

REVIEW BY ISOBEL BLACKTHORN

ABOUT LIVING ON THE INNER EDGE: A PRACTICAL ESOTERIC TALE

A mystical story, breaking traditional boundaries, new thought, practices, insights, and a way of knowledge. Everyone walks their own path but in the New Age of Spirituality the idea of Group Work was born from the works of the Tibetan Master D.K., where he introduced the idea of group work on the physical plane and in the higher spheres of the Soul, and the Gurdjieff/Ouspensky Work which was accomplished through intense group meetings and personal interaction. *Living on the Inner Edge* is a foray into the world of experimental Group Work which lasted for over 30 years, constantly evolving and synthesizing the essence of different Esoteric Traditions into a new body of discipline that achieved extraordinary results.

MY THOUGHTS

The gnostic or esoteric way of knowing relies on the development of the esoteric sense, a way of perceiving into and through words and experiences to arrive at their deeper meanings, to grasp the essence in terms of inner truth and spiritual purpose. The development of the esoteric sense requires an innate disposition or some sort of pre-existing esoteric hardwiring, along with training in meditation to cultivate the ability to indwell for sustained periods, and guidance in the form of esoteric knowledge. To begin with, the esoteric way of knowing forges a connection between the personality and the soul or Essential Nature and starts the long process of aligning the will of the personality with that of the soul. This process of discriminating between personality and soul natures is the first major step on the path of spiritual evolution and takes immense effort, discipline and perseverance, all of which occur both inside and beyond meditation experience and should become central to daily life.

Living on the Inner Edge portrays this journey and makes it a lived reality for the reader. Many books detail the hows and whys of meditation, few explore the experiential side. Ryan's testimony sounds a clear note in our current age of confusion. Importantly, Ryan cautions against blind adherence to any spiritual teachings, repeating them, parrot like, as if that were an indication of spiritual progress.

The memoir opens in Toronto in 1975 when a spiritual group is formed around a teacher, RN, and goes on to depict the evolution of the group, the highs and lows, the tests and the successes and failures. Above all, *Living on the Inner Edge* describes not a search for meaning but the laying bare of an authentic unfoldment of the soul within, the Essential Nature, of the author. Ryan makes several journeys to India, visits various sacred sites, and has extraordinary experiences along the way that make for an entertaining read. His depiction of the dangers, the struggles and the challenges that face the dedicated seeker are portrayed with insightful

explanations. The strange manifestations of the astral, the latching on of Elementals, the confrontation with the consuming Dwelling on the Threshold, are all described in rich detail. The path is long, enlightenment is far away, and the journey begins when the seeker strips away the delusion that they have already arrived at some point of high achievement.

Ryan has a gift for explaining the complex and abstruse in the most lucid and accessible fashion without losing the true essence of meaning. There is an awakening, stimulating, attuning charge to the writing, the memoir told by someone with decades of practical experience and a sincere heart.

This memoir will appeal to readers with at least a passing knowledge of Theosophy and the esotericism of the East, as found in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, and a healthy dose of esoteric empathy. *Living on the Edge* is a journey on the inner planes, where unfoldment occurs at that interface of exoteric and esoteric realities. At the end, Ryan provides appendices containing further explanations and meditation techniques, in what amounts to a very sound and useful guide.