

ALPHA'S PAGE

God in a Two Litre  
Bottle

This is a sample

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## Readiness

This book could be about me or it could be about you. On the surface it is a story about how, in the course of thirteen years, I went from having no mystical experiences at all to having beautiful mystical experiences every day. My alleged experiences include encounters with heavenly realms, angels and loved ones who have died, and being able to channel the presence of Alpha, an agent of God who delivers a deliciously fresh spiritual philosophy. On a deeper level, this book is about what we may all have in common – a desire for intimacy with God – and it is about the steps which a person can go through to become close to God. It is about processes which could work for you just like they did for me.

Some readers will be excited or relieved to be reading about a spiritual dimension, but some of you will be on the verge of putting this book down because it talks about things which don't exist. Rest assured that I don't feel the need to persuade you to believe in anything I say. Ironically, you might also like to know that my so-called God tells me he doesn't mind whether you believe in him. You have every right to believe whatever you like. There is no judgment, and God doesn't need your vote.

Take this story as a case study in human

perceptions. I believe I have experiences of a spirit world, but I believe there is no objective proof. I believe that I might be deluded. Although I am naturally a scientific and analytical person, my so-called history of mystical experiences could be a pattern of neurological events and coincidences that managed to slip through my net of scepticism.

My willingness to use the word “God” is, indeed, something that has evolved with my experience. Even a few years after my mystical experiences began I was uncomfortable with the concept of God. As a scientist and a perfectionist, the letting go and surrendering to the confusion of a word is part of my story.

When I began experimenting with my consciousness, it was because I had absolutely no evidence of a spiritual dimension. To go looking for one was a gamble. It’s about gambling with your precious time. I reached a point in my life when I just wanted to find out for myself if there is a God and an afterlife. It took many hours and a lot of motivation to learn to silence my mind. Given that intimacy with God could be the ultimate prize, I decided it was worth gambling for.

I understand that any person’s decision to experiment with God comes down to time, motivation, and what else they are juggling and gambling with at that point in their lives. But there is one other thing,

apart from God, which may draw you to my work. My method for approaching God is about silencing your mind and softening yourself, and raising your atmosphere as high as you can. This in itself is a beautiful state, with or without God.

When I was a young person I wasn't psychic, and I couldn't hear God at all, no matter how hard I tried. I had every advantage. My parents were great believers. I was taught to pray. I was told that many people had personal experiences of God, and I believed it. Yet I had no mystical experiences at all. My mother was having mystical experiences. I wished I did, and I thought I almost did, but honestly there was nothing really there.

Into adulthood, life became more complicated and more depressing, as it does for most of us. My prayers disappeared but I never lost my desire to know whether God exists. Every now and then I would complain to the sky, "If you want me to believe in you, show me that you are there!" Of course, nothing happened. I devoted myself to being mentally and emotionally healthy without God. Positive thinking, self-awareness, physical fitness and pursuing your passions were all good ways to have some depth and fun in your life, without needing to think about souls.

Then one day there was a twist in fate. I'm not going to tell you details from my biography. I was tempted to write a hard luck story about how my quest

for God was fuelled by personal tragedy, woe, woe, woe, but looking back I don't think it's relevant. We're all in the same boat, in pain because of a lack of inner peace, and vulnerable to the misfortunes of nature. This book could be about you as much as it is about me. I just want to talk about the experiences which could be accessible to both of us. So I have decided to leave my personal dramas out of this.

Just like you, something unexpected and stressful happens in my life from time to time. When something tragic happens to you, you're shocked. You're not sure how you're going to cope. Your priorities shift or become clearer. For me, my dormant desire to know about God bubbled up to the surface.

I remembered a line from a meditation book I read a couple of years earlier. "The soul is in the gap between the thoughts." Like other people, I'd already heard plenty of ideas about souls. In my case, there was lots of talk about souls at Sunday School and church in my childhood, and then at dinner parties when I was in my twenties. The popular view was that your soul is something which thrives on good behaviour, good work and good thoughts, it goes beyond your body and it survives your body at death. Unfortunately, the existence of this soul is just hearsay. Anybody else's testimony that they had astral travelled or had a transcendental experience was just hearsay to everybody else.



But the quote, “The soul is in the gap between the thoughts,” gave me an idea for a practical experiment. If I could make the gaps between my thoughts bigger, might I not fall straight into my soul?

With hindsight, I appreciate that I was in a good position to conduct this experiment. Thanks to my religious childhood and some training in psychology, it was second-nature for me to think of my mind as a playground where thoughts could be trained and subjective wonders could happen. I also had some experience of meditation and knew that I wasn’t looking for a standard meditation technique.

When I was a teenager I often attended my parents’ Christian meditation group. They meditated for twenty minutes at a time in a wonderful loving atmosphere, sometimes with peaceful visualisations of lakes or forests, but there was nothing to stop the mind from wandering as it usually does. There might not be any gaps between your thoughts. Then when I was a science student, I learnt that meditation was good for both mental and physical health. We were taught to meditate by progressive muscle relaxation followed by focussing on breath. Again, the mind could wander as much as it wished. At other times I tried Sri Chinmoy meditation (I remember there was a flower and a candle) and yoga meditation (you stretch first). Still no insistence on creating gaps between your thoughts. Some meditation teachers encourage their students to

let their thoughts drift by like clouds while they meditate. Just watch each thought without attachment, and let it pass. I wasn't interested in this kind of meditation either. If the soul was in the gaps between the thoughts, I wasn't going to let those thoughts invade like the weather.

I could draw upon an important chapter of my early twenties – a chapter in which I learnt how to tackle challenges step by step. During my twenties, I had a couple of companions who were keen on outdoor adventure – any kind of outdoor adventure. I found myself hiking, caving, canoeing, camping and climbing, all at levels which scared me. My companions were tough-minded and had a blind-spot for self-pity. Faced with any challenge, whether it was how to get down a cliff or how to get un-lost, they calmly broke the challenge into small manageable pieces with practical solutions. I fell in love with this way of thinking. I was determined that I would become just as positive and goal-oriented in my own life.

Interestingly, my adventuresome twenties was also a chapter in which I experienced glimpses of profound happiness hand-in-hand with natural physiological highs. These experiences gave me a benchmark by which my mystical experiences could later be measured. There was plenty of adrenalin and endorphins, love, freedom, accomplishment and closeness to nature. I thought that outdoor adventure

was the best thing ever. That was all going to change when I learnt to silence my mind. What I began to experience later in life when I began my own style of meditation was something completely new.

It all started because I decided to learn, step by step, with the determination of an outdoor adventurer, how to silence my mind.

## First light

I rushed through my chores and meals so that I could find half an hour at the end of the day to observe my thoughts and create silences in my mind. The lounge room where I learnt to silence my mind was decorated in the style of cheap and practical. I had no candle, no aromatic oils, no music or sounds-of-nature CDs, no indoor water feature, no drugs, no photos of gurus, and no other spiritual merchandise of any kind. There were no pictures of ponds or rainforests, either in my room or in my head. There was nothing to set the scene for spiritual adventure except the fat cushion on which I sat on the floor.

I wanted a posture which was both comfortable and helped me to concentrate. Sitting in an upright chair might be good for some people, but I get back-ache in chairs. I found that a standard meditation cushion – a fat circular cushion - was good for me. Most people don't have an upright spine if they sit cross-legged directly on the floor. If you sit on a thick cushion or a meditation stool (an angled stool about twenty centimetres high), the base of your spine is vertical, and the rest of the tower is easier to balance on top. To say that I sat cross-legged is not entirely true. My ankles never crossed anything except the imaginary mid-line. I rested each foot on the floor, one in front

of the other, so nothing was squashed.

Normally I had a constant stream of thoughts with gaps of only milliseconds between them. In fact, I could have been well above average in how noisy my mind was. I noticed that I could place my attention on a gap and my attention would make the gap last a little longer. This was easier if I was breathing out at the time. I might make the gap last a whole second, then a thought would creep in. I would go with the thought until I could collect my focus again. Then I waited for another gap. I kept giving my attention to any gap I could find, forcing the gaps to be one second, then maybe two seconds long. Eventually I could create gaps as long as it took me to exhale.

I started trying to have a gap every time I exhaled. When I could do this for several exhalations in a row, I tried to keep the gap going while I inhaled as well. One day I managed to hold my mind silent at will for a whole out-breath, in-breath, and out-breath. It was peaceful and I was in control. I was hooked. I would create a state of peaceful exertion to hold that silence in my mind for a couple of complete breath cycles in a row, then more, then more. My meditation was not about winding down and going to sleep. It was about being in a state of happy determination. It was concentration and persistence. It was one foot after another. It was about counting and continuing.

Eventually I could hold my mind silent for a

whole minute. I started doing it during the day whenever I needed a mental break. People were clamouring for me to meet their needs, but I could pop into the bathroom and silence my mind for a minute. I was free.

Within six months I could hold my mind silent for five minutes non-stop. This trick was wonderful for reducing my stress levels. It felt healthy and pleasurable. There was no sense of emptiness or void while my mind was free of thoughts. Instead, I felt more real, more alive, and more “me” than normal. I felt a sense of magic, and I felt hope. I had discovered a new kind of consciousness that I would be able to draw on for the rest of my life. Perhaps my future would be far more pleasurable than my humdrum thought patterns of the past.

One night, without warning, while I was sitting with my mind silent for a few minutes, I felt a powerful sensation around my pelvis. My eyes were shut and the room was dark, but there was light inside me. A kind of milky, relaxing light moved up through my body, completely penetrating me. It moved steadily up through my torso for a few seconds and then dissipated. It was the most beautiful and peaceful sensation I had ever had.

For a few minutes I sat motionless, reflecting on what had just happened. I still felt the peace and delight of the experience. I checked my memory over

and over. Yes, it was different to anything I had ever experienced. Yes, I would call it a light even though I had been sitting in darkness. Yes, I would call it a light even though it was inside my body and not in front of my eyes.

Now racing again, my mind was quick to suggest conclusions from this experience. It could be called a mystical experience. It could be evidence of another dimension to life, where there are special wavelengths and powers. It could be evidence of the light of the soul, or of God. It could be – but I had no reason to think so yet.

I was very impressed by this experience. I was excited and impatient to experience the same thing again. It would turn out that this was just the simplest of thousands of mystical experiences I was to have in the years to come.

Even though the weird light lingered in my thoughts and feelings, I doubted my perceptions. Did it really happen? Was it as strong as I remembered it to be? A few days later I experienced the same thing again. Then the light became a regular feature in my meditation, not as a sweeping surprise, but as a more constant, gentler feature. Sometimes it felt like a shimmer. Other times it washed back and forth. Other times I seemed to pulse with it. It always felt rich, good and wonderful. When the light was strong, my head felt hot and compressed, yet deliciously alive and liberated

from any noise. My limbs - and indeed the rest of the world - felt much further away. Time seemed immeasurable. I began to refer to these experiences as “an altered state of consciousness” because my consciousness had certainly altered, and to such an extent that it was different to anything I had stumbled across in all the other decades of my life.

As days and weeks went by and I continued to have delicious experiences because of meditation, many questions paraded through my mind. Why weren't other people talking about the joys of a silent mind? Why do most meditators aim for relaxation rather than mental silence? Why doesn't the general community know about this kind of bliss? Is it really possible to have mystical experiences just by learning a mental skill?

One of the first benefits I noticed of my silent-mind meditation was that it was good for my self esteem. The sense of deep peace which came when I silenced my mind, and the occasional rush of bliss or non-visual light, meant that I had - inside me - the most beautiful experiences I ever had. I had a new skill, new sensations, and a new way of being free. Questions of how I appeared to other people, or whether I was achieving enough in life, no longer seemed relevant. A sense of happiness and fulfillment was under my control, and available to me whenever I summoned it.

My first six months of progress in meditation came entirely from learning to extend the gaps between



my thoughts. This was enough to lead me to multiple experiences of uncanny light, filling me with a phenomenal sense of peace and joy. I did not enter that experience armed with a belief in God or in supernatural experiences. I was merely an observer, an experimenter, trying to find out what would happen if my mind went silent. The only belief which got me there was the belief that it was worth my while to stop thinking.

## Silence, Softness and Uplift

Hooked on altered states of consciousness, I gained twice as much enthusiasm to be skillful at silencing my mind. I didn't experience the light every night. On some nights it was difficult to silence my mind at all. I began to figure out what helped to silence my mind, and what helped that silence to lead to an altered state of consciousness.

It's not easy to consistently put your thoughts aside. We are fascinated with our own thoughts, and some thoughts seem really important because they urge us to remember to do things or to solve problems that came up during the day, or to resolve emotions. I had to believe that my thoughts could wait for another time. When I had a thought which was important for practical reasons, I would deliberately say to myself, "I'll put that on my unconscious agenda". This was my way of letting my unconscious mind remember the thought for later. It was almost like pinning it to a noticeboard in the back of my mind. I never did forget anything important that way - as far as I know.

Eventually I noticed that I could anticipate when a thought was about to surface. I could sense a kind of ripple in my awareness. It was almost like a change in a musical note, as if a voice was about to break into a word. If I recognised these buds of thoughts, I could let them go before I knew what they were going to be. I'm still perplexed by this experience.

It does make me wonder whether our minds make our audible thoughts out of random musical ripples in our heads, just for the hell of it.

I also noticed that sometimes when my main stream of thoughts became silent, a kind of narrator would step into my consciousness. This narrator was my own thought-voice saying things to me like, “Oh, good, now your mind is silent - nice and peaceful - keep it that way.” For full silence, I had to dismiss the narrator as well.

All of this took a lot of concentration. If I began meditating with a lazy attitude, I missed out on the silence and the bliss. I learnt to draw upon feelings of enthusiasm and energy for each meditation, reminding myself what a precious opportunity it was.

Many of us have hobbies or pastimes that naturally energise us and help our minds go silent. You might find that your mind tends to go silent (or more silent than usual) when you are, say, sewing, carving wood, digging or swimming. Maybe mental peace is one of the reasons that we are attracted to hobbies like these. Prior to learning to meditate, I already had one hobby which helped my mind to go silent. This hobby was running. It’s an activity which also involves a kind of peaceful, yet intense, exertion which turned out to be a useful state of mind to bring to meditation.

Where I live there are a lot of green spaces. No matter where you start, if you want to run a few kilometres, you can get away from houses and end up in a forest or on a rocky knoll. Most of the time the sky is

blue. On winter mornings there might be a fog clinging to the lowlands, and frost on the grass until the sun strikes there. In the middle of a hot day you can smell the trees. On cold afternoons you can smell the soil. Sometimes you can run between the trees near dusk and disturb hundreds of birds from the grass.

I learnt to run for pleasure when I was in my twenties. My favourite running routes were those that took me up-hill to a view. I wasn't always vigorous. Sometimes I was bloated or tired, but I could usually find a good rhythm. The trick was to not let yourself be phased mentally by the slope ahead. You just focus on where you put your feet, blades of grass and textures of rock flashing in and out of vision, the sound of gravel and twigs underfoot, the air in your nose and mouth getting hotter and more charged, your chest knowing itself more intently as it pulls deeper and deeper from the muscles in your abdomen, your thighs dancing forward to the imagined beat, until finally you come to the crest of the hill, and the land opens up before you as you pass through that last outcrop of boulders. There are ribbons of hills in the distance in multiple shades of olive and pale blue, and nothing between you and that enormous bleached sky. During those last few moments of rhythm up the hill, the mind does not talk, except perhaps when you need a mantra like, "Left, right, left, right," or, "Just to the top, just to the top."

I drew on these memories when I sat in meditation. I didn't look at the sights or sounds in my memories, though. I drew upon the mental states – a

sense of focus, energy, will-power and liberation. Applied to meditation, these feelings helped me to concentrate and achieve mental silence. As soon as I began to focus on the gaps between my thoughts, I was shaping my attention as if I was running. Part of me narrowed in concentration, while at the same time I felt more expanded and free. For you, there may be a different activity which does the same thing, and which can give you memories of states of mind that would help to induce a completely silent mind.

There was definitely some effort and self-discipline involved in silencing my mind, but on the other hand, if I went into the meditation with rigid expectations or demands of myself, I couldn't pass into that altered state of consciousness. I had to be soft, both in my posture and demeanour, and open to what might happen.

I developed a little routine to help me get the most out of my meditation. First I did a few exercises which help to relax my back at each region of the spine. Then I settled into my meditation posture and checked that I was physically comfortable. Then I checked my mind to see if there were any important thoughts or particular attitudes or expectations hanging around - and I let them go. I returned to a neutral soft state. It is a state that is vulnerable and humble, and open-minded, as if you are listening for something but you don't know what's going to happen. You are waiting to hear for a pin to drop but you don't know if it ever will.

Having made myself as comfortable, neutral and

soft as possible, then I reminded myself of the value of silencing my mind, and called upon my enthusiasm and resolve. Then - begin!

Sometimes, if I hadn't experienced an altered state of consciousness for a few days, I would play with my mood during meditation to spark things up a bit. It occurred to me that, since I could hold my mind steady, I could also hold a particular mood or atmosphere steady. I thought about what feelings I would like to experience. What feelings would be nice to hold steady in your mind? My list included the feeling of being adored, being amused, feeling free, wonder, compassion and levity. I would choose one of these and, at the beginning of my meditation session, imagine that feeling as best I could, without images or self-talk. And hold it. Steady.

The results astounded me each time. Each feeling led to a strong altered state of consciousness, and each state was different. Not only was the state coloured by the mood I had chosen. Each mood led to a different kind of state - some more electric than others, some more expansive than others. Surprising to me, the one which led to the most powerful state was the feeling of being amused.

This ability to silence my mind, and to hold it steady on whatever target I chose, was my complete tool box. During long meditations, I developed some back-ache but because there was no apparent reason for it, I was able to use the meditation itself to solve the niggling pain. I observed how the pain wavered, in the

same way that thoughts come and go. I gave all my attention to the gaps between the pain, just as I had learnt to give my attention to the gaps between my thoughts. Eventually the pain completely disappeared.

More importantly, my steady mind would lead to hundreds of new and exciting experiences during the next ten years, including a variety of bliss states, ESP, insightful dreams, vivid flashbacks and then a huge range of experiences which I could only describe to myself by referring to other forces - God, angelic presences, spiritual guides, ghosts and entities. Every month for the next ten years there would be something new to experience. It was the best hobby ever and it was all based on a set of skills which I summarised to myself as, “Silence, softness and uplift”.

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