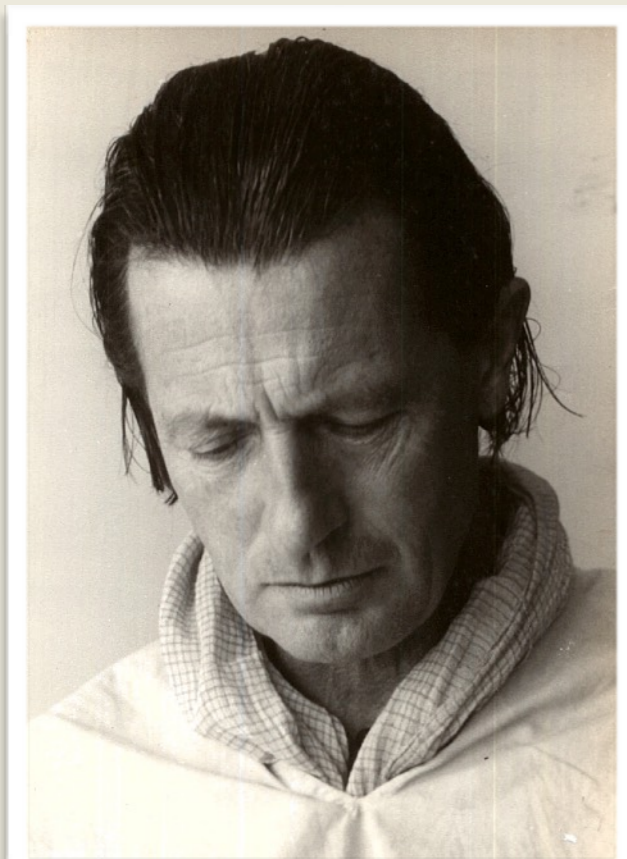


Saying the Unsayable

Chitra Iyer shares a letter from Sri Madhava Ashish

This is one of the very early letters written to me. It seems that the path is not a linear trajectory but a complex feedback loop that constantly needs to be renewed and restored. I had asked Ashishda to explain ‘dhyān’ but he also relates it subtly to a way of life where the different modalities of human expression and understanding, everyday work and inner meaning are integrated. He tells us of ‘treasure’ - concealed perhaps from the surface mind with its endless preoccupations, but not from the heart.



Excerpt from a letter dated Jan 28, 1979

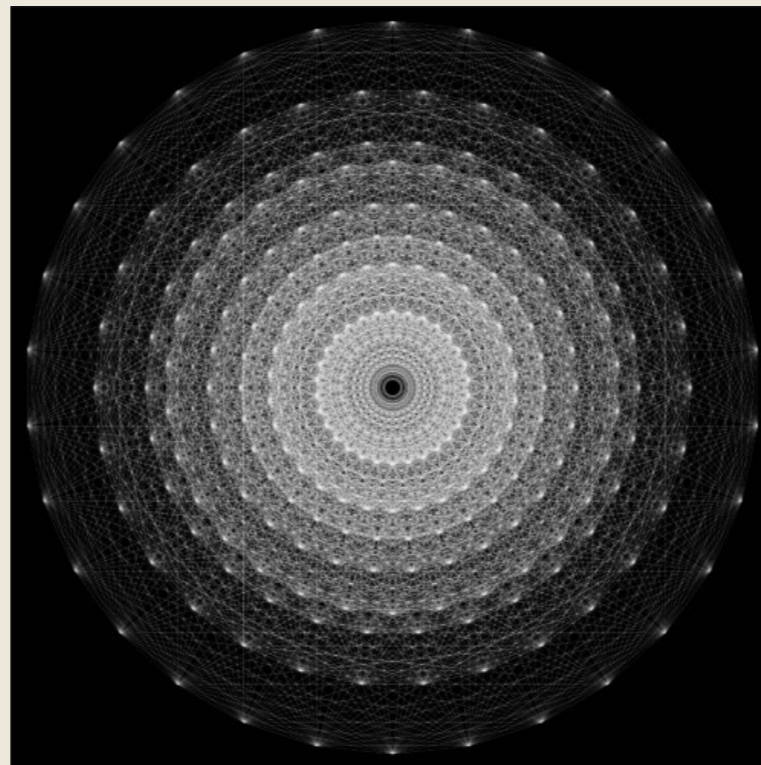
“Whether one uses the word dhyān or meditation, what matters is not the words used, but what the person thinks they mean. Most people say they are doing dhyān (*dhyān kar raha hun*) – they think of it as a process, a sort of mental activity in which an attempt is made to focus the mind or concentrate it on something

they assume to be spiritual. As I understand it, dhyān is not a process; it is a state (*dhyān mein hain*). The process which leads to entering the state of dhyān is a holding (*dharana*) – not just holding the mind still, but holding it to the inner. The only point in discussing this is that one tries to clarify one’s ideas about what one is trying to do.

One is really trying to get beyond the everyday mind and into whatever it is that stands beyond it. The problem is how to persuade the everyday mind to stop its activity. It is very difficult to get beyond it unless one first learns how to stop it. It is certainly better to concentrate the mind on one thing – e.g. an image of Krishna – than to have it running all over the place. But such concentration is more likely to lead to visions than to the goal itself.

Visions may be very inspiring, and sometimes very useful. But who is the person who sees the visions? Such visions like dreams have to be understood. Often their messages are more direct than in the ordinary dream but they still need interpretation.

Understanding them will help you on your path. Merely seeing them, but not understanding, learning and acting on their advice, will get you nowhere. It may merely swell your ego. If visions come, note them and try to understand them. But the aim of your ‘dhyān’ should not be to see exciting things. The aim is to go in – in – in.



There is an exception to this rule. When you feel you need to know something (not just idle curiosity) then frame your question clearly, hold it firmly in mind, and try to pass into the state in which you know that visions can come. The trouble is that what you see may or may not have anything to do with your question, so you have to be very careful.

Also just because you see something in ‘dhyān’, it does not necessarily imply that the message has come from a source of true knowledge. No visionary message absolves you from responsibility for deciding whether you should or should not accept and act on the message. This does not mean accepting messages you like and rejecting those you

don't like. You have to train yourself to recognize the truth, nice or nasty. And if you believe something to be true, you must have the courage to act on it. There is really no other way of learning.

One more point before I stop: I have avoided trying to say what the state of dhyān is, because no description will

help you. All you need is the assurance that there is something – a very wonderful something – beyond the mind. But to find it, it is not enough only to do some meditation every day (I underline 'only' because regular meditation is important). Meditation is a concentrated effort to stop the mind and find your Self.

But all the rest of the time you should be trying to keep yourself 'self aware'. The bit of yourself you feel to be you has to be watching the khel (play) of thoughts and feelings that go on all the time. It does not stop thoughts and feelings; it just watches them.”

28th Jan 79

Dear Chitra,

I don't want to bother you with semantics and academic stuff about the root meaning of words. Whether one uses the word dhyān or meditation, what matters is not the words used, but what the person thinks they mean. Most people say they are doing dhyān (ध्यान कर रहा हूँ) - they think of it as a process, a sort of mental activity in which an attempt is made to focus the mind or concentrate it on something they assume to be spiritual.

As I understand it, dhyān is not a process; it is a state (ध्यान से है) . The process which leads to entering the state of dhyān is a holding (धारण) - not just holding the mind still, but holding it to the inner.