

## INTRODUCTION

*“All your material plans and great achievements have gone by the wayside. You have spent your life trying to have good experiences and avoid unpleasant ones. You start to think what is life all about? What is its meaning? Who am I? Yet you have no idea what’s going on because no one has ever been able to explain these things to you. So you come to believe that life is just an accident: you were born, you have gone through prevailing conditions and experiences, and you get old and die.”*

These are the words of a great *siddha* (perfected one) of modern times called Robert Adams, but, as he points out, this is not necessarily how it needs to be and there are those who know this and have found the Truth, capital ‘T’ Truth, who we say are enlightened.

This book introduces the reader to some of them. They tell us that the material world is a dream of separateness from God, being experienced by the egoic mind in an illusion of time – while *enlightenment*, in the sense used here, is the realization of union with the one Supreme Being – which brings unalloyed joy and happiness. But there are differences in understanding between the East and the West that need to be explained.

Consider these questions:

**Is the world of matter, this universe of which we are a part, a reality?** “Yes” says the West because the world of matter is the only reality that the senses and the intellect can perceive. And the religions of the West (the Semitic religions) seem to have embraced this view.

But Eastern mysticism says “No”. The world of matter is finite and changeable, while reality is changeless, infinite and immortal when experienced by the inner man – the spirit or *Atman*. The mystics say that changeable matter cannot be real. It can only exist in time – and time is an illusion.

**Is man separate from God?** “Yes” says the West because God created the world including man. God is the creator and we are the created. There is duality: God and his creation. But “No” says the East, because God manifested *as* the universe. God is therefore in the world of matter, and the world of matter is in God. Godliness is in everything, and there is only One. This is non-duality. Even though the Bible proclaims that God created man in His own image, and Jesus exhorts man to, “Know thyself. The Kingdom of Heaven is within. The Father is in me and I am in the Father,” these and other sayings do not suggest the same concept of Unicity in the West, that occurs in the East.

One of the earliest Eastern sages to visit the West in modern times was Swami Vivekananda. In addressing the founding conference of the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago, he said:

“Each soul is potentially divine. The goal of life is to realize this divinity within. Do this either by work or worship, or philosophy – by one, or all of these, and become free... Doctrines or dogmas, rituals or books, temples or forms are but secondary details... Religion should be taught as a science of experience. There has always been a small group of individuals in any age who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics, who occur in every religion, speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ in this regard – and the book from which to learn this religion is your own heart.”

### **Mindstuff and the dilemma of the modern world**

In the modern world, the ego personality is firmly in charge. It is driven by the pursuit of personal gratification, under which daily life too frequently becomes a grinding task focused on the perceived

needs of pleasure and survival. Swami Tapasyananda summed up the situation cogently, “The mind, as it is constituted in the sense-bound man, may be quite ineffective in the spiritual field and may not grasp the Supreme Being. But it becomes a regenerated power when it is refined through dispassion, concentration, discrimination and devotion. Such a mind becomes capable of giving the aspirant a clearer understanding of the Infinite Being.”

If this seems in doubt, read honest biographies and autobiographies of the rich and famous – and reflect on Emerson’s conclusion that “The majority of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

The writer Paul Zweig, at a time of transition in his life, gives us a good example of this dilemma. In his book *Three Journeys*, he wrote: ‘*Some recipe of wishes dating from the earliest mixture of my being had created an awful dish.*’ He had – he wrote – intended to be completely happy but something had gone wrong and he began to suspect, to his horror, that the demon was himself:

*It shadowed me from within... loving when I loved, speaking when I spoke. Every spoonful of my existence went, somehow, into its mouth, and because of it everything went wrong. Food did not feed me, but it; success did not please me, but it; and the creature reclined in the sultriness of my inner being while I shivered and became thin.’*

The Chinese writer and Nobel Prize winner, Gao Xingjian, makes a similar observation in his book *Soul Mountain*: ‘*I don’t know if you have ever observed this strange thing, the self (the egoic self)... I once looked at a photo of me on the monthly bus ticket I had... At first I thought I had a charming smile; but (then) there was also an anxiety which betrayed acute loneliness and fleeting snatches of terror, certainly not a winner – and there was a bitterness which stifled the common smile of unthinking happiness and doubted that sort of happiness. This was very scary and I didn’t want to go on looking at the photo... The problem is the mind: this is the monster which torments me no end... Arrogance, pride, complacency or anxiety, jealousy and hatred all stem from it. The egoic self is in fact the source of mankind’s misery. So, does this unhappy conclusion mean that the self should therefore be killed? Is it just vanity? The Buddha said: “All the myriad phenomena are vanity, and the absence of phenomena is also vanity.”’*

And Aldous Huxley concluded that: *'Every man and woman, even the most healthy and well endowed individuals who have made what the jargon of psychology calls 'an excellent adjustment to life', may suddenly, or gradually with age, arrive at a feeling of damnation that is nothing more nor less than being confronted by one's own sweating egoic self: our common consciousness, generally dulled, but sometimes acute and naked, of behaving like the average sensual human beings that we are.'*

And all this, the mystics tell us, stems from our belief that we are the doers in a world of judging, rewarding, and punishing.

### The subtle body

Another difference between East and West is that in Eastern philosophy there is belief in a subtle body, in which *gunas* (tendencies of behaviour) are stored. The subtle body persists after physical death and is believed to be the vehicle of out-of-body experiences that sometimes occur with ordinary people during their physical life. The subtle body has an 'anatomical' system comprising a spinal channel running from the coccyx to the crown of the head, interspersed with activity centers called *chakras* (centers of the subtle body) placed from the lower abdomen to the heart and throat, and between the eyes to the crown of the head. These attributes of the subtle body are known to yogis and are also important points of focus in Eastern medicine.

The *kundalini* is the psychic energy of the subtle body that can be awakened through yoga, to rise up through the spinal channel causing the 'turning' of the chakras and bringing both psychic and physical experiences. In Eastern philosophy, the subtle body also has a supracausal body which is devoid of all thought and where the state of deep sleep resides. Deep sleep is considered to be the closest that the worldly-bound individual can get to enlightenment and, although most of us forget the experience almost immediately on waking, it is said that if we are alert we may be able, for a moment, to discern a trace of its bliss that could change our lives.

In the East, the pure Self is called Atman and has been described as Consciousness Itself, which is not generally perceivable to the

ordinary world-bound mind. It is the God-essence in all created individuals and has been called *Awareness* by some. It is the only thing that any of us can be absolutely sure of in the transcendental world, and gaining familiarity with Awareness, it is said, will show that it is the source of all phenomena.

### **Celestial experiences, miracles**

Such happenings are mentioned briefly here because of their importance in supporting spiritual beliefs. Overall there is incontrovertible evidence for miracle-like happenings that are not explainable by present-day science. Good writers have expounded these matters in books like *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, *The Tao of Physics*, *A New Science of Life* and *The Self-Aware Universe*.

For example, there are individuals who remember other lives, or other worlds, in a phenomenon known as the Charles Bonnet Syndrome. In this, apparently normal and definitely not deranged individuals, have clear visions of what can only be described as other places, and other times: A woman sees cows grazing in a winter field and comments on the cruelty of this to others, who see the field as empty. Another is followed around by two children in Victorian dress; yet another sees bright flowers growing everywhere she walks (see *Hindustan Times* of 23rd October 2000). And such visions, though not often spoken of, are said to be experienced by literally millions of people.

Miracles are not necessarily about things like the parting of the Red Sea, yet they create a great stir and an outpouring of spiritual fervor when they occur – and as a matter of interest, miracle-like happenings often take place around enlightened persons such as those considered in this book. Commonly, they involve the generation of feelings in the heart and changes in spiritual comprehension and understanding, or they occur, against all odds, following intense wishing for things or happenings.

A good example of such a miracle of the heart type that demonstrates the energy that flows from a saintly being at such times, concerns the great yogi Swami Muktananda, whose ability to impart mystical experiences made him popular in the West through

the 1970s. The account here is given by Paul Zweig. He is taken, somewhat unwillingly, to meet Swami Muktananda in New York by a friend and is listening as people are introduced and are asking questions or making comments.

He wrote: *'The sorts of questions rubbed me the wrong way; they seemed full of personal melodrama, but then a young woman began speaking to Muktananda. She explained that she had lived for several years in India and in a tremulous voice she said that she had a question to ask. I found myself paying attention suddenly, not so much to what she was saying as to the note of vulnerability in her voice. When she meditated, she said, the experience of silvery light was intense, but then nightmarish forms came between her and the light, and she was frightened. When she lifted her hand as if to describe the nightmares, it began to shake. Then suddenly, I (Paul Zweig) was shaking too. I felt as if I was rooted to the floor, yet trembling with intense feeling. I had to make an effort not to cry, but it wasn't grief, for my body had become buoyant and warm... Even after the hand was tucked away in her lap, and Muktananda's voice had begun to speak, I went on staring while the forms and colors of the room glided before my eyes like paper cut-outs. The words 'afloat in tears' repeated themselves over and over in my mind... I was aware that my mouth was hanging open, yet I couldn't seem to close it... My jaws felt like hinged gates into a cave of tears... And all the while I held my tears in by an effort of subtle attention. The tears seeped into my face anyway, a few at a time.'*

Yet there are physical miracles aplenty associated with great enlightened individuals. The most striking examples come from Sathya Sai Baba, but there are many others including the raising of the dead. Recently, in Singapore, an Indian couple came to Amma distraught over the death of their three-month-old baby. Amma comforted them and said, "Go home now, your child will return in three hours." And the child did return!

### Enlightened teachers

Many religions are only comfortable with long-dead saints and prophets, but there are certainly many around in modern times – as will be seen in the following pages. And although it may be

something of a digression, a short account is given here of a modern sage who lived to a great age. It was recounted by an indomitable guru researcher, Surjan Singh Uban, in his book *The Gurus of India*. Surjan Singh was an Indian Army surgeon and wartime hero of the Burma campaign, who studied gurus and wonder workers for most of his life, and one of them was Sri Bawa Hari Das Ji Maharaj, a forest sage. Surjan Singh, following a long series of unusual events, found himself climbing through the Himalayan jungle in a quest to meet this ancient sage. He writes: *'The path was rough, uphill and full of tall grass amongst the pine trees, where, I was told, cobras were quite common. The orderly told me, however, that those cobras were harmless and were only there to protect the great yogi. There were panthers also, I presumed for the same purpose. But I had my own doubts about the capability of these wild animals to sift good men from bad; mistaken identity could spell a painful death.*

*'Sweating and puffing we arrived at the gate of the yogi's beautiful cottage... Whilst my orderly shouted to the guru, who was reputed to be about 150 years old, to come out and open the gate, I was forming a mental picture of a very old man, bent down by age and hardly able to walk. Instead I saw a lean, erect and sprightly figure come quickly up to the gate... The yogi appeared rather curt when he asked me the purpose of my visit but after explanation his stern face became kind and charming...*

*'Hesitatingly I broached the subject of this yogi's guru, who was reputed to be even older. He replied: 'My guru is over 400 years old and sits in that part of the Himalayas,' – pointing a finger to snow covered peaks. He then explained how he had wandered for some twenty years along the coast of the Arabian Gulf and over the Tibetan plateau undergoing austerities and hoping to find his Inner Being, all without any result. After he had become considerably emaciated and had lost all hope of reaching his goal, he walked back into India, and settled down in a decrepit old temple. He started chanting God's name and some villagers would bring him milk or rice and join him in his devotional singing. One day a crazy fellow came from nowhere. He had a shoe on one foot and the other was bare. As he entered the temple with one shoe on the whole congregation shouted at him pointing out the sacrilege he*

*was committing by entering the temple with a shoe on. He just laughed and said, "Which temple are you talking about? The whole world is God's temple. Anyway, I have come to take your miserable priest," and taking the yogi by the arm and marching him away, he said, "I have been sent by my Guruji, who says you are now fit to take up initiation with him. Accompany me and I will take you there in a moment".'*

One of the characteristics of all enlightened individuals is that they exude a feeling of love. Paul Zweig talks about this form of love. He writes:

*'Most of us would probably agree that love is our ideal emotion, and we would say it a little wistfully, because there have been only a few short times in our lives when we have known, personally, its dislocating power. The rest of the time we find it necessary to preserve certain limits: to have affection, to like, to feel tenderness, to 'love' with civility and constraint, expecting the same civility and restraint in the 'love' that others feel for us. The other, more extreme kind of love, we idealize by using only elevated language when we talk about it. We direct it towards beautiful objects, or Jesus whom we visualize with the aid of highly stylized images... Our reverence doesn't require that we change the way we live because the beloved ideal is hopelessly remote from our imperfect existences... Yet this ideal is marked by an almost forgotten trace of an undefined longing which can be overpowering, almost religious in its insinuating attraction. Even a pop tune has the power, sometimes, to make us feel like exiles wandering about in an empty world... We listen to the song and for a minute the ideal isn't rose-colored anymore. It sinks its teeth into us like something hungry that would break apart our lives if we let it. And all the great legends of love and death mutter and turn over in our psyches... To experience the great dislocating power of bhakti, we must come before the true saints and gurus with humility and have our pressing minds put into neutral.'*

A key factor in selecting the gurus featured in this book has been the importance and relevance of their teachings for all humankind. The profiles of Dayanand Saraswati, Sai Baba of Shirdi, Sri Aurobindo, Dada J.P. Vaswani and Sri Bhagavan have been obtained or compiled by Yogi Impressions.