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FOREWORD

As a reader, I'm generally put off by long winded introductions, often passing them over in favor of the actual book. So, it's with some reticence that I'm following the impulse to write this and would thus certainly not blame you for just skipping over it and diving straight into this book. On the other hand, it's become good form for an editor to pen down some nonsense or the other, and as there does happen to be a story to be told here, if you're in the mood you may as well read on...

I met Chaitanya Balsekar about 9 or 10 years ago after one of his brother Ramesh's talks. I'd already been coming regularly to hear the talks for a few years at that point, but had somehow managed never to meet Chaitanya. Then one day he suddenly appeared out of nowhere as I was about to

head out the door and down the stairs, introduced himself and invited me over to his apartment across the hall for some tea. Tea quickly turned into lunch, and ‘hello my name is’ turned equally quickly into an immediate and deep friendship. We’ve since continued our tea and lunch visits regularly several times a year whenever I found time to come to Bombay to hear Ramesh’s daily talks.

Chaitanya and I naturally always enjoyed talking and sharing ideas about one of our favorite subjects, Advaita, and much of the time we spent together was occupied in this manner. It was not just the depth of his understanding that impressed me, but also the way in which he had so integrated both his guru Nisargadatta Maharaj’s and his brother Ramesh Balsekar’s teachings into it – a quality that’s very present in this book. I was also always deeply moved and inspired by the way he so embodies Advaita in his daily life in the world.

One day, during one of our visits together, Chaitanya went into his study and came back with copies of some writings he’d recently jotted down, for me to read at my leisure. As soon as I read them I felt deeply touched by them, and each time I visited Bombay he was there waiting for me with a small stack of newer writings he’d done. I never

expressed it to him but began on my own to secretly save up all of his writings into a small collection, because each time he gave them to me, beginning with that very first time, I was struck by an intense intuition that one day in the future after Ramesh had passed away I would find myself putting them together in the form of a book. I could quite literally 'see' it, like the preview of a film, and felt that it was my duty to follow through on it. There was never a doubt in my mind that this would eventually happen one day. I simply 'knew' it to be true.

The last time I saw Ramesh was about 5 months before he died. At that time he would often invite me to come visit with him in the afternoons privately, in addition to the public morning talks, and one such afternoon was the last time I was ever to see him. In what turned out to be our final conversation he asked me over a cup of tea why I had stayed around him all of these years, and what it was that he'd said when we first met that compelled me to keep returning. I replied that ever since my early childhood I continued to have the experience of 'seeing', 'knowing', or 'dreaming' things before they happened, often quite precisely, and sometimes well in the future... Getting suddenly very animated and cutting me off mid-sentence he completed the trail of my thought for me,

nearly shouting, “Yes, yes Gary! Exactly! That is PROOF of it! The fact that some people see things or dream of things before they happen *proves* that the entire manifestation is already there in one big block! It is all already there! There is no denying it.”

And then Ramesh – who had greatly alarmed me by the way he so spontaneously leapt out of his rocking chair while exclaiming this at full volume, toothless, like someone who’d just learned he’d won the lottery... after all he was 91+ years of age at this point, very frail, in poor health, and could barely get around even with the help of a walker – just as suddenly settled back down into his chair and into his normally passive but lucid witnessing type state, and returned to quietly sipping his tea again as if he were all alone in the room. After some time he very slowly hobbled over to the door with the help of the aforementioned walker to see me out, and the last thing he said before the door closed was, “So that’s why you stayed for all these years. You knew from *personal experience* that it is true – no one does anything.”

Well, it wasn’t exactly the last thing he ever said to me from a certain point of view: 4 months later, on my way back to Bali where I was living at the time, from Brazil where I was visiting, I booked a flight with a stop-over in Bombay

so I could go sit with Ramesh one last time and thank him deeply for everything he'd so selflessly given for all those years. I knew from my friend Gautam Sachdeva that Ramesh was dying, and I knew inside my heart that it was going to be my last ever chance to see him. Then, one week before the flight I had a dream; in the dream I was denied entry into India and was unable to see Ramesh or say goodbye to him. Waking up quite upset from this, I set myself to securing every possible document that Indian Immigration could conceivably ask for: my visa, hotel booking, onward flight ticket, bank statement, extra cash, etc., It seemed like overkill as I'd been to India more times than I can count and never had a problem, but I never the less gathered everything together into a folder in my carry on as I boarded the plane – interestingly, exactly one year ago this week.

Somewhere along the way I finally managed to fall asleep with my head pressed up against the side of the window, when I had another dream: I was back with Ramesh alone in his apartment and he told me, “Gary, I’m very sorry but they are not going to let you enter India this time. We won’t be able to meet again.” I got very upset and replied, “but Ramesh, this is my last chance to see you! I need to say goodbye and I need to thank you for everything you’ve given me. They *must* let me in!” Ramesh just laughed and said,

“This, like everything else, is destiny; it cannot be changed. But, it’s also not important so don’t be at all concerned with it. There’s no need to say goodbye again. You’ve said goodbye to me so many times already and there’s no need to thank me again either. You’ve already understood whatever I had to give you, and that understanding will take its natural course. There’s no need for you to come back here anymore, so just be relaxed and smile as it happens.” And, at that exact moment I was awoken from the dream by the plane’s tires hitting down hard against the runway in Bombay.

In spite of the dream, I confidently approached the Immigration desk with my pre-prepared folder in hand, ready for any question the officer could throw at me. He immediately asked what country I’d flown in from and when I said, “Brazil,” he replied, “Please show me the certificate for your yellow fever vaccine.” After an oddly pregnant pause, I broke into a very enjoyable and hearty laughter. I’d never flown to Bombay from South America before and had no idea that one needed a vaccine for yellow fever to enter India from there! I couldn’t stop laughing anymore than the officer could help having to deny me entry into the country. Ramesh passed away a few weeks later and although I felt deeply sad when I heard the news, I also couldn’t help but smile as I knew that the story would have made Ramesh smile too.

So, when several months later Chaitanya sent me an email with an entire book length file of his most recent writings attached, informing me that he was considering compiling them into a book and asking if I'd be willing to edit the material for him, I again broke into a very deep and hearty laughter – having sat through the preview so many times before, I would finally be able to enjoy the actual film! As Ramesh pointed out so clearly on that final afternoon last spring, how is it that we can 'know' things before they happen unless those things are all already there? And, if they are all already there, then... 'game over'. I only stopped laughing once I downloaded the attachment and began reading through it – the material had exceptional depth and was very profoundly expressed. *Dream of Consciousness*, elucidates the fundamental tenets of Advaita as clearly and passionately as any book on the subject ever could. Even regardless of my previous premonitions about it, I felt compelled by the very words themselves to offer my assistance in any way possible to help get the book into print and immediately emailed Chaitanya to tell him so. I remain grateful that he took me up on the offer... though I know that he also couldn't help it.

By the way, speaking of Gautam Sachdeva – the publisher of this book: About 7 years ago while I was having a

re-read of Ramesh's *Pointers from Nisargadatta Maharaj*, a clear voice came into my head and declared, "Someday someone will write a book called *Pointers from Ramesh Balsekar*." Naturally it was another one of those moments of uncontrollable belly laughter when I received an email two years ago from Gautam expressing that he'd just written a book called, *Pointers from Ramesh Balsekar*, and asking if I'd mind proof reading it for him!

Have a look around you; though they are unique for each one of us, the signs are all so clearly there. How can one help but laugh? This entire manifestation so clearly *is* the *Dream of Consciousness*, and we are all both the Dreamer and the dreamed. However, it is up to each one of us to 'prove' this Truth for ourselves in the unique fires of personal experience, otherwise Advaita remains just a heap of strange sounding words.

And if somehow, in spite of the absurdity of it all, you still find yourself not laughing, somehow still not quite getting the joke, then please do read on... As you go through the following contemplations you'll likely notice things starting to look a bit different than they did before – less real and therefore more Real, less tangible and therefore far more Palpable. Get out of the way and let the contemplations do

their work on you. With any luck, you may find yourself rolling around on the floor laughing hysterically, or perhaps on your knees expressing the deep gratitude that the cosmic punch-line inspires in one's heart. In fact, if somehow an obscure limited edition book like this has found its way into your hands and you're sitting there reading this right now, then that alone should be 'proof' enough that it was meant to be there. So go ahead, why not... turn the page and enjoy the deep journey through this beautiful book. After all, what have you got to lose? As Ramana Maharshi once said, "Your head is already in the tiger's mouth."

Or, as Chaitanya Balsekar might more soberly prefer to express it: May each one of us be lived to continually receive the deepest possible Understanding of the Truth about who and what we really are.

– Gary Roba,
Bangkok,
August 2nd 2010

PREFACE

This is a small book on Advaita but it is hard-core Advaita.*

No compromises.

I have tried to make Advaita as simple as possible, the way my own Understanding itself has evolved. You might agree with my Understanding or not. That is your privilege and your right. Nevertheless, Advaita beckons.

Advaita makes us aware of the invisibility that we are as Consciousness behind the visibility that we are as human beings. As human beings, we are but images temporarily appearing yet ultimately disappearing again, within the Pure Consciousness that we truly are beneath the mirage of our

own manifestation. According to Advaita, Consciousness is all there is.

There is contemplation when the mind rests on a particular topic and becomes absorbed in it instead of flitting around aimlessly. This is a book of contemplations on Advaita. These contemplations are separate and independent of each other. Although you will find a lot of repetition in them, please consider each as if it is something entirely new that you are reading for the very first time. Read with sincerity, because there are always slight nuances to the apparently repetitious that contain ‘something more’. They will make you increasingly grounded in the subject, because the point is not just to read *about* Advaita but to become grounded *in* Advaita. This is where the repetitions in the text come into the picture. Ultimately, Advaita will give us each our own personal understanding of it.

To get a good sense of the subject, you may initially read the whole book several times through if you so choose. After that, please read just one or two chapters a day with sincerity. In that way, let the book do its work insidiously. As you continue with the reading, you may find yourself understanding life without fearing it.

My brother Ramesh and I came to know of Nisargadatta Maharaj through an article by Jean Dunn in *The Mountain Path*, a periodical of Ramanashram. Fortunately, Maharaj used to stay nearby and we started attending the daily talks at his residence. Ramesh soon became one of the English translators for Maharaj's talks, which were given in Marathi. Maharaj was a very private person who firmly rejected any attempts to form an organization or institution around him. I was fortunate to be present when towards the end of his life Maharaj one day, just as privately, 'ordered' Ramesh to start giving his own talks. Other persons may also have been similarly 'ordered'. In any case, there was no question of any succession or successor. Ramesh's talks then started happening a few months after Maharaj passed away.

I remember once telling Maharaj that I could not understand a lot of what he was teaching. He said I should not worry about it because when he talked he planted seeds of Understanding, and they would take root in their own time. Truly enough, things have become far clearer to me to my own satisfaction.

I am also grateful to Ramesh for two vital clarifications:

The first is that the ego will remain so long as life is

there in the body. There is no such thing as killing the ego. The only difference between the ego of the Sage and that of an ordinary person is that the ego of the Sage has lost its sense of 'doership' and has become like a burnt rope, which appears but cannot bind.

The second is that life is a series of happenings for which no one is responsible.

This book came about after my friend Gautam Sachadeva read an article that I wrote on the Gayatri mantra. I had actually only written it for my own clarification and understanding, as well as for sharing with a few close friends, but after going through it Gautam inquired whether I was planning on writing a book. The fact that a publisher, who had also published my brother Ramesh's books among others, was asking me this question set me thinking, because prior to that writing a book had never been a possibility in my mind. However, it remained at that until another friend, Poonam Ahuja, did a numerological reading for me and said that I might be writing a book within the year! I want to sincerely thank these two friends for giving me the motivation to write this book – something that I had never dreamt of doing earlier but which has now happened.

Finally, I am extremely grateful to my friend Gary Roba for his brilliant editing, which has greatly enhanced the readability of this book. By ‘cutting and polishing’ this previously rough stone, Gary has made it sparkle like a diamond and masterfully brought in clarity wherever it was needed. Thank you Gary, I truly do appreciate it.

This is not a book for those who fear life, but for those who want to truly understand life and call its bluff!

May we all be lived to receive a deeper and deeper understanding of Advaita so that it plays an increasingly prominent role in our day to day living.

Now, please read on...

* Editor's note: It has become customary to compensate for the incapacity of the English language to accurately express Advaitic concepts that originated in Sanskrit by employing Capital and lower case letters for this purpose. Different authors have applied different strategies to this end, none of which are fully satisfying. Capitalizations generally represent the transpersonal or impersonal aspect of Consciousness, while lower case letters typically represent our personal everyday ego consciousness. In this book, we have endeavored to combine what seemed the best of these various, imperfect approaches in the hopes of not going too far wrong.

Throughout the text, I AM, and I AM THAT are fully capitalized when referring to either the pure Awareness of Being or to the Absolute, out of respect for the gravity that these terms have within contemporary Advaitic thought and literature. All other similarly oriented words, such as Consciousness, Awareness, Understanding etc., have simply had their first letter capitalized, except in specific instances where the author wished to emphasize their transcendent nature. Italics have been used wherever it was felt that specific emphasis would help clarify the meaning of a sentence. Although this approach seems to work for the most part, it is by nature still quite problematic. For example, writing "I AM THAT" would seem to create an object out of THAT, which in fact represents pure subjectivity. Furthermore, fully capitalizing THAT while only partially capitalizing Consciousness, Awareness, Being, etc., appears to create a hierarchy between THAT and Consciousness, when there clearly is none – they are exactly the same 'thing'. The deeper problem however has to do with the very expression of these concepts themselves, as to express the inexpressible truth of Advaita one is forced into the absurd position of linguistically objectifying the non-objectifiable nature of pure subjectivity, or of creating the mistaken impression that such theoretical subjectivity represents a permanent, separate individual – a ridiculous,

conceptual game akin to building sandcastles without any sand!

If you are new to Advaita and find this to initially be rather confusing, don't be concerned. Simply keep reading and in time it will all start to make more sense. The same advice equally applies if you are not 'new' to Advaita yet the words still don't make much sense! Keep reading; stay with it. In fact, through the very attempt to understand the peculiar languaging of this philosophy, the meaning behind the words will begin to reveal itself to you. Find out, why is Consciousness capitalized on this page but not on the next? ['C' refers to Impersonal Consciousness and 'c' to personal consciousness]. Inquire, what causes the narrative to keep shifting unexpectedly between personal and impersonal perspectives? Keep exploring the material using your discrimination to ascertain why it has been written in the peculiar manner that it has. Find out in what way this odd means of writing in English helps to clarify the meaning of the concepts. The confusion one may initially feel when encountering these ideas for the first time [or the thousandth time] is actually a symptom of the concepts working on you! So, if you find yourself dazed and baffled, your mind drawing a complete blank after reading through a few pages, or perhaps even just a few lines, then congratulations – the teaching is working!!! However, fear not – in time, with any luck, it will all start appearing as simple as it truly is.