



VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2

SEPTEMBER 2011

Coming Events

LIGHT is pleased to announce our upcoming events for September to December 2011.

There is *no admission charge* for any of these events, but donations are gratefully accepted.

LIGHT Lecture Series

The talks will be held on the first Tuesday of each month. Attendees are invited to a buffet starting at 6:30 p.m., with the talk to follow at 7:00.

Location: Charisma Restaurant
83D Sherbrook St.

Tuesday, September 6

Sheila Dancho: "Healthy for Life"

Many children and adults in our contemporary Western culture are suffering from obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and other serious health problems. The root causes of these conditions are not adequately addressed by drugs or modern medicine, which focus on the symptoms and not the underlying problem. The talk will present a more natural, holistic approach in the form of simple, practical, healthy lifestyle changes.

Sheila Dancho is an award-winning business entrepreneur and certified 'Healthy for Life' coach. She has been educating and mentoring people from all walks of life to achieve optimal health for over five years.

Tuesday, October 4

Ian Whicher: "Yoga, Freedom and Responsibility - Harnessing the Evolutionary Impulse Today"

This talk will explore how accessing the deeper dimension of Yoga today can and must culminate in a balanced integration of the spiritual, ethical and material dimensions of life, thereby incorporating a clarity of awareness with the integrity of being and action.

A long-time Yoga practitioner, Dr. Ian Whicher is a Professor and Head of the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba. (See the interview with Dr. Whicher starting on page 3.)

Tuesday, November 1

Tara Maniar: "Experiencing the Saints of India"

An enthusiastic and humble student on the spiritual path, Tara has had the opportunity to be in the presence of numerous saints of India, including H.H. The Dalai Lama. Through storytelling, she will share some of her experiences, lessons learned and the impact of being in the energy of the saints.

Tara Maniar is a local, national and international speaker, learning facilitator, consultant, Focusing practitioner and certified interpersonal wellness coach. She was trained as a yoga teacher in India and frequently travels there to study with her spiritual teacher.

Tuesday, December 6

Mary Louise Chown: "Now I Know the World is Round - Stories at the End of Life"

Based on her recently completed book, storyteller Mary Louise Chown will share her experiences in hospice and palliative care settings as a visiting artist. She will relate some of her memorable experiences with those nearing the end of their life, as well as telling stories and playing music which celebrate the preciousness of human existence and the inevitability of death.

Mary Louise Chown is a Winnipeg-based storyteller, teacher, musician and visual artist. She is also a trained shamanic practitioner.

Exploring Healing With Spirit

Location: Robert A. Steen C. C.
980 Palmerston Ave. ~ Fireside Room
(side entrance off the parking lot)

Thursday, September 22 - 7:00 p.m.

Beverly Swanson: "Life Wheel Assessment"

Is your life unfolding with a sense of purpose and meaning? This holistic workshop is an introduction to a process by which we can learn to co-create our life and live by conscious design. The path to wholeness starts with one small step.

Beverly Swanson is a Trained Life Coach with accreditation from the International Coach Federation and owner of Conscious Life Coaching Services. With over 10 years in the counselling field, she provides one-on-one and group coaching series, facilitates workshops and retreats, and brings consciousness into the physical form as a BodyTalk apprentice.

Thursday, October 20 - 7:00 p.m.

James Jupiter: "Awakening to Spirit - A Direct Approach"

Simple exercises which can be practised in the midst of everyday life can engage our body, mind and emotions and bring us directly in touch with our essential nature as spiritual beings. These techniques bring about a state of relaxed attention and open awareness which can return us to the reality and beauty of the present moment.

James Jupiter has explored a wide range of Western and Eastern spiritual teachings for more than 35 years. He received his M.A. in Psychology from the University of Manitoba and, in his private practice, integrates traditional and contemporary approaches to human spiritual development and fulfillment.

Thursday, November 24 - 7:00 p.m.

To be announced

LIGHT Symposium June 2011

LIGHT held a symposium on multi-cultural spirituality and healing on June 3 and 4 at the Fort Garry Hotel. The purpose of the symposium was to bring together individuals, groups and organizations representing a broad spectrum of cultural and spiritual approaches to healing, optimal health and inner development.

On Friday evening, keynote speaker Aubrey Davis, a Toronto author and Sufi storyteller, discussed the urgent global challenges facing humanity and how traditional spiritual teachings can illuminate the problems we collectively face and provide ways of understanding our common human heritage and ability to solve complex social and cultural problems. Aubrey's telling of traditional Sufi teaching stories, including many tales by the 'wise fool' Mulla Nasrudin, captivated the audience. By turns serious and humorous, the stories reach the non-linear, holistic right hemisphere of the brain in ways that logic and rational ideas cannot.

On Saturday, workshop presenters from a variety of spiritual traditions shared their teachings and practices with symposium attendees. Brian McLeod's "Medicine Wheel: Wellness, Health and Healing" presented traditional aboriginal

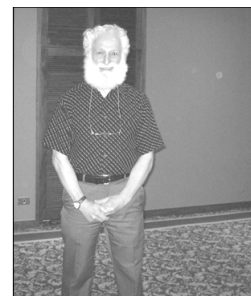
spiritual teachings through storytelling and the framework of the medicine wheel. In her workshop "Spiritual Care for Caregivers," Beth Martens explored the challenges facing those who care for others, whether physically, emotionally or spiritually. Beth and workshop attendees shared their experiences in an open, trusting atmosphere that was at times serious and at times light-hearted. Irene Friesen's "Sacred Land, Sacred Space" was a fascinating presentation that included a slide show of six outdoor gardens she has created in Pinawa that honour the world's great spiritual traditions. Irene also showed participants how they could create their own indoor or outdoor garden space to facilitate a deep connection with nature and support their own spiritual work. One of the highlights of the symposium was the workshop presented by Tara Maniar titled "Yoga, Ego and Healing." Maniar explored the universal philosophy of yoga as a practical framework for a balanced development of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Her knowledgeable and enthusiastic presentation of traditional yoga teachings challenged and stimulated audience members and provided a holistic perspective for healing ourselves and the planet.

The workshop by John Tozeland

focused on the spiritual perspective from the ancient Hawaiian Huna traditions and how they blend with modern approaches to healing and integrating body, mind and spirit. John shared many practical exercises involving the use of breath and the Hawaiian energy system which can be utilized in the course of everyday life.

The closing workshop by Aubrey Davis was an in-depth examination of Sufi teaching stories drawn from Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Middle East. Aubrey told a selection of stories, including humorous tales and children's versions, and discussed their history, value and strategies to learn from them and apply them to our own lives as a key to self-knowledge and spiritual development.

The symposium ended with a wonderful concert by Celtic harpist Lisa Marie Tucker, accompanied by Tibetan Bowl player Craig Forster.



Aubrey Davis

LIGHT AGM

LIGHT held its Annual General Meeting on June 14 at Charisma restaurant. Five existing board members agreed to stand for re-election (Doug Staley, Tim Freeman, Ernie Strauss, Bonnie Wrighton and Karen Barkman) and all were re-elected for a two-year term. LIGHT president Doug Staley described the purpose of the organization, its past accomplishments and future plans.

The AGM was followed by a performance of transcendental music by pianist Deborah Judith. Her beautiful improvised musical offerings captivated the audience and many reported that Deborah Judith's music had touched their essential self, healing old wounds and opening new possibilities. You are invited to share her music at her website www.deborahjudith.com

LIGHT Library Additions

LIGHT has recently added a number of books dealing with the Fourth Way teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff to our Lending Library. Gurdjieff is increasingly recognized as one of the most important spiritual teachers of the 20th century. He taught a powerful system of psychological and cosmological ideas and offered practical approaches to self-study and 'work on oneself.'

Jeanne de Salzman's *The Reality of Being* is one of the most significant Fourth Way books published in the last half-century. Mme de Salzman was entrusted by Gurdjieff to oversee the preservation and continuation of his teaching. Based on her personal journal, *The Reality of Being* is a profound examination of the role of self-observation and attention in spiritual transformation. *Heart Without Measure* by Ravi Ravindra, a close student of Mme de Salzman, is a fascinating

account of his 20 years of study under the guidance of a remarkable teacher. Michel de Salzman, Mme de Salzman's son, was also an important teacher in the Gurdjieff tradition. *The Next Attention*, based on talks to his students, reveals the many dimensions of attention which lead to harmonization with a higher spiritual energy.

Two books by direct pupils of Gurdjieff, *Memories of Gurdjieff* by A.L. Staveley and *Becoming Conscious of G.I. Gurdjieff* by Solange Claustres, offer intimate portraits of their teacher, showing how he used the everyday circumstances of life to teach his pupils. Finally, John Fuchs' *40 Years After Gurdjieff* and William Patterson's *Spiritual Survival in a Radically Changing World-Time*, provide practical directions in personal self-study and the critical role of attention and impartial self-examination in this process.

LIGHT Interview: Ian Whicher

Dr. Ian Whicher received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Cambridge University, England and is currently head of the department of Religion, University of Manitoba. **LIGHT** recently spoke with him about his spiritual journey.

Q: How did you first become interested in spirituality?

It came out of the blue. When I was studying political science at Queens University, I became increasingly restless and disinterested with my academic studies. In the 1970s I quit university and began to meditate, at first with Transcendental Meditation and then later with other meditation techniques. I also began reading widely in the fields of religion and mysticism which addressed questions about who I really was. I re-enrolled at university in religious studies with an emphasis on the spiritual teachings of India, especially Hinduism and Buddhism. This was not a reaction against my upbringing in the Anglican church, as I still maintained my Western roots – I just expanded my spiritual search with a global interest.

Q: You have made a number of trips to India. What impact did they have on your spiritual development?

After practising TM for a number of years, I met a teacher in Ottawa in 1981 ~ Swami Shyam ~ who was giving a talk on Yoga and Vedanta. He was a close friend of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of TM. I was in the audience and he seemed to zero in on me and we began a dialogue on spirituality and transformation. It was time to get serious about my spiritual path. We kept in touch by correspondence and in 1983 I travelled to his ashram in Northern India at the foothills of the Himalayas, where we worked closely on a one-to-one basis. I traveled to India again for a year in 1987-88 and have made frequent trips ever since. India is permeated with spiritual energy and tradition and exerted a major influence on my spiritual work. I also met Krishnamurti in 1983 at one of his talks at Saanen,

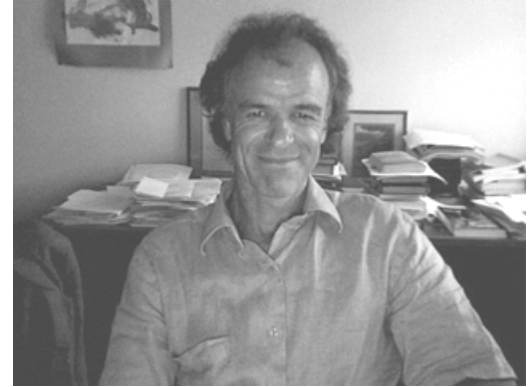
Switzerland. Krishnamurti was a remarkable human being and a very profound spiritual teacher. Following his talk I approached him and there seemed to be an instant recognition. We went for a long walk holding hands in silence. His teachings have been one of the major influences in my spiritual life and I have a deep gratitude for being able to meet him and share his presence.

Q: Most people in the West are familiar with the Yoga postures or 'asanas' and do not realize that these are but one limb of a comprehensive system of spiritual development. Could you comment on this?

There is no doubt that the physical culture of Yoga has had the greatest influence on the West. And some Indian yogis like B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Satchidananda have popularized and even packaged Yoga for a Western audience. And there is really nothing wrong with this as many people get a taste of Yoga through the physical postures and then will explore further. There is also abundant scientific evidence that Yoga postures and breathing exercises have significant beneficial effects on physiological and psychological functioning. But these practices are really preliminary stages in a very sophisticated system of inner transformation. The ultimate goal of Yoga is pure Consciousness or *Purusha* – a state of timeless awareness and Being.

Q: Is there a universal aspect to Yoga that connects it to other spiritual traditions?

The roots of Yoga can be traced to the ancient Vedas and Upanishads. It was first codified and systematized by Patanjali in the form of sutras in the 3rd and 4th centuries BCE. There are various forms of Yoga ~ hatha, bhakti, karma, jnana, raja – which correspond to seekers with different temperaments in their approach to spiritual truth. In this sense, Yoga is a universal teaching in which different vehicles are employed to dissolve or shed the ego and liberate the natural intelligence within every human being.



Yoga strives for union with all of life from plants and animals to stardust. It points to a universal consciousness and primordial intelligence beyond birth, life and death. Like all great spiritual teachings, Yoga, at its summit, is an expression of a timeless, universal truth that transcends culture, geography and time.

Q: What do you think draws people to a spiritual path?

There are many reasons, such as a tragedy in one's life, the desire to solve personal problems, disillusion with the world, and so forth. Some have argued that the reason is karma or destiny, but usually this is an afterthought as the mind tries to interpret life events from a mental standpoint. But ultimately there must be an inner pull, what some teachings call a "magnetic centre," which defies the gravity of ignorance and conditioning to lead the seeker to an opening and greater vision of life. There is truth in the adage "like attracts like," as a genuine inner thirst will inevitably meet a source that supplies real spiritual nourishment.

Q: The world's great spiritual teachings are now widely available through books, various groups and organizations and the Internet. Some have called this a "spiritual marketplace" in which people can easily become "consumers." Do you agree?

I don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. We need to discriminate between real and counterfeit gold, between authentic teachings and cults.

(Continued on page 4)



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LIGHT's membership year begins on September 1.
To become a member:

- Fill in a membership form
- Attach \$20 (cash/cheque) or provide your credit card information and signature
- Leave it at any LIGHT event or mail it to the address at the bottom of the form

Ian Whicher Interview

(Continued from page 3)

One of the challenges on the path is to make this discernment. A real guru removes ignorance and attachment while the false teacher abuses their power and authority and enslaves their followers. When there is a right relationship between teacher and student it is a representation of the highest form of non-duality – each recognizes the divinity in the other. There is also a danger in viewing spiritual teachings, techniques and teachers as “objects” or “commodities” that have to be consumed in order for one to gain something. This attitude creates a self-centered approach to spirituality and is a disguised form of greed. The ego is adept at turning even the most sublime spiritual teachings into instruments which reinforce and maintain its own existence.

Q: In many spiritual traditions there is an emphasis on either effort or non-effort, on gradual or sudden enlightenment. Do you have any thoughts on this seeming duality and contradiction?

Both concepts are products of the mind. A volcano erupts in a moment but the underlying dynamics may be invisible and take a very long time to manifest. The sudden and the gradual are both part of a non-dual process. There are different levels of awakening which depend on the seeker's ripeness and ability to receive the higher impulse of spiritual truth. The desire to accumulate spiritual merit through effort and mastery of techniques, to measure one's progress on the path, can be a great impediment to enlightenment.

It must be balanced by an effortless letting go and attunement to the mystery of the moment, a surrender to the reality of life itself, without any desire to gain anything.

Q: Some spiritual paths advocate renunciation and a monastic lifestyle while others stress a full engagement with life.

We withdraw from life every day during deep sleep and return to the Source of all that is. During this time we enter into the Self, the Origin, the Unmanifested Ground of Being. When we awaken we re-emerge with the reality of phenomenal existence, a journey from darkness to light, from the unborn to the created. This is analogous to the ascent and descent of a mountain peak, whereby we leave our normal patterns of identity behind, gather energy, intention, and focused attention for the task ahead and then allow the rising of a universal impersonal consciousness to guide us on our journey. We then return to life itself as transformed human beings to share our knowledge and lives with others. The goal is to be “in the world, but not of the world.”

Like two birds of golden plumage, inseparable companions, the individual self and the immortal Self are perched on the branches of the selfsame tree. The former tastes of the sweet and bitter fruits of the tree; the latter, tasting of neither, calmly observes.

- Upanishads

LIGHT and the Community

LIGHT is a community-based organization and we welcome input, feedback and ideas from those who attend our events and support our efforts to present and share the world's spiritual traditions to all whose minds and hearts are open. We are interested in hearing from anyone who wishes to help LIGHT fulfill its mission and evolve in a direction that meets the spiritual needs of the community. Specifically we are interested in:

- Suggestions for topics and possible speakers for our monthly 'Lecture' and 'Healing with Spirit' series
- Ideas for future activities, initiatives and ways of injecting spiritual ideas and practices into the community
- Volunteers to help LIGHT in the organization and presentation of our programs and events
- Anyone willing to serve on our Board and thereby contribute in a practical manner to our desire to serve the spiritual needs of our city and province.