

Foreword

I remember that evening vividly. It was during the seminar in December 2003, that we were relaxing on the terrace of the Rockholm Hotel overlooking Kovalam beach. The sun was low on the horizon, behind Ramesh, its rays scattering jewels on the sea.

Ramesh told me that for some time now, he had been writing small passages which came to him spontaneously. These had accumulated and could now be compiled into a book. I loved the idea of such a book. One you could pick up any time, turn to any page at random to read a couple of passages, and then put it down to let their meaning sink in. In this age of information overload, it was a brilliant way of conveying the teaching.

You will find no chapters in this book, as we have endeavored to retain the spontaneity of the writings as they happened – in an ‘unbroken wholeness’, as it were. These reflections are from a man who has had an illustrious yet simple life – as a family man, bank president, a leading Advaita sage loved by people across the world, and a prolific author of over 20 books. At 87 years of age, I could think of no one better ‘qualified’ to present these gems of understanding to guide us on our life’s journey.

The basic concept of Ramesh’s teaching that there is only One Source pervades the entire book. No one is a ‘doer’ but, rather, all actions are happenings ordained by this One Source. As Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda wrote: *When did smoke learn to fly?*

Ramesh’s guru, Nisargadatta Maharaj, said, “The same mirror that shows you the world as it is, will also show you your own face.” May this book serve as ‘a polishing cloth’.

Gautam Sachdeva
August, 2004

Preface

The mirror as an object of divine intervention is timeless. Its efficacy is delightfully recounted in the ancient myth of Shinto Japan:

Terrified by the violent acts of her brother, the beautiful sun-goddess, Amaterasu, recoiled into a heavenly rock dwelling. As darkness descended, the universe was threatened by an inevitable end. Faced with calamity, the counsel of gods advised that a mirror be placed opposite the entrance of the cave. A simple but ingenious plan.

The forlorn Amaterasu, amazed and enticed by a fleeting glimpse of her own magnificence, gently stepped forth. When light was restored to the world, the gods rejoiced and stretched behind the sun-goddess a rope of straw, called a shimenawa. And though Amaterasu may retreat each night into a restful sleep, the shimenawa ensures that she does not disappear forever...

What, one might ask, is the relevance of this story to a book of reflections?

A reflection is none other than a mirror, a plane of wisdom in which we can at last truly see ourselves. Imbued with pure, spontaneous insight, this book sparkles with a luminosity that beckons us out of our dark and solitary confinement into renewed vistas of eternal light. A light that is peace, a light that is harmony...

Protected within the bounds of an invisible shimenawa, amidst fields of meditative contemplation, we are free to meander with the innocence and careless abandon of youth. Knowing that we shall never be lost again. Guided by the silence of sunshine. Reflections mirrored in the flow of life.

Anjali
August, 2004



We are not the reality, not the substance, but only
its reflections, its shadows: the substance is there in the
moment, in reality, hidden from us by the screen of time.



Purpose Of Life

The purpose of life is to watch life happening. I can watch life happening only if I am anchored in peace and harmony from moment to moment. I can be anchored in peace only when I am not uncomfortable either with myself or with others. I am not uncomfortable only when I do not hate anyone, either myself or the 'other'. I do not hate anyone only when I am able to accept totally that "events happen, deeds are done, but there never has been an individual doer of any deed."

Transformation

Any deep understanding, any transformation, can happen only in a still mind, only in that alert and yet passive mind in which there is no blaming, no condemning, no conflict, no resistance. In such a state of mind, one is simply confronted with 'what-is', which is precisely what is supposed to be according to the Cosmic Law.

Harmony

In the end, all happiness can be reduced to three words: 'me', the 'other', and the 'relationship' between the two. If the relationship is harmonious, there is happiness. If the relationship is unharmonious, happiness is absent.

The One Source

The Source can only be One – the Unmanifest Unicity transforming into the multiple manifestation. It is this impersonal energy, functioning through the human psychosomatic apparatus, which generates the original thought leading to individual action. This is considered by the separate entity as ‘his’ action. Thus, the whole process of the individual entity with volition, considering himself the doer, is in fact the activity of this impersonal primal energy.

As the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam puts it:

*“With the Earth’s first Clay They did the
Last Man’s knead,
And then of the Last Harvest sow’d the Seed:
Yea, the first morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of reckoning shall read.”*

This Impersonal Energy is the one source of all the opposites in the manifestation, beginning with male and female. From the human perspective, the cosmic drama appears as a play between the inter-dependent polaric opposites of every conceivable kind.

As the *Tao Te Ching* says:

*“Under heaven,
all can see beauty as beauty
only because there is ugliness.
All can know good as good
only because there is evil.”*

'I Am'

The Source does not need to be aware of Itself. Awareness happens – *I Am* – as the Impersonal Awareness in manifestation. When the 'I Am' identifies itself with an object, the personal awareness arises as an individual object.

Conflict No More

Living one's life involves a series of happenings in which an awareness of the 'me' as a separate entity really does not exist. The 'me' becomes conscious of itself only when there is conflict. Until then, so long as everything is moving smoothly without any frustration, without any contradiction, there is no consciousness of oneself in action. I am aware of myself and my 'problem' only when I am blocked by something that the 'other' has done which has affected me adversely.

It is necessary to understand the relationship between 'me' and the 'other'. Normally, if I am hurt or opposed, my immediate reaction is that the 'other' has done it and so I hate him. If, however, I am able to accept that in life, as the Buddha has so clearly stated, everything is a happening and nothing is a deed done by anyone, the 'conflict' simply cannot arise. If I am hurt, it is obvious that the event – according to the Cosmic Law – was supposed to hurt me, and, most importantly, through which body-mind organism it happened is totally irrelevant.

Freedom For The Ego

The basic problem of the ego is whether what is sought is freedom *for* the ego or freedom *from* the ego.

It is quite clear that a sage has to live the rest of his life, after he has had the full Self-realization, as the same separate entity that he was before. How then can he say that he truly sees no separation between himself and the 'other'? There is the problem! How can the ego – which is identification with a particular name and form as a separate entity – be destroyed and yet live as a separate entity?

In other words, it is obvious that a sage continues to live his life as a separate entity, and, therefore, he must have an ego. How can there be an ego without the sense of separation? Such a contradiction it seems cannot have a solution, and yet there is a simple answer. The sage *does* see a separation between 'himself' and the 'other', but only as the separation between two separate instruments, through both of which the same energy functions and brings about whatever is supposed to happen according to a Cosmic Law.

When the sense of personal doership is thus removed from the ego, what remains is only the identification with a name and form, a totally harmless ego, a mere instrument through which life happens. It is the sense of doership that causes the meaningful separation and, when that is destroyed, no real separation exists.

The freedom that is sought is really not freedom *from* the ego, but freedom *for* the ego from the sense of personal doership.

Orbit Around Reality

At the end of the day, if one sat quietly and reviewed the events of the day, not as separate segments but as one whole totality, one's perspective could be astonishingly different. One would then see the whole not as a series of causes and effects but as a totality that is not the totalization of fragments seen one at a time. Our perspective would then not be separate judgments of separate segments based on human logic and human standards of fairness and justice, but the Totality based on the Cosmic Law.

Indeed, the perspective could change very radically: that we ourselves, the shadowy egos, are in movement and what we observed as events of the day was the immobile. Like planets circling round the sun, like electrons round the nuclei of the atom, our life and living would then be an orbit around Reality. This would be totally different from seeing life like a split-second vision of only a slice of Reality which we stretch into a continuity like a cinema film made up of still, individual frames.

And, of course, the review could be over a day, over a year or even over a lifetime. The only obvious way would be to let the body-mind organism react to a life situation in the moment according to its natural programming, otherwise it would mean the ego making a judgment continuously on each segment every moment, and never on the totality of Reality.

A Transitory World

How can we know that the world is transitory, that time is passing, that nothing stands still? We cannot know that our river is flowing unless we have one foot on the bank! There is no entity, only a continuum*, and that continuum is Consciousness.

Silent Light

Meditation – Relax totally and sink into the silent light of impersonal immortality.

Understanding What-is

Truth ultimately can only be the understanding of 'what-is'. 'What-should-be' is only a concept based on desire, and one desire is continuously replaced by another. It is only in a state of mind free from conflict, passive and yet alert, that the intention to understand the Truth in 'what-is' can exist. The actual position at any time, unfortunately, is that we are constantly seeking methods and systems. However, it is only in the spontaneous tranquility of mind that there can arise the real understanding of 'what-is'.

* continuum – a continuous sequence in which adjacent elements are not perceptibly different from each other, but the extremes are quite distinct. Origin Latin, from *continuus* 'uninterrupted'. – Compact Oxford English Dictionary

How Does Consciousness Occur?

It seems that scientists are seeking clues about how the subjective inner life of the mind arises. A true understanding of the phenomenon of consciousness remains elusive.

How do the brain's physical systems work together to create the subjective experience of the mind – the self-reflective, private thoughts that make us what we are? Noting the difficulty of using empirical science to quantify something so subjective, David J. Chalmers, a philosopher at the University of Arizona, has dubbed this as 'The Hard Problem'.

Neuroscientists can outline which functions the states of consciousness fulfill and which physical, chemical, anatomical and physiological conditions are necessary in the brain for the development of these states. Yet, they would still be left with the critical question: how does consciousness occur? For now, no definitive explanations exist, but the scientists hope that eventually the mysteries surrounding consciousness will fall away in the face of persistent scientific enquiry.

Could it not be, however, that the problem itself is misconceived?! That something so subjective as consciousness cannot be 'created' by any neurological process at all? Could it not be that the very essential basic core center of every conception that occurs is itself consciousness? The problem itself would then dissolve.

Contentment

If God came to me in my dream and asked me what I wanted most in life, I would ask for a state of mind in which I would not have to ask for anything: peace of mind... contentment.

Surrender

How does a spiritual seeker seek? Every time he comes across a sentiment, statement or concept that fits in with his inherent programming – genes plus conditioning – he adopts it enthusiastically, while at the same time ignoring with contempt those which he did not like or, more frequently, did not understand. This process continues with fervor as his jigsaw puzzle builds up, until he has a personal patchwork of concepts that has no real significance at all. Such a progress could never in a million years produce the essential understanding that the initial urge has been obliging him to seek.

What we are required to do is exactly the opposite of this: to ‘lay down’ absolutely everything that is ‘ours’. Naked, empty-handed, we must go to the Guru in all humility, and then the Guru will remove the accumulated ‘ignorance’. What the Guru will reveal to us is the One Whole, immutable, though couched in various concepts. Gradually, what seemed difficult to understand will get clearer, until finally, all at once, the entire meaning will become manifest, and we shall *know* the ultimate understanding.

Past Conditioning

There is no question of the necessity and utility of knowledge as such in daily living. ‘Knowing how’ kind of knowledge is absolutely essential in dealing with situations in life. But the knowledge constituted by psychological beliefs involving fear, desire, security – the past conditioning – acts as a hindrance to Truth.

What Am I Seeking?

For the seeker, the basic question should be: what am I seeking? If the answer is enlightenment, what will it do for me for the rest of my lifetime that I did not have before?

It is because this is not addressed, either by the Guru or the disciple, that such enormous frustration is associated with spiritual seeking, ending with the feeling that it is all illusion and hypocrisy. Enlightenment has to be found in the very living, and not considered an ideal or principle of perfection, which as such can only be an escape from life. The real question, therefore, is whether it is possible to live daily life in a state of enlightenment with a sense of greater ease, a sense of fulfillment, which the ordinary person does not have.

What the ordinary seeker expects is something positive: *ananda* – joy, bliss. And this is what has been held out to him, all these years, as the carrot before the donkey. Which doctrine, which system offers more, is the usual choice before the seeker.

From my experience, I would very clearly tell the seeker that I do not know of any positive joy or bliss which does not very soon give way to misery and pain. All I would hold out before you is *negative gain*: if you are able to accept totally, without the slightest doubt, that all action, without exception, happens as an event which has to happen at that time and place, through a particular body-mind organism, according to God's Will – Cosmic Law, and is not an action done by any individual human entity, then that is enlightenment.

What is the benefit of this enlightenment to the individual entity for whom this has happened? Very simply, since he is not doing anything at all, nor does anyone else either, he goes through the rest of his life without the slightest load of shame and guilt for his own actions and

without any hatred and malice towards any other entity. A state of negation – that is all. And yet this state of negation is the very basis for peace and harmony: to be anchored in tranquility while necessarily facing life from moment to moment.

Jivanmuktas Of History

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharshi, Hui Neng – the outstanding, incontrovertible examples of men who lived, each in his own way, for long years in a state of illumination, in a state of freedom from living itself. None was at any time an intellectual. Each spoke as a separate entity from the plane on which he lived, in that time, in that culture.

Their ‘verbal formulae’ differed, but the sense of their words is amazingly identical. They were speaking precisely of what they knew from their experience. Their words do not excite controversy or arouse in us an expression of opinion. They go straight to our hearts like stones thrown into a pond.

Besides the words of the *jivanmuktas*, what is the value of the theories of the metaphysicists and philosophers who write about something they seek and hope to find? These are obviously necessary for discussion amongst students, for teachers talking to students, but let us not forget that these are merely opinions and theories, interesting and stimulating though they may be.

It is, of course, a fact that an intellectual approach could lead to the necessary intuitional approach. But do we truly know of any man, historically speaking, who realized the Truth through a strictly intellectual approach, merely through studying the Vedas and the Upanishads?

The Experience Of Oneness

Some people have an experience – sometimes more than one – of Oneness. The background and the nature of the people differ on a very wide scale. It seems that there is no minimum ‘qualification’ for the happening of an ‘experience’.

The usual effect of such an occurrence is that the experiencer keeps wanting a repetition of it, and quite often becomes frustrated. What then could be the significance of this kind of an experience? The only relevance would be to bring home to the experiencer the basic fact of life – that it *happened*, that it cannot be something that could be achieved.

Such an event emphasizes that nothing in life, no pleasure or ecstasy, can ever match the bliss of Oneness that happens when the body is dead and the ego has vanished. There really can be no individual ‘experiencer’ at all. Therefore, the only thing to ‘do’ is to be still and let life flow, without giving too much importance to any pain or pleasure in the moment. Finally, death is not something to be feared but welcomed.

What Happens After Death?

You are concerned about what would happen to you after death. There is no need. What will happen to you then is precisely what had happened to you before birth. There was no ‘me’ to be concerned with anything before birth, nor will there be after death. The dream that started with birth will have ended with death.

Don’t worry, be happy, live your life moment to moment!

There Is No Creation

“There is no creation, no dissolution,” said Ramana Maharshi. “From the beginning nothing exists,” said Hui Neng, 1300 years ago.

Scientists like Louis de Broglie and Schrödinger appear to have demonstrated mathematically – and in the laboratory – that there is nothing real that exists, nothing absolute that could exist: “Mass appears to be only resistance to change (to movement of energy), decreasing in bulk in accordance with acceleration and increasing proportionally in energy. In other words, matter has no existence as such.”

Wise men, with intuition, have believed Ramana Maharshi and Hui Neng. The others will believe the scientists.

Only A Reflection

In living our lives as separate entities, being in control of our lives and responsible for our actions, ‘we’ are but objects pretending to be the Subject.

‘We’ are not the reality, not the substance, but only its reflections, its shadows: the substance is there in the moment, in reality, hidden from us by the screen of time.

Our ‘life’ in manifestation is a continuous misapprehension by which a shadow is mistaken for the substance, a reflection for its image, an echo for its voice.

Total Listening

I do not ask my visitors to accept my concept, but rather, that they listen to what I have to say directly and not through the screen of their accumulated tradition, habit, prejudice, beliefs, desires, cravings, and fears. All I ask is that they listen totally and then test my concept in the fire of their own experience.

Discovering The Self

What exactly is Self-knowledge? Self-knowledge cannot happen by sitting in a corner meditating about myself. I exist as an individual entity only in relationship to people, things and concepts. I can only know myself by watching, observing, studying my relationships, as well as my inward thinking. Anything else would be an abstraction. I must study myself as I am, not as I wish to be.

All I need to do is simply observe in the mirror of relationship my attitude regarding people, things, ideas, and concepts. Without judgment, without approval, without condemnation. That very perception turns out to be the action, the beginning of Self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge is not a process of accumulation. It is a process of discovery, not of judgment, in relationships. It means observing the ways of the mind, how one looks at neighbors, how one treats people one likes and does not like. All these things are like mirrors in which can be seen one's real self and, if one is alert, one is astonished to discover everything anew from moment to moment.

Receptivity

The mind that is capable of insight, intuition, must necessarily be free from all accumulated knowledge, tradition, superstition, escapes. Only then can there be receptivity, resonance to what is being heard. And then we shall be free: an attitude of detachment from the accumulated baggage will result.

Self-improvement

J. Krishnamurti tells us that: “the self becomes extraordinarily important with the idea of self-improvement.” At this point, a valid question arises. Should one not try to improve oneself? There is great wisdom behind this statement, and it behooves us to find out what he had in mind.

One dissipates loads of energy in the conflict between ‘what-is’ and ‘what-should-be’. The ego is unable to face ‘what-is’ and projects a ‘what-should-be’ as an escape route. This is what Krishnamurti tells us to avoid. He asks us to face the ‘what-is’, and investigate whether the ‘what-should-be’ is valid. When facing the ‘what-is’ one has to be totally honest: this means forgetting one’s conditioning as a Hindu, a Christian, a Buddhist, and facing the ‘what-is’ as a total human being, the total consciousness. And then there is the greater possibility that there never was a question of ‘what-should-be’.