose to plant the seeds of my thoughts? Violence or peace? Anger or love? These choices are transformative.
- The state of awareness I attain in silence connects directly to the quality of my understanding. Understanding “in sound” is a cognitive process, while understanding “in silence” is more subtle, resulting in realizations that emerge from within. These are very different experiences.
- In silence I discover my innate qualities, the qualities that are intrinsic to who I am. Here in silence I touch my eternal self, and I come to trust this deepest essence.
- The experience of recognizing my intrinsic and unique qualities increases my own power to receive. In silence I touch my inner strength and experience trust, faith, safety, beauty, worthiness. It is from this base of inner strength that my actions evolve.
- In silence I can listen to the call of God, the call of nature, the call of others in need.
- Silence is an inner space of learning. When I do not understand something, I continue to hold on

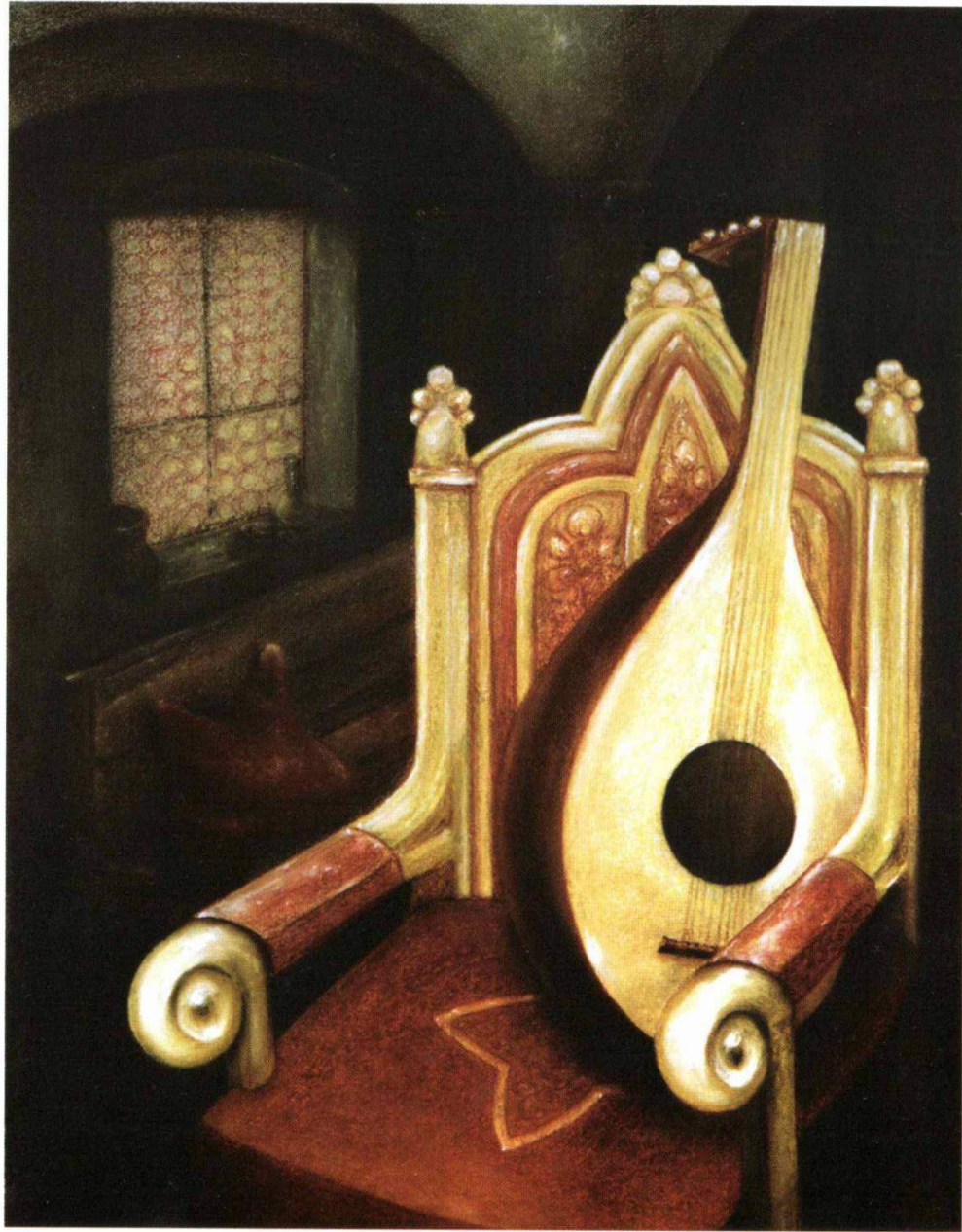
to it. When learning has occurred, I can release it and move on.

- In silence I discover truth by getting in touch with the true self. Silence increases my capacity to hold the truth within.
- Silence is an opportunity to rest in the lap of my own greatness. Remember to care for yourself with the special attention you would accord any great soul.
- Silence is a discipline, not of doing, but of being.

Use these thoughts about silence as a tray of hors d'oeuvres, picking what you want to support you as you transition into a silent inner space.

Mohini Panjabi shared these ideas at a Call-of-the-Time Dialogue in Uruguay in 2001 as dialogue participants prepared for a day of silence. ■





A POINT OF ENTRY

BY DOMINIQUE PECCOUD

“SILENCE IS THE
FOUNTAIN THAT I DRINK FROM,
DRAWING ON PEACEFUL
IMAGINATION AND EFFICIENT
COURAGE FOR BUILDING
TOGETHER, DAY AFTER DAY,
OUR COMMON
HUMANITY.”

SILENCE FOR ME IS A CHOICE OF STAYING IN A space of contemplation, to receive from God, the Father, the reminder that my own being is a member of the human family living in a shared universe. It is very important to have periods of silence to deepen the conscience of my being, not as an autonomous individual but as a free person interrelated with my human sisters and brothers. Through silence I develop the capacity to love and to strengthen the links that connect us as a human family and to the world in which we live. Whenever I hear the noise of the many troubles all around the world, I grow more confident in the

meaningfulness of our present times. Silence is the fountain that I drink from, drawing on peaceful imagination and efficient courage for building together, day after day, our common humanity.

What is my point of entry into silence? It depends on the kind of silence we are speaking about.

In the plain silence of the night or the early morning meditation, I light a candle and sit comfortably in front of it, realizing that without air it wouldn't burn, and like myself, without breathing I wouldn't live. Then I become aware that the air I breathe in and the air I breathe out is like the grace I inhale from God,

the Father, and the deeds I give back to Him, good and bad. I let Him do the sorting of the good to add to the creation, and to destroy the bad.

Then, what about the daytime silence? Is it possible to be silent in our activity, or does silence mean only inactivity? From my experience, I dare say that I can keep my “soul equal and silent” (Psalm 131) in some kind of activities, while there are other moments that are not at all quiet but are nervous and broken. Silence remains when I am present in the moment and I am receptive to my relationship with others; and silence gets lost when I am no longer present and receptive.

"SILENCE REMAINS WHEN
I AM PRESENT IN THE MOMENT
AND I AM RECEPTIVE
TO MY RELATIONSHIP
WITH OTHERS ..."

So how to keep silence in activities? Let me give an example.

After graduating with a doctorate in theoretical computer sciences, I was headmaster of a college of natural sciences in Versailles, France. My job was mainly organized in two parts. In the morning administration duties, and in the late afternoon and evening, between 4pm and 11pm, receiving students and counseling them about their daily lives, successes and failures, hopes and fears ... and giving them some guidance. In this second part of my day I was called upon to be fully present and peaceful, listening to the boys and girls, and to be fully concentrated on the one who was sitting in front of me. I usually took a break between 1pm and 4pm to prepare myself for those hours -- a short lunch, a nap, a short period of silence, and finally, practicing on the cello for two hours. That preparation worked very well for me.

In the late 70's, when the first microcomputers were available, our college got one and I started to develop a software program for managing a database with the records of the students I had in my charge. At that time we didn't have such easy-to-run software programs like Microsoft Excel or Access, and so I had a lot of programming to do. I would start work on the software program in the morning, going right through into the afternoon, stopping just before the time to start my appointments. Very soon I began to notice that my daily activity of counseling the students began to get more and more tedious and boring. The boredom reached a point in which a student could have told me that his father or mother had died and I wouldn't have reacted. Then on reflecting on that problem

during my night silence (which by the way was also getting more and more heavy), I decided to stop working on the software program at lunchtime and go back to my former schedule, which included my cello practice. The amazing thing was that in less than a week, I recovered my full capacity to listen for long hours to the students, without any displeasure and boredom. I had returned to an internal receptive silence.

I asked myself: What was the difference between the two activities of programming software and playing the cello?

I discovered that my state of mind in relation to my computer was aggressive, whereas to my cello there was much more a kind of mutual understanding. When programming, I was in a mood of fighting with the computer, knowing that even if I had some difficulties, I would overcome them and be the winner, and at the end, my program would run. With my cello, for example, trying to interpret better and better the Sarabande of Suite No. 5 in C minor, I was experiencing real progress; but the aim that I sought to reach was, at the same time, moving further away with no hope of a final interpretation. It is like walking through a beautiful countryside and coming up to a new hill with such a view that you cannot do anything but explore the beauty you discovered in front of you, full of admiration and thanksgiving. It is something like an appeal for never-ending progress. You never fight against your cello. You play with a feeling of going from painful strangeness to mutual complicity. It is not so far removed from a human relationship. Going from silence to music and music to silence ... ■



Points of

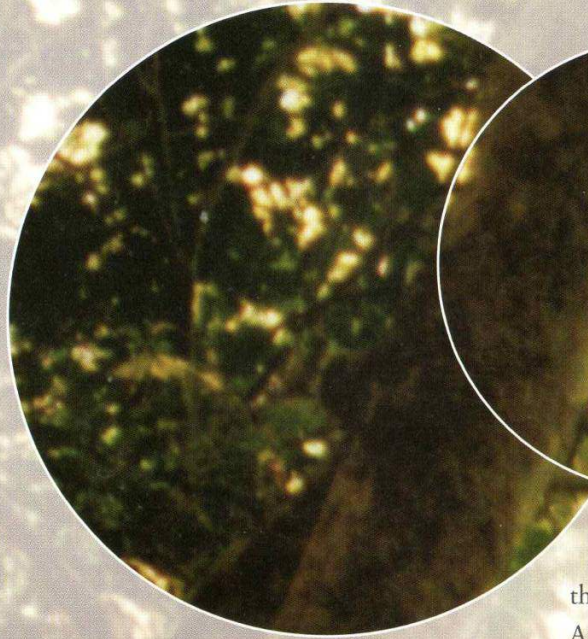


Charlie Hogg,

from dialogue
in Australia:

“When I began to learn the art of meditation, it had the extraordinary effect of cooling the speed of my mind, allowing me to find within myself a point of coolness, a point of silence. It was like an internal reference point that I was able to access. Initially it did not happen very much, but after a while it seemed that I was able to access this point easily, going to a safe place whenever I felt the need. In this safe place I was able to make sense out of what was happening around me. I noticed that the more often I went to this silent place of coolness, the lighter, more stable, and clearer I became. So, for me, the entry point into silence is this inner point of calm and silence.”

Coolness



Nature

Jenny Morawska-Ahearn,

from dialogue in Australia:

“Since I am an extrovert, I often use an external medium -- particularly nature -- to take me inside. For example, I run. When I start running, I will get into a rhythm that becomes almost like a meditation. Another way into an inner space is through swimming. When I am in water, I can go into the most profound silence. There can be surfers and crowds of people around me, and yet I am in my own inner space.”



Peter Senge,

from dialogue in UK:
“Many people experience nature as a sacred space that can lead them into silence.

For me, deep connection to nature is a key to larger understanding, to appreciation of the universe, life, the cosmos, and a feeling of connection to the whole. I think this is one of the oldest practices that there is. Anyone can go to a sacred place, but the important thing is what happens there. One can come to the space, walk right through it and say, ‘Gee, that was pretty.’ For the place to lead us to a special inner experience we have to bring a particular awareness to the place. There are always two aspects to having a sacred place as a point of entry: first, there is the place itself and what is possible in that place, and second, there is the readiness and preparation of the person.”

Sacred Space

Entry

Thomas Odhiambo,

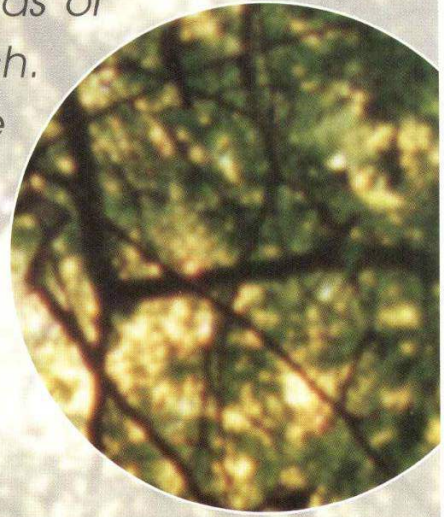
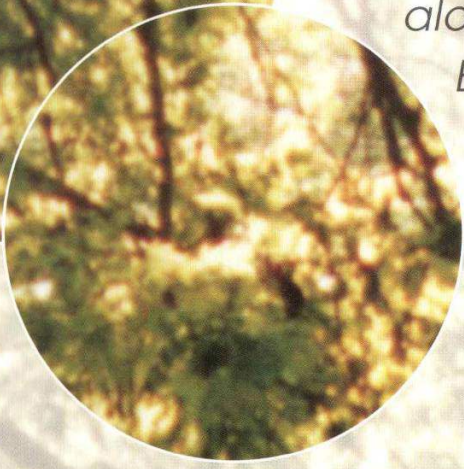
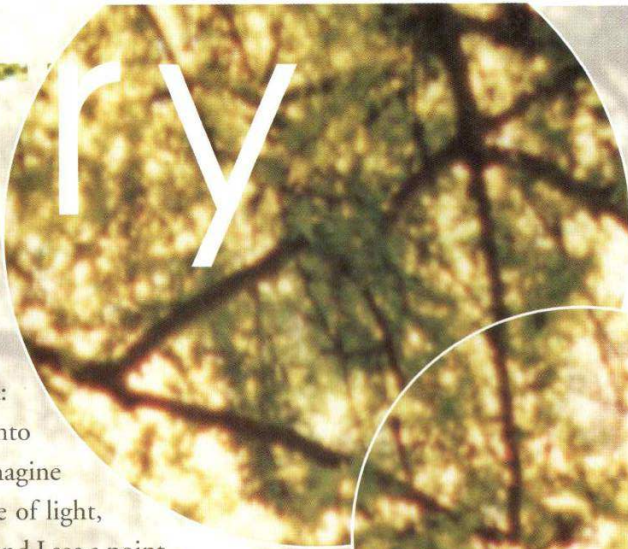
from dialogue in Kenya:
“When I am moving into silent meditation, I imagine myself being in a circle of light,

Light and I see a point of light directly in front of me. It is almost as if the whole circle is lit, but I can't see the light surrounding me, only the one point of light -- and that brings me a sensation of freshness. Before I know where I am, I am actually completely within this realm of light. I know that some people think of water, or a cave, but my point of entry is a point of light in a circle of light.”

Imagination

Saleem Salki, from dialogue in UK:

“I have two ways of entering silence when I am on my own and not in a group. One way, which I have learned from Aikido, is to focus on my *hara*, a point in the lower abdomen, which I imagine becoming infinitely small. The other way is simply by lighting a candle and an incense stick; this ritual connects me to another level of thinking and consciousness. I lose awareness of my body and feel that I am floating. I experience a feeling of connectedness, oneness, and lightness.”



Each of us has a special path to move into quiet space. One of us might pick up a musical instrument; another will go out for a walk in the woods or along the beach.

Become aware of your own private entry into silence.

Andrew So Kwok-wing,

from dialogue in India:
“I like sitting quietly in an isolated retreat house with lots of silence and no everyday concerns to occupy me, or before a beautiful sunrise or sunset with the sound of nature gently lulling me into my personal inner world of thoughts and feelings. In moments of silence, I am able to find my personal inner world that is real but cannot be seen. Only the results of my thoughts and feelings can be seen. When the silent period comes to an end, I am never disappointed.

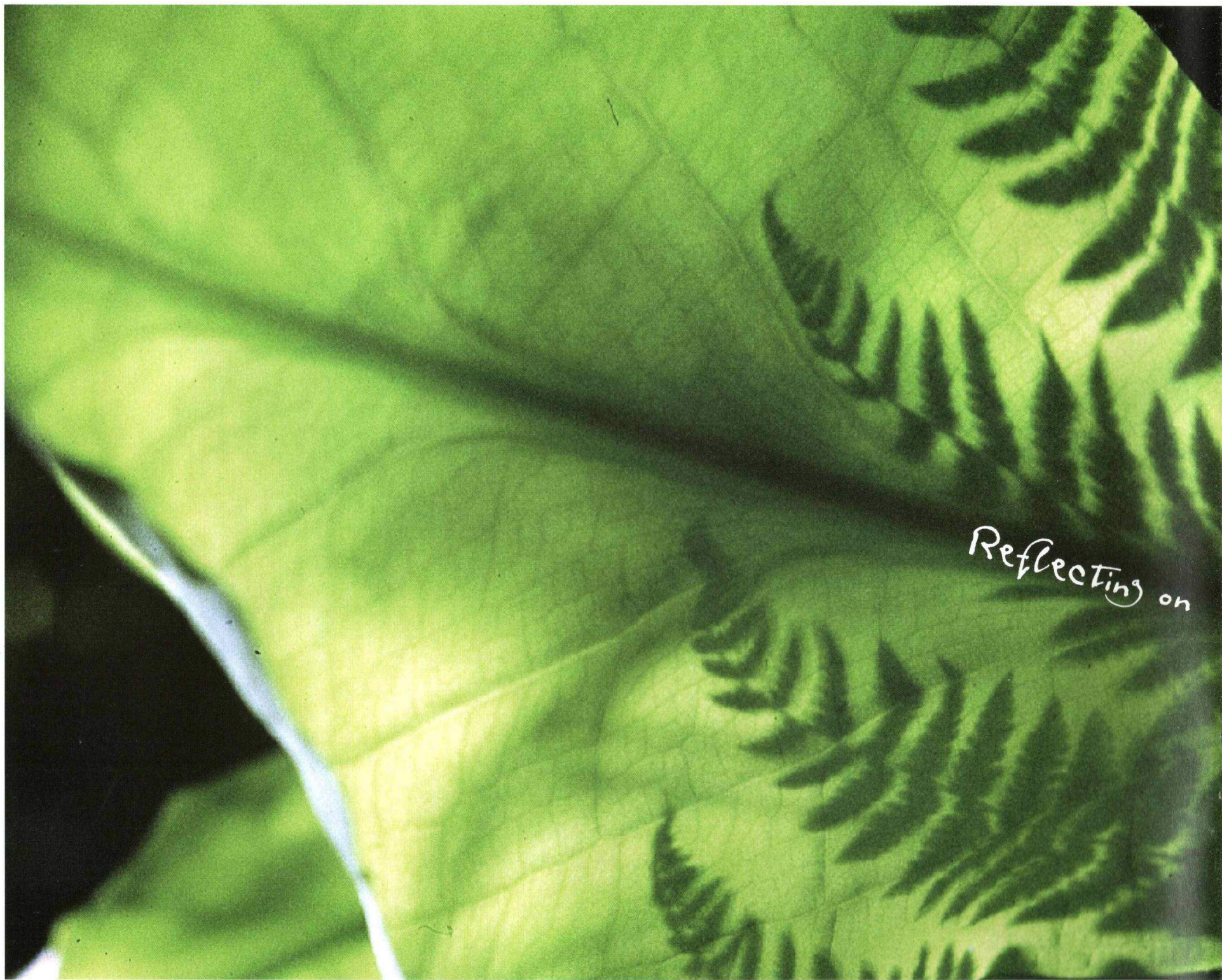
Retreat

Something has happened. I may not even know what it is that has happened, until I come back to the busy outside world.”

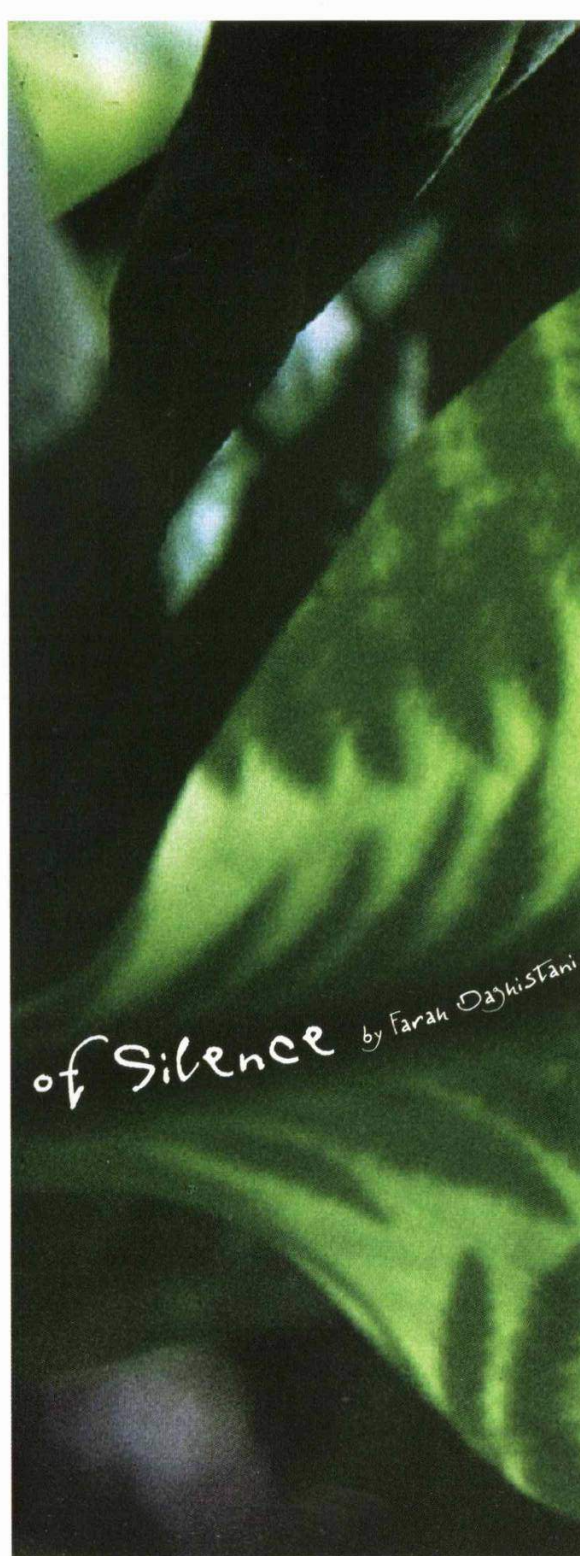
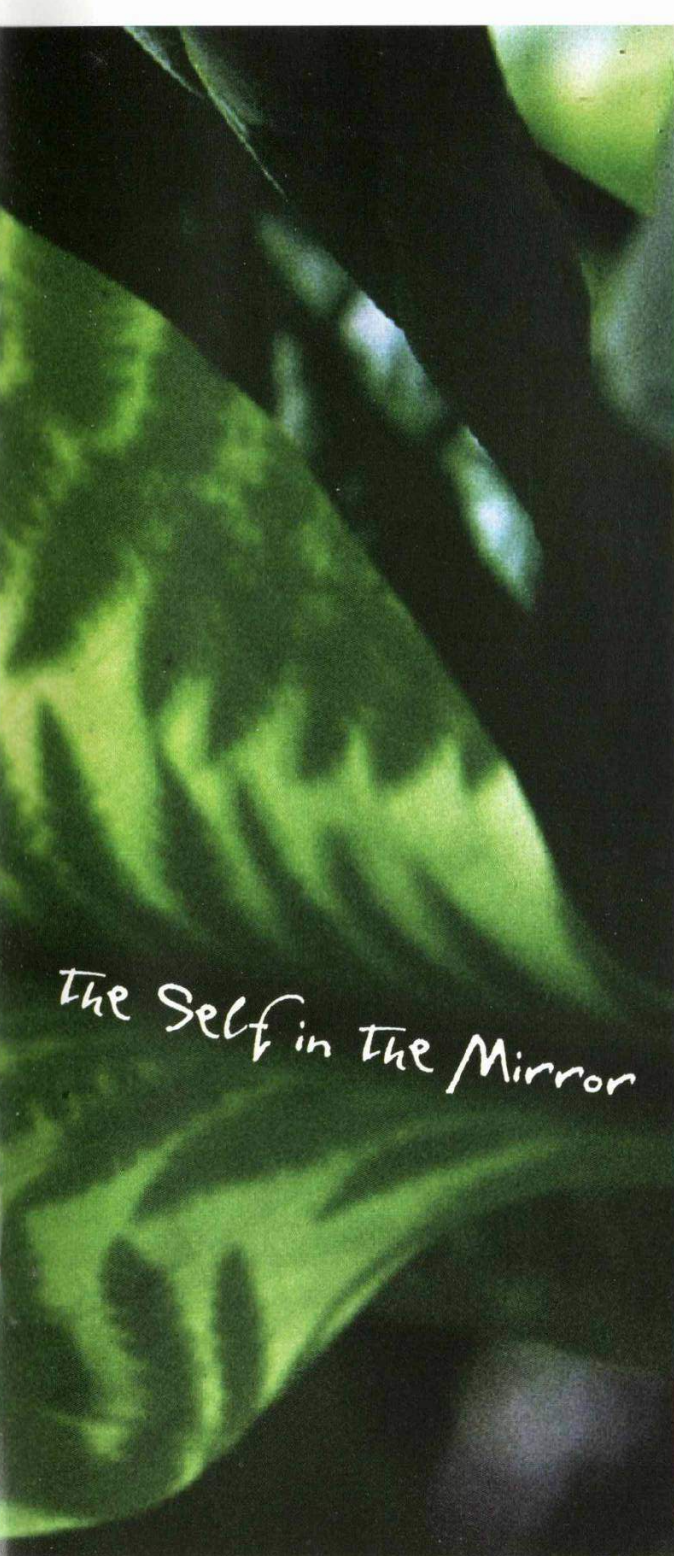
Withdraw

Christopher Drake,

from dialogue in Malaysia:
“One of the simplest ways I have found for going into silence is to let go and withdraw from sound. Silence is then what remains. I quickly feel that I have moved into a natural and proper state, a condition that is inherent to me, the soul, as a spiritual entity distinct from the world of matter and movement. It is as if I have removed the accumulated thoughts and feelings that have covered up my inner silence. In silence I find tranquility, stillness, and clarity. When I return to the field of sound and action, I feel full, refreshed, at ease with myself, and at one with the world.”



Reflecting on



IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONVEY IN WORDS WHAT IS best learned in silence. I had underestimated how unprepared I was to talk about the experience of silence in my life. While writing about silence, I learned how unprepared, overall, I still am at making the transition from the world of silence to the physical world in which we live.

Having said that, however, the awareness of silence and the richness it encompasses did not leave me after participating in the Call-of-the-Time Dialogue, even when I became re-submerged in the chaos of the inevitable everyday activities. After leaving this experience in Oxford, my knowledge of peace and the insight that I glimpsed remained intact. I believe that it is because we were not only given access to an authentic communion with our own souls but also a chance to connect at a spiritual level with others as well. The memory of that does not go away!

What struck me about the experience of silence was how familiar it felt. Not the people, nor the place as such, but the silence itself. It felt natural; it was like revisiting a place I knew well, even after a very long time of being away from it. Through silence, we have the chance to tap into some ancient knowledge that we had all but lost, through our own lack of love and our refusal to embrace that state of grace, which is our birthright. When people talk about the difficult path to spiritual enlightenment, I find myself disagreeing. It is not about accumulating vast amounts of new knowledge; it is about reclaiming something that was ours all along. Through silence, we can reconnect with that ancient soul wisdom. It is part of our spiritual genetics! And, like a person who has learned to ride a bicycle, the soul never forgets.



How far we have allowed ourselves to stray and, in doing so, how much we have lost sight of what is real. I learned that *maya*, the Hindi term for illusion, comes in many forms. Through silence, I realized that I had somehow managed to evolve an illusionary spirituality, which had nothing to do with real spirituality. For me, only silence has the power to make me really see where I have been fooling myself, and to recognize the fake from the real. Talking about spirituality, and even thinking about it, often fools me into believing that I am making progress. My subtle tendencies towards reverting to illusion, to sabotage myself, to take what I think is the easy way out, or to appease my ego, become apparent in silence. Yet I can let go of my shortcomings since, through silence, I am not compelled to react, and I am no longer in competition with my own self-image and myself. Although it hides nothing, silence is a forgiving teacher.

The virtue of detachment is undervalued and misunderstood, particularly in times such as the present. Detachment means to be compassionate in the purest sense, in that it is not shaped by self-interest. I had allowed my own practice of detachment to

become false, because it was a device to distance myself from what I did not want to face or deal with. Silence reminded me of this. Silence reminded me that detachment does not only mean being merely detached from the world, but also being detached from myself, my own drama and self-interests. I had forgotten that. Detachment is to be an observer.

“SILENCE IS PART OF OUR
SPIRITUAL GENETICS.”

I always knew that I had the best influence on those around me when I felt best about myself, yet somehow failed to consistently incorporate this into my life. This takes courage and self-confidence. The need to speak, to prove, to impress, to be admired, to be responded to, and even to be sympathized with, often won. I can feel tarnished as a result of these needs, and the feeling of self-violation can lead to

deeper levels of feeling tarnished, because we do not improve when we feel bad about ourselves. In silence, I see myself in light, which stops me from chasing the shadows of gratification that come from constantly asserting my presence in the world. In silence, I am never ugly or disrespectful to myself, and therefore feel no need to cause myself pain or humiliation.

I know through silence when I should speak. I was fortunate to have precious moments in Dadi Janki's company during the Call-of-the-Time Dialogue. Her words made sense when she offered them, and continue to make sense afterwards. We must be ones who act out the will of God, and who shine God's light. I knew then that my own definition of silence had been mistaken. Lack of action, or sitting on the sidelines, comes from fear and lethargy. In real silence, there is no confusion about when to act. Without planning it, I emerge from silence with clarity of purpose, and the knowledge of how and when and why to speak and act. This is why I need to dwell in silence more. Not just for the sake of silence alone, but so that my interventions in the world are accurate and do not lead to waste.



On reflecting upon our time in Oxford, I also realized that what I need to learn is not only to embrace silence myself, but also how to benefit from my own silence and the silence of others. I have seen Dadi Janki do this and I appreciate how important it is. I have seen Dadi listen to the pain and suffering of others and, without words, guide them to a place of peace. I have a tendency, born out of my own fear of pain and suffering, not to allow that to be expressed to others. I would interject, comment, call it by another name, and deny it, anything to quell it through my words. This response denies others the chance to deal with that pain. My desire to converse or to visibly deal with the subject is not only disrespecting the source of suffering in others, but it is also putting my own ego in between their experience and the peace I could share with them.

I reflected on the pressure to always be a spokesperson. Silence has helped me to be able to separate the desire to defend, criticize, or argue from the true desire to spread peace. There is so much pain in the world. This has been the case for a long time but, just because it may touch me now, it does not mean that I should feel compelled to help spread it further.

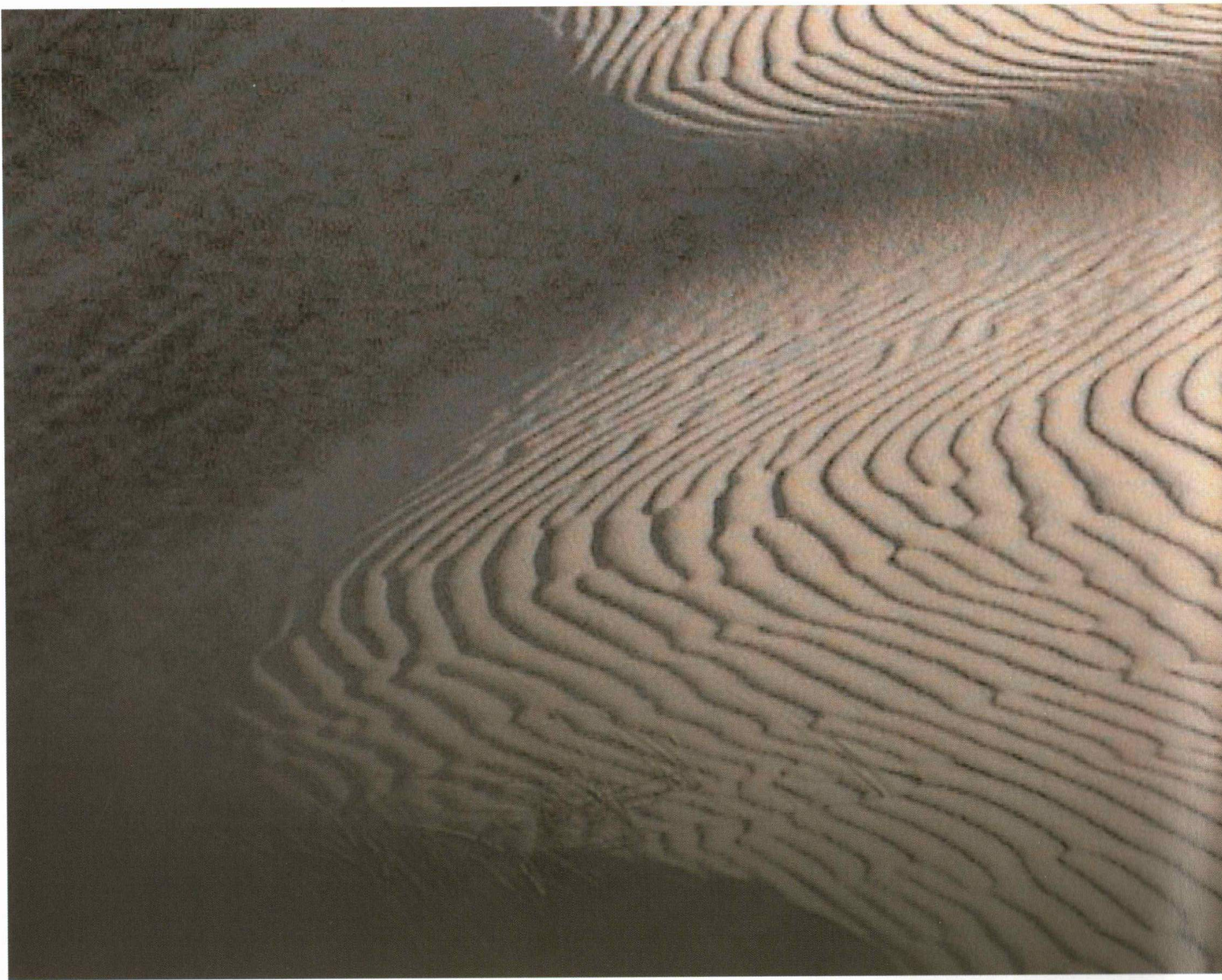
People can be like hurt and scared children who are spiteful and aggressive because of their fear. Silence takes me to a level where I can be forgiving and understanding. Without silence I lack the generosity of spirit required to be that way, for I am too busy looking for ways to defend my ego, my pain, my fear. This misguided course compounds the problem.

Silence teaches me that I need to discipline myself. Even though my mind can twist and turn, the experience of silence cannot be tarnished or questioned. I have only to revert to it, and this gives me the clarity to see the aberrations and distortions of my faulty intellect. From that silence, I can see the world differently and hear it clearly. Silence gives me glasses and hearing aids with which to understand that which appears to be around me. It is like the story of the emperor's new clothes, in that I am no longer fooled by illusions.

I learn more and more each day that the responsibility of arriving at grace is ours alone, and that it is within our reach. There will always be help and support on hand, but we must take the initiative to recognize and accept them when they are offered. Sometimes they are so obvious that they are invisible! I have found that

“IN REAL SILENCE, THERE IS NO CONFUSION ABOUT WHEN TO ACT. WITHOUT PLANNING IT, I EMERGE FROM SILENCE WITH CLARITY OF PURPOSE, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW AND WHEN AND WHY TO SPEAK AND ACT.”

silence works in such subtle and powerful ways, that the returns and rewards can be beyond my wildest dreams. At the same time, they can be as light and unobtrusive as a feather. I have a long way ahead of me but, then again, seeing it as a journey with a destination is a false dichotomy. Every moment is a journey, and every moment spent in silence is a destination in itself. ■



Partnering With the Sustainer of Life to Build a Sustainable World

by John Williams

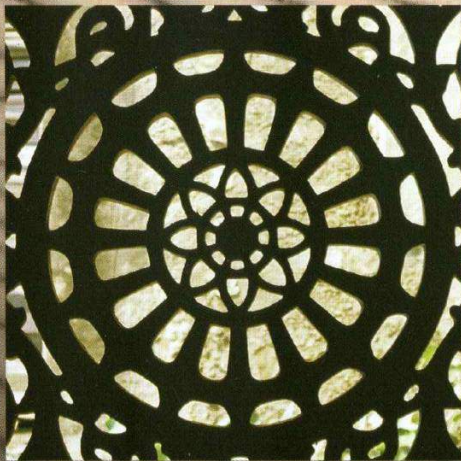
I WOULD LIKE TO LINK THE CALL OF OUR TIME with my personal calling, which is the daily challenge of how to live as a Christian in the world of business. Having a life as a businessman and having a spiritual life are usually, so it seems, kept separate. A common belief is that we should neither get too businesslike in church nor too spiritual in business. But I find this separation to be phony, even deceitful, and I have tried for many years to integrate these two aspects of my life.


On the one hand, I have applied business management principles to the church of which I am a member and, on the other hand, I have introduced the concept of values and personal growth into the organization of which I am an executive. But I still find resistance and sometimes criticism for my approach on both sides. I have been accused of excluding the spiritual for business management in my church and of having a religious-like zeal in my workplace. This is somewhat puzzling to me because I feel I am on a journey to integrate my business and spiritual lives. I believe when those of us who work in institutions integrate our spiritual understanding into our secular lives, this integrated awareness

allows us to have greater impact in our work. So how am I attempting to do this?

I endeavor to have a daily discipline of early morning prayer and meditative reflection on scripture. To hear God, I must have a daily discipline of sitting still, being quiet, and allowing God's guidance, comfort, and encouragement to settle on my heart and mind. I find that there is a strong link between leading a spiritual life and being effective in business and in my personal life. This doesn't mean, of course, that things go the way I expect; God's wisdom is different from mine, and I have to have faith.

The present state of our world is of concern to many people and institutions. The Alliance for Global Sustainability, an international consortium of technological universities that has made a commitment to a sustainable world, has identified a sustainable future as one in which there is health and safety for all people, social order and equity, preservation of the earth's ecosystems, economic growth, and resource enhancement. This is in line with what scripture tells us God intended for our world when He created it.





“I AM NEVER EXEMPT
FROM PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY.
I HEAR, I CHOOSE, I
DECIDE, I ACT.”

What is excluded from the Alliance's mission is the need for personal spirituality. Or is this somehow inherent in its mission? Is it spiritual to have a strong sense of care for the well-being of all people and the environment, a desire for peace and harmony, a commitment to the elimination of poverty, and a discipline of using all resources sparingly? Are these values and behaviors inherently spiritual?

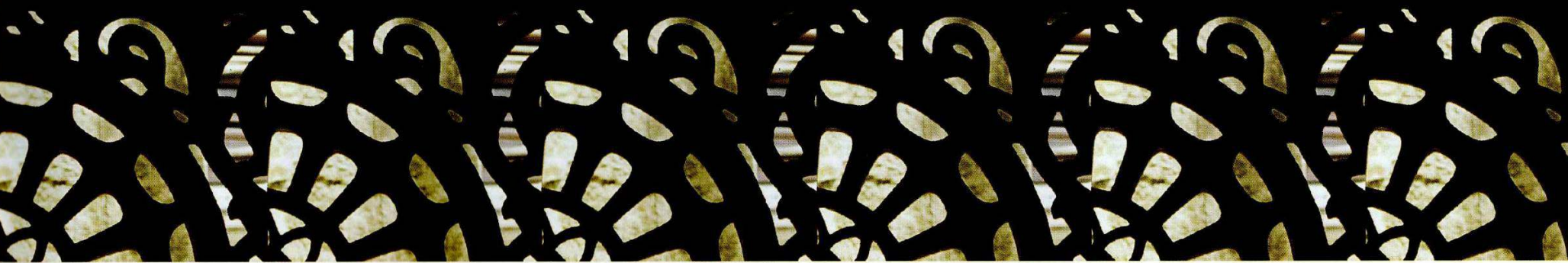
Individuals and groups of people working together, sharing noble values and adhering to a worthwhile purpose, can make a difference. But is such action inherently spiritual? I don't believe so. For a transformation of the world order, I believe the spirit of God must be involved. Only God has the total picture, the mind, the heart, the wisdom, the power, and the perfection to redeem the world and us. To build a sustainable world, the Sustainer of all life has to be involved. So why isn't God inherently involved in the noble actions of good people? To answer this question, I need to explain what I believe is the nature of our relationship with God.

First of all, what do I understand by “spirituality”? To me, it is a life lived with the spirit of God, the sustaining energy and power of all life. But God is also a personal being who seeks a personal relationship with all people. There is no spiritual life or spirituality unless we live in this relationship with God. So if

“spirituality” is missing, I really mean that God is missing from our lives, our organizations, our institutions, and our nations. And unless we are reconciled to God, there is really no hope to transform our world and create a sustainable future.

When God created the universe, the earth, and humankind, God intended that all people would “love their neighbor,” which includes all people within our circle of influence; live in harmony with God's will; and have the enabling power of God's spirit. We were made to be partners with God in caring for this world. Incredibly, though, God gave us all the freedom of choice, the beautiful gift of creating our own purpose and meaning of life, and the ability to explore and discover in our own way. If we choose to live as slaves to our own egos, we live in a kind of darkness. We live a life of deceit and self-delusion.

So how do we make this choice? What difference does it make in our lives and to the world? I would like to illustrate this critical choice by looking at the story of a person accepting God's invitation for a transformation in her life. This biblical story can be seen as myth, allegory, or history but, whichever view you take, it has a lesson. The person is a young Jewish woman called Mary, who was the mother of Jesus of Nazareth. Let us look at the incredible event in Mary's life that led to his birth.



As a young woman, Mary was betrothed to a man called Joseph. Prior to her marriage, she received a disturbing visit from an angel called Gabriel. When Gabriel appeared to Mary, we are told that she was perplexed. The angel tried to reassure her by saying that she had found favor with God, which presumably meant that God had examined her heart and mind and knew she was ready for the message that the angel was bringing to her. The message was that she would give birth to a son who would be the “Son of the Most High.” This message was definitely not good news for Mary. To be an unmarried mother in Palestine 2000 years ago was a most undesirable and unfortunate situation. So Mary asked, “How and why will this happen?” Gabriel explained to her that it will happen by the life-empowering action of God’s spirit. And then, something amazing happened, which explains to me the nature of God’s relationship with us. Gabriel waited for an answer!

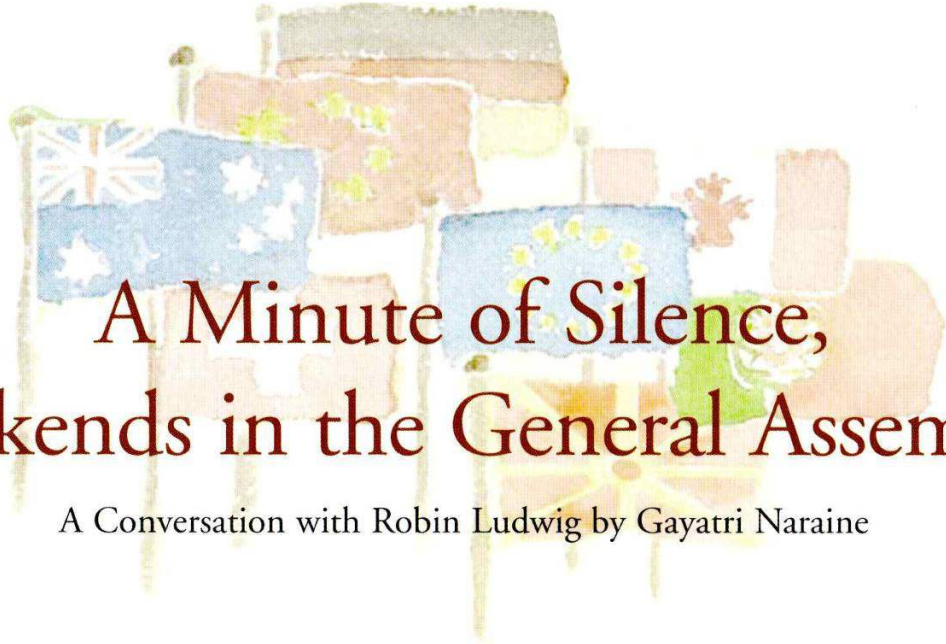
This was not an edict or command from God, it was a message, an invitation. So Gabriel waited for Mary’s answer. I can hardly believe that God, in seeking to be partners with us, asks, and then waits for our answer. We must choose; God will not impose upon or force us. So Mary gave her answer and gave a humble “yes”: “May it be unto me as you have said.”

This story shows me how I am to relate to God and live a spiritual life. I must accept God’s invitation to be a partner in transforming the world. Then I will receive the power of God’s spirit. I am never exempt from personal accountability. I hear, I choose, I decide, I act. We have been given the freedom to choose life or death, truth or darkness, blessings or curses, abundance or poverty. These choices are within the normal confines of life. It is getting on with life in the way God has guided me, and there is nothing “supernatural” about that. God wants to be invited into our lives to bring about personal transformation in our hearts and minds, and then work with us to achieve world transformation.

A message of reconciliation and partnership with God is not popular. The truth of God’s sovereignty over and love for humankind confronts personal ego and confounds our noble and not-so-noble objectives. The imperative of business and government is to establish sustainable, enriching businesses and societies in a world of peace and prosperity. Transformation of the world for the better and the establishment of a sustainable world can be progressed by truly spiritual people. People in government, business, universities, and charities everywhere can bring about change beyond their imagination. ■

“THE IMPERATIVE OF BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT

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AND PROSPERITY.”



A Minute of Silence, Bookends in the General Assembly

A Conversation with Robin Ludwig by Gayatri Naraine

FOR OVER 50 YEARS, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the United Nations has opened and closed its sessions with a moment of silence. In researching the story behind this practice, I learned that the proposal to open and close the General Assembly with a minute of silence was made by the first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie. At that time, he had said, “The members of the United Nations represent people belonging to nearly every religion, creed, and philosophical outlook in the world. It is not possible to introduce a public prayer which will satisfy all tenets and give offense to none.” In 1949 the proposal was adopted and became Rule 62 in the “Methods and Procedures of the General Assembly.” It reads: “Immediately after the opening of the first plenary meeting and immediately preceding the closing of the final plenary meeting of each session of the General Assembly, the President

shall invite the representatives to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.”

After gaining an understanding of the rationale behind formally adopting this practice, the question foremost in my mind was, how does this minute of silence work for the delegates who observe it, and what impact does it have, if any at all, on the process and nature of the discussions that take place?

What follows is a conversation with Robin Ludwig, Deputy Director of the International Year of Peace, on the significance of the minutes of silence, which serve as bookends in the General Assembly.

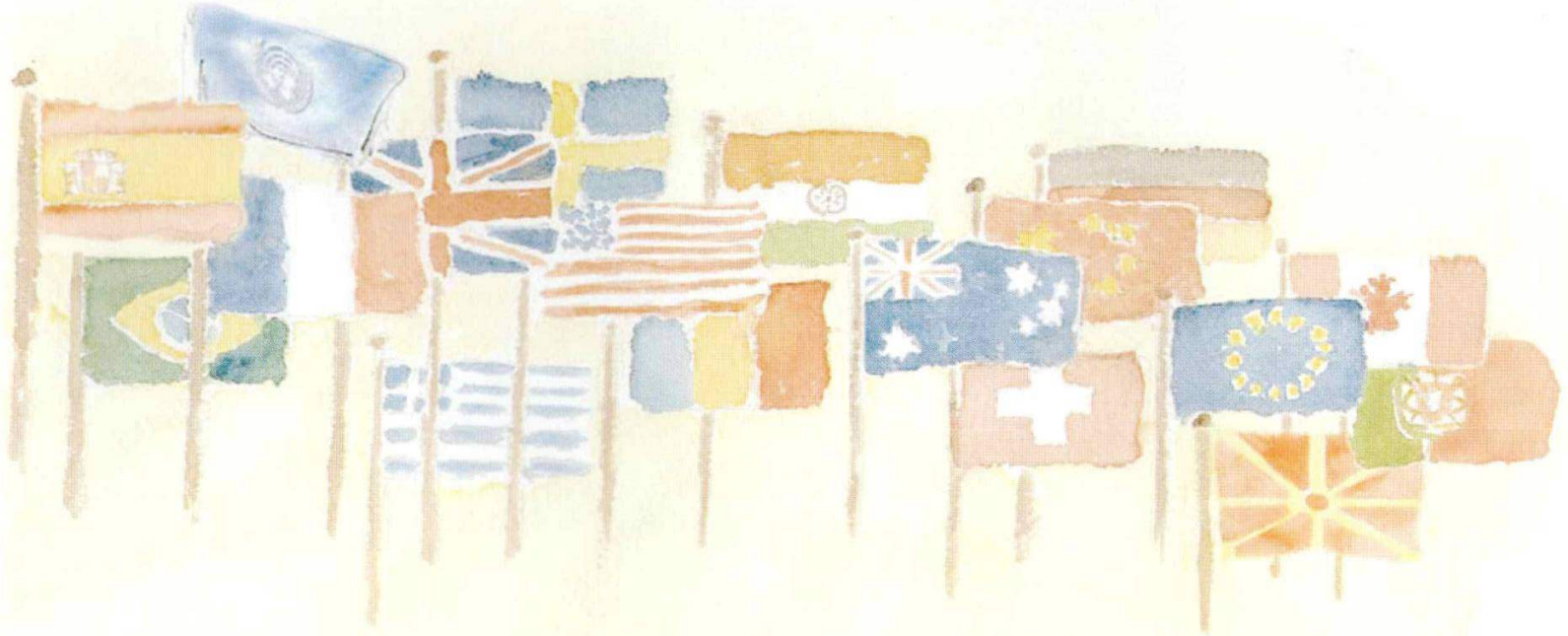
Q: What prompted the United Nations to begin this practice?

The idea to have a minute of silence in the General Assembly of the United Nations was put for-

ward by the Indian Delegation. It was adopted at the 4th Session of the General Assembly. This idea was born during the Gandhi/Nehru era, when India was an example to the world of spirituality and openness. Some people say that it is the only time when there is silence in the General Assembly.

Q: What in your opinion is the experience of the delegates when this minute of silence is observed?

This practice provides all delegates an opportunity to think about what their presence at the UN means in a broader context. If used for the highest purpose, it offers a good prelude to the discussions. Of course there is always the possibility that some delegates may be thinking of what they will have for lunch, but at least it provides them with an opportunity to reflect on the task before them, on what this body of the UN is



supposed to do over the coming months, and on what their individual contribution might be. At the end of the session, each can consider what was accomplished and what he or she contributed. Ultimately it depends on the awareness of the person as to how the minute of silence is used.

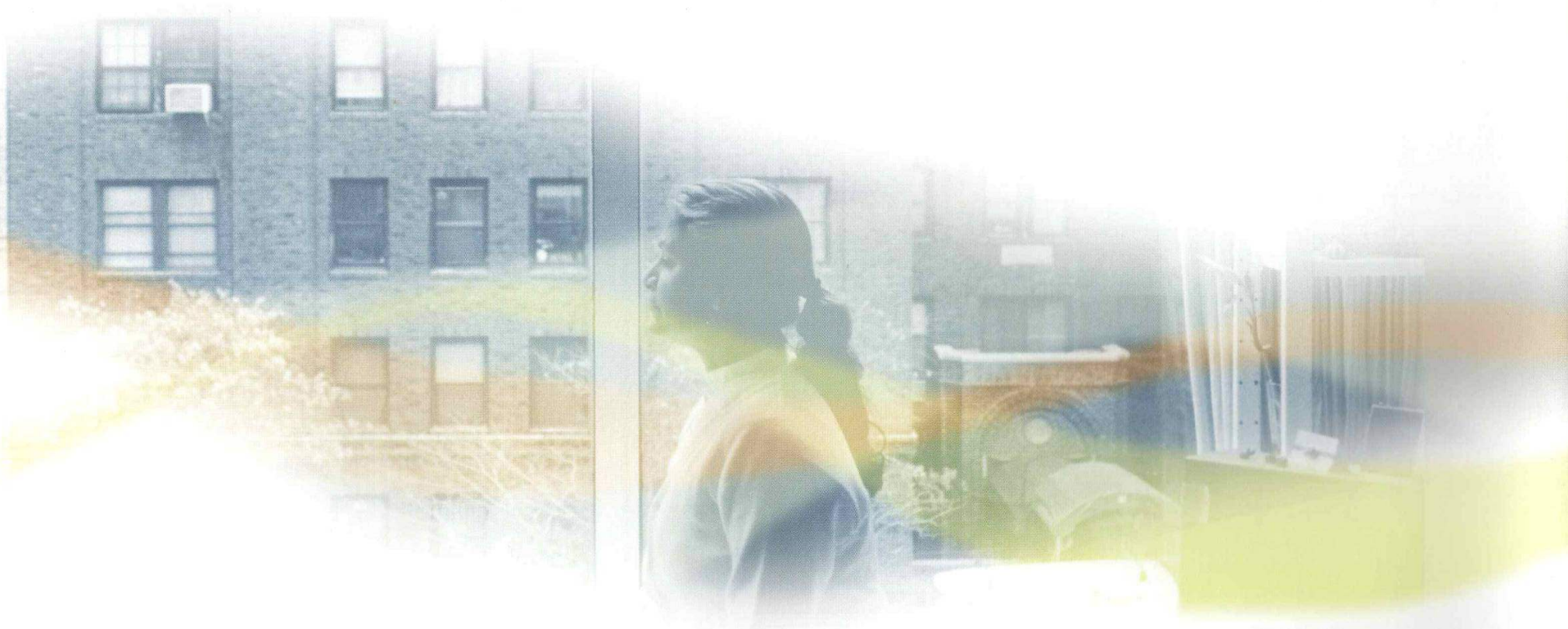
Q: What is the experience of the General Assembly as a collective?

I think it creates a space for delegates to remember what they have in common, possibly contributing to a

meeting of the minds later, when they are engrossed in their discussions. There is no other place like the UN, where representatives from so many states of the world come together and work on global issues. It is quite powerful to have that many delegations standing together as a collective and observing a shared moment of silence. They are not standing there only as individuals. The delegates are there representing their countries and their people. It may be that this sense of the collective whole standing quietly together could give them a glimpse of what is possible for the world.

Q: What would you tell others who might be considering incorporating silence into public meetings?

What I worry about with these types of procedural actions is that they might become formulaic. There needs to be an effort to make them alive and new each time. A minute of silence is a common theme to which each person brings something different, and it doesn't hurt to provide that framework and allow for that opportunity. One minute is not a lot of time; it simply creates a pause and gives time for reflection on what one needs to do. ■



TO BECOME SPIRITUALLY AWAKENED MEANS to cultivate the ability to sustain the awareness of myself as a soul in a body. There are practices we can do that disclose to us aspects of our inner subtle self that strengthen our ability to stay in a soul-conscious state and that allow us to serve others as instruments, using the subtle power of the soul. In the same way that Mahatma Gandhi spoke about experiments with truth, we will explore these practices as experiments in silence.

The original environment of the soul is silent. The original language of the soul is silence. However, we have become immersed in an outer world of action and have forgotten how comfortable we once were with silence. We are like immigrants to a new coun-

try whose original language has slipped into the background. In an immigrant neighborhood, certain words and expressions of the old language linger as threads in the fabric of the new one, bringing richness to the new culture. In the same way, the quality of silence remains threaded through modern discourse. Silence is the language we turn to in special moments of reflection and respect. Although we don't focus on these moments of silence, they provide deep wells of resources when we need them the most.

Just as an immigrant may become alert when she hears the language she learned as a child, but may find it difficult to speak it, we find at first that we enjoy silence, but have forgotten how natural it

once was for us to express ourselves in thoughts or feelings, and to experience the vibrational frequencies they create.

Discovering the Spiritual Self

Creation and transformation in the outer material world always begin with creation and transformation in the subtle world of thoughts, feelings, and vibrations. To become familiar with the spiritual or subtle world requires that we attune ourselves to subtle phenomena. The experiments in silence we explore in this journal are spiritual practices, exercises to strengthen our remembrance of and our ability to express in this subtle, causal world.

Experiments in Silence

by Judy Rodgers and Gayatri Naraine

Awareness of the Inner Being

When the soul understands that it is distinct from the body, it is as if a gate of awareness opens and a transformation happens. This first transformation answers the question, “Who am I?” It happens when we become aware of the inner being that is distinct from the outer form. The soul from inside the body begins to understand itself as the inner nature that lives in a world of silence. It is the soul who is having the experience of acting in the world through a body. Our awareness of ourselves as souls is the first realization and transformation.

Just beyond this first gate of soul-awareness is a second gate, which opens with a second question, “To

whom do I belong? In the same way that the primary affiliations and relationships of our outer selves are with our family and friends in the world, the primary relationship of the soul is with God. This is a relationship between a parent and a child, a teacher and a student, a guide and a traveler. Our awareness of our close relationship with God is a second realization and transformation.

Understanding this second transformation allows us to grasp what it is that gives the deeper territories of silence their power. In these depths of silence the soul enters into conversation and relationship with God. It is this relationship that makes transformation possible in both the inner world of each soul and in the outer world of action.

The foundation of the power of silence is the possibility for profound transformation. This profound transformation happens in the world of silence. This is what gives silence its power. Everything pertaining to the power of silence rests on this basis, that we are spiritual beings who have the power to transform ourselves through our own efforts and our own expanding awareness.

Experiments in Silence

The experiments in silence are practices that invite us to move from a focus on the outer world to the awareness of our inner selves and the power of elevated thoughts and benevolent feelings to transform us and

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the world. Below are eight spiritual practices, the first of which we will explore in this journal. We intend to take up the other “experiments in silence” in future issues of this journal.

- ***Drishti*, the vision of love and good wishes one soul has for another.**
- **Cooking and eating in silence.**
- **Traffic control, a way to still the traffic in the mind.**
- ***Amrit Vela*, an early morning meditation.**
- **Receiving subtle signals.**
- **Listening and making choices in silence.**
- **Serving others through the power of elevated thoughts.**
- ***Bhatti*, a collective meditation for an extended period of time.**

In Hindi, *drishti* means vision; *amrit vela* means the time of nectar; and *bhatti* means a furnace, which symbolizes intense meditation.

Our first experiment in silence is the practice of *drishti*.

Understanding *Drishti*

There is a saying, “The eyes are the windows to the soul.” We can experience the inner state of someone

by looking at his eyes. In the same way, we send our inner state out to others through our eyes. *Drishti* is a Hindi word for the vision of love and good wishes that one soul has for another. The language of the soul is the language of the eyes.

One aspect of this spiritual practice of *drishti* is the link between the thought we have in our mind and the way that thought affects what we see when we look out at the world. It is our inner awareness that creates the vision we have of the world. When our inner awareness is elevated, we literally see a different world. We see the spiritual qualities and potentials in each one we meet and in the collective of humanity. Each of us acts out of the vision we have of the world. One who sees the world as an unsafe and hostile place will take one kind of action. Someone who sees the world as a place filled with a yearning for love and peace will take another kind of action. It is these actions that create the world.

The link between our inner awareness, our vision, and the action we take in the world is something we often hear about in reference to leaders. We hear about our leaders’ visionary capacity, their ability to lead others because they are able to touch others with their vision. Spiritual leaders, such as Jesus, Buddha, or Mohammed, uplifted others with their vision of the world. They helped others to see a world founded on love and generosity and to act accordingly.

In a soul-conscious awareness, my elevated vision has a purifying and calming effect on those around me and on the atmosphere. This beneficial impact of elevated vision is one of the reasons that Raja Yoga teaches a practice of meditation with eyes open. Meditation with eyes open takes this spiritual practice

beyond the confines of a meditation room into the outer world. A benevolent vision of the world provides a protection from the influence of harmful or impure vibrations.

When we elevate our thoughts to a higher level of consciousness, we may be looking at the world, but our inner experience is of connection with God. So our vision becomes a benediction, a blessing, a silent current of good wishes and spiritual power.

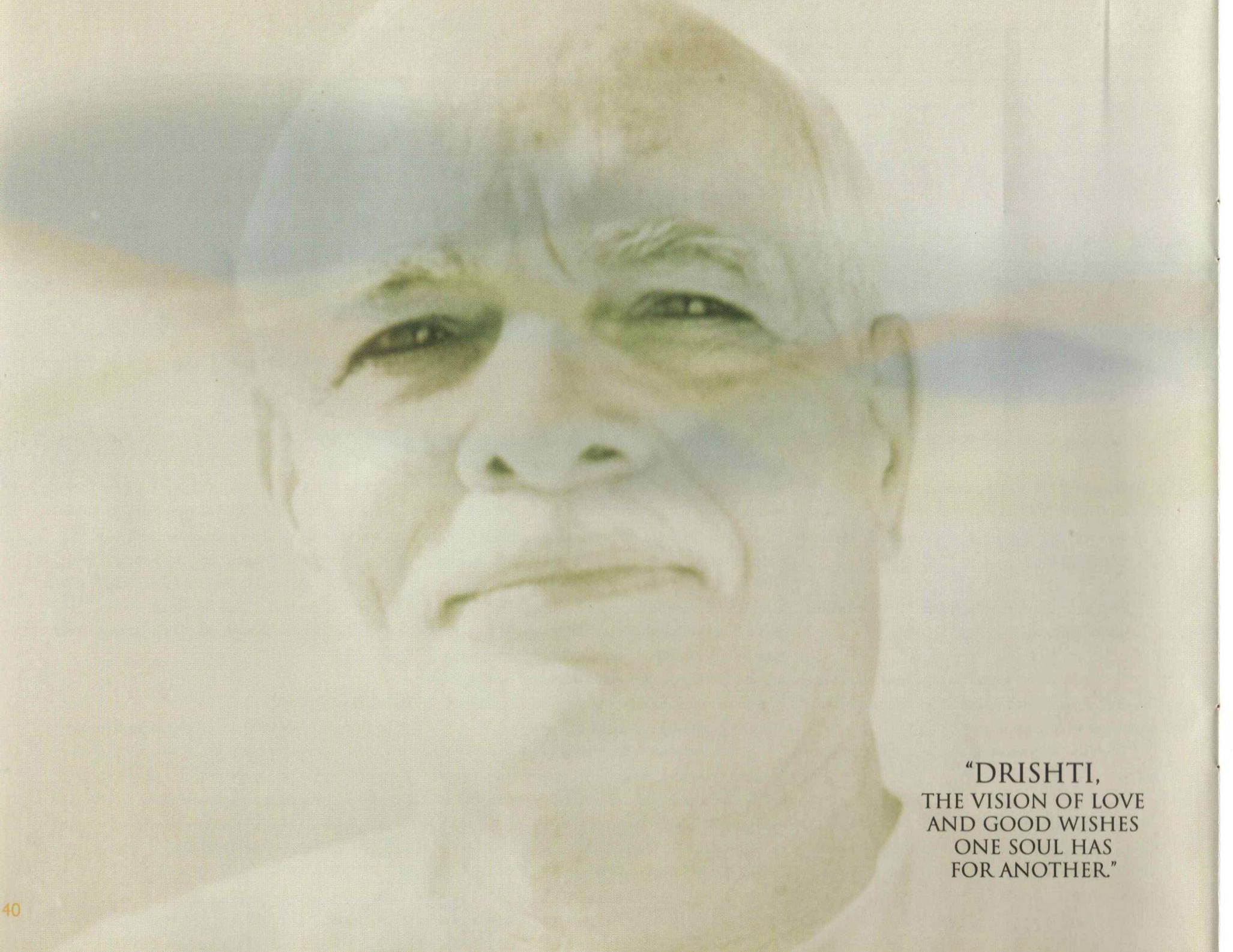
Practicing *Drishti*

When I “give *drishti*” to another and “receive *drishti*” from another, I re-establish our spiritual connection. The cleaner my inner state, the more powerful my *drishti*. To give *drishti*, I first must visualize myself as a soul, a tiny star resting in the forehead slightly behind the eyes.

Then, I link myself to God, the Supreme Soul, becoming aware of the stream of light and power that I receive from God. This connection with God lifts my inner state, my thoughts, and my feelings. With this elevated awareness, I look at the other through this “third eye” of the soul. With this divine vision, I am aware of the soul, the living being shining through the human body.

The Gift of *Drishti*

There is no more powerful way to give and receive support than through this elevated practice of *drishti*. There are many who say that their first true awakening came by receiving *drishti* from someone with a powerful and elevated stage. In an instant, we touch the other, lifting them and being lifted by a spiritual current from God. ■



“DRISHTI,
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ONE SOUL HAS
FOR ANOTHER.”

AN EXPERIENCE OF *Drishti*

BY JAYANTI KIRPALANI

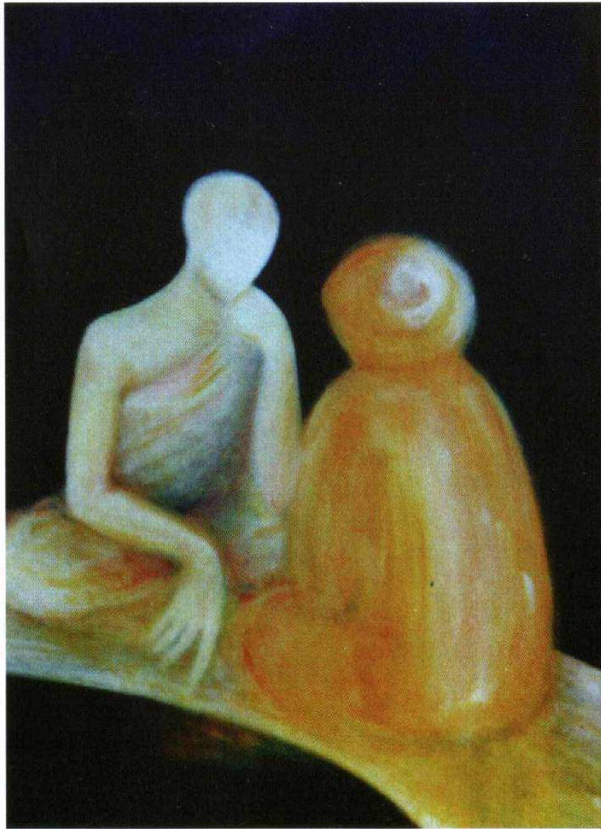
IN JUNE OF 1968, AFTER I HAD BEEN STUDYING and practicing Raja Yoga for approximately nine weeks, I came to Mt. Abu. I had been to Abu a couple times earlier, but more as a tourist. This time, I came thirsty for spiritual wisdom, motivated by the thought that Raja Yoga was something I wanted to be involved in on a long-term basis.

One evening while I was there, Brahma Baba, Founder of the Brahma Kumaris, invited me, together with a small group, to come and say good night. The scene and the feelings still emerge vividly each time I recall them. In the warmth of the summer night, Baba met us in an open courtyard where the fragrance of jasmine filled the air. There was a sparkle of white all around us – on Brahma Baba's clothes, his hair, his face,

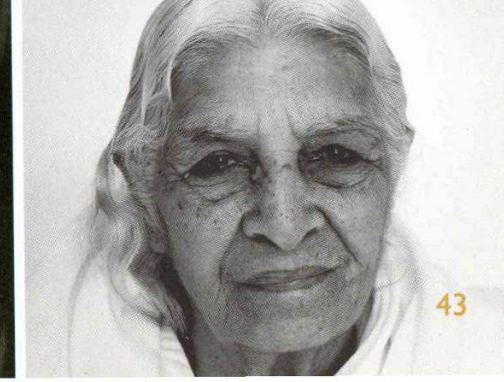
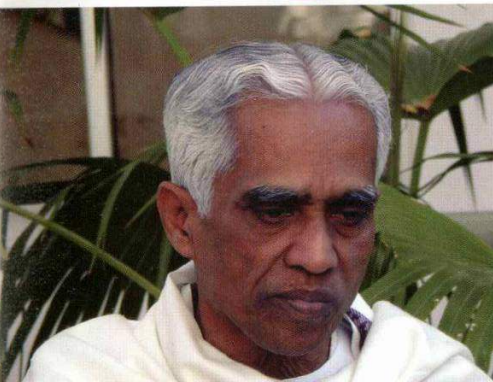
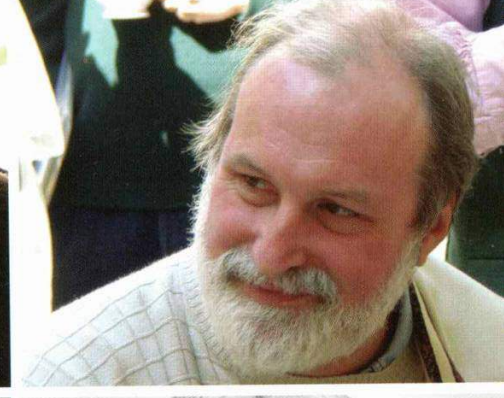
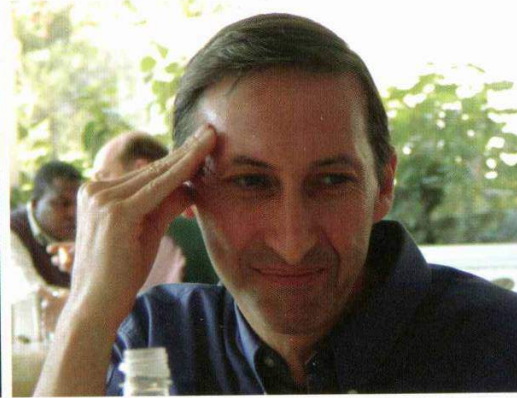
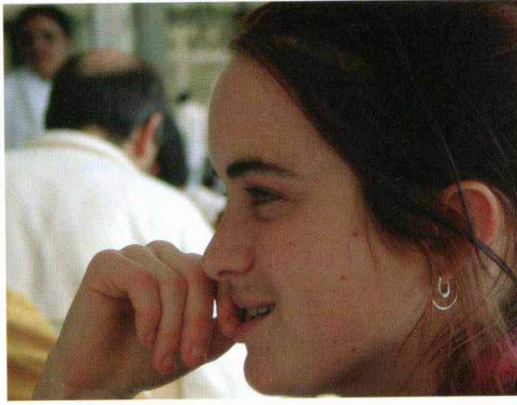
even on our own clothes. Baba turned to us, acknowledging each of us with his *drishti*. When his eyes fell upon me, he beckoned me toward him to give me a bunch of white jasmine flowers. In fact, he also wanted to give me *drishti*. When I reached Baba, he held my hand and gave me the flowers; but the entire time my eyes stayed focused on Baba's eyes. It seemed as if the power of soul consciousness that Baba had accumulated was pulling my mind into the state of deeper and deeper awareness of the soul. I began to feel myself as a being of light, and the consciousness of my surroundings and my body faded away into the distance. As I was seeing Baba's face, filled with light, my eyes moved to Baba's forehead. It was as if a magnet pulled the soul out of the body and carried me on a journey.

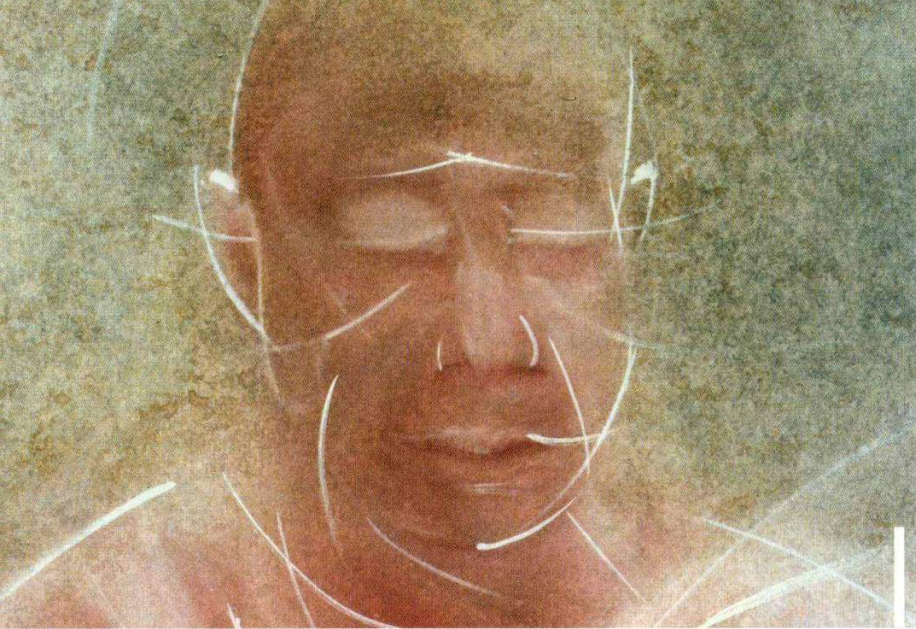
I moved beyond the consciousness of the physical realm and, in silence, traveled to a different dimension. This magnet of light carried me into a world of light, a place of freedom, a place with no boundaries. In this realm of light, I connected with the Source of Light. It was a timeless moment in which I felt a profound sense of love and joy, and at the same time I felt merged in an ocean of stillness and peace.

After a while, it was as if Baba "reduced the voltage," and I gradually became aware of the physical domain and the physical form of Brahma Baba. Baba's *drishti* had carried me to a place that left an indelible imprint on my soul. It was the start of a new consciousness and a new life in which God was to play a central role. ■



“THE LANGUAGE
OF THE **SOUL**
IS THE LANGUAGE
OF THE **EYES.**”





In the Next Issue

The *Experiments in Silence* journal explores the same themes and silence practices as the Call-of-the-Time Dialogues. The forthcoming Dialogue series will explore the theme, “Healing Humanity’s Soul.” Living as we do in a world ravaged with war and polarized by powerful divisive forces, there is a recurring call for wholeness. However, it seems that our best intentions around healing are often sabotaged by accumulated past experiences and events, creating thoughts that resist healing. In the next issue, we will look deeply at what healing really means, how true healing happens, and the mental models that support the process.

The “experiment in silence” in the next issue will be “service through the mind” or “service through elevated thoughts, pure feelings, and beneficial actions.” This experiment allows us to serve people and situations even when we are not able to be physically present. It requires an understanding of the subtle dynamics of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes and how these can contribute profoundly not only to people but also to the environment.

To receive the next issue, email info@callofthetime.com

ARTISTS' STATEMENTS

ELLIE CASHMAN, USA

(graphic designer, *Experiments in Silence* journal)

"Designing the visual presentation for the written ideas expressed in this journal has been an interesting conceptual process. Some of the images we have chosen illustrate the concepts of silence and points of entry in very abstract and poetic ways, while others depict literally the actual experience of the dialogues themselves. Visually the journal supports the importance of silence as a means to positive action in the world."

JOHN LOUIS COHEN, FRANCE

("Meditation," Page 44)

"My work includes graphics, calligraphy, and landscapes. Though I enjoy them all, it is the landscapes where I most often find the experience of harmony and beauty."

OLGA DOROVSKAYA, UKRAINE

("Power of Pure Vision," Page 38)

"The soul generates a powerful energy of pure thoughts and good wishes. When this energy reaches others, the vibrations transform a negative attitude into a positive one, and an elevated vision awakens the original and eternal inner goodness of the person."

BENOIT DUCHÉ, FRANCE

("UN Flags," Pages 34-35)

"Water and colors play together with light on the paper, they live their own life, bright and soft, they splash and mix, and interact. They are untamed. Watercolor is light. Light is the first color. Light is everywhere. Yet, light is not painted. Just like beauty. Beauty would hardly let itself be brushed. At best, it would let me suggest

it. When I let them play together, without interfering, they sometimes let me express some of their freedom. When that happens, I am reminded of Berthe Morisot, who said, 'I lived my painting, and painted my life.'"

GEORGE EDWARDS, AUSTRALIA

("Rippling Sand Dunes," Pages 30-31)

"I am a graphic designer with interest in photography, video, and music. I like to capture images of a gentle and peaceful nature."

MONICA G. FIGUEREDO, URUGUAY

("Dawn," Page 13; "Wonder," Page 16)

"There is a childlike innocence inside all of us that remains untouched through time. This is the part of us that naturally and instinctively sees only beauty and wonder. Creativity born from this beautiful place heals and sustains the soul."

URSULA GUEDELHOEFER, GERMANY

(Both untitled, Page 42)

"In my artistic work, I am able to transfer the subtle feelings I experience into poetic expressions. These paintings are created out of affection for the beauty of human beings in an environment of openness and silent communication."

HEIDI GUTMAN, USA

("Lunch Hour Series," Nos. 1 and 15, Pages 18 and 19; "Silence in New York City," Page 36)

"You can tell lies with photographs. And you can find truth. One of my favorite explorations with photography is finding truths about life and our culture. My personal work focuses on revealing the truth of a moment.

ERIK LARSON, USA

("Solitude," Page 14)

"When observed, nature reflects back to us what we can understand. Solitude in nature provides great feelings of beauty, truth, and a calming simplicity. I walk and sit with a camera for moments to emerge which are full of these qualities."

MIRIAM SUBIRANA, SPAIN

("Intimacy," Cover)

"When I sit in front of the white canvas, I turn inwards, and in silence, a vision emerges. Colors full of their original light start to flow, and a landscape begins to take shape. It is the expression of the connectedness between the inner landscape and the outer world."

HARRY VAN ESSEN, GERMANY

("The Lute," Pages 1 and 20)

"In the light, in the colors, in the expression of perfection, one touches the original silence of the soul."

RUDOLF ZWAMBORN, CANADA

("Light Playing on Leaf," Pages 26-27; "Stone Flowers," Pages 31-33)

"I like to pick out the essence of the things I see around me, to focus on one thing that catches my eye, something beautiful, like sweet, pure music calling out to me above the noise of our man-made world – the sound of the pure form of nature."

PETER BARRYMAN, AUSTRALIA

("Shiva," Page 23)

We received a number of photos with no photographer acknowledged. To all those who contributed their work, our heartfelt thanks.

S I L E N C E

STRENGTHENS THE MIND, WHICH ALLOWS FOR CLEAN AND CLEAR THINKING.

SILENCE NURTURES THE HEART WITH FEELINGS OF PEACE AND LOVE.

SILENCE FORMS AN ATTITUDE THAT IS BENEVOLENT AND INCLUSIVE.

SILENCE REJUVENATES THE ENERGY OF THE SOUL.

AND GENERATES ACTIONS THAT ARE FILLED WITH BENEFIT.

WITH THE PAPER OF SILENCE

AND THE PEN OF ACTION, WE SKETCH THE LINES

OF THE IMAGE OF OUR WORLD, FILLING IT WITH THE COLORS OF OUR

COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE.