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FOREWORD

I remember the first time I met Gautam Sachdeva, about nine years ago.

I was impressed with him, not so much by his impressive personality as by the genuine humility in that personality – despite the fact that he was a successful businessman who started almost from scratch as he had to take over the business when he was very young.

I was also impressed by the fact that he was genuinely interested in Advaita Vedanta, without the condescending attitude that many successful businessmen have towards Advaita. In fact, he reminded me of the occasion when my doctor nephew had taken me to the hospital for a routine check-up. When I was introduced to the senior doctor as a banker of thirty-seven years, who now gave

talks on Advaita Vedanta, his immediate response was:
“Oh, Vedanta! I am only fifty-six years old, I shall think about it when I’m really old.”

During the early years, when Gautam visited me every Sunday morning, I noticed the keen interest he showed in the subject and I soon came to the conclusion that ‘awakening’ had taken place, and that he was on his way to ‘deliverance’ – awakening functioning in daily living.

When he showed me the manuscript of this book and requested that I go through it, I was very happy. For some time I had been thinking that I had written more than thirty books, and that it would be very nice to read a book written by someone who had actually practised the teaching.

I told him that he had my best wishes but, while I said it, I was quite aware that he did not need them. He said he wanted my blessings and I told him he has always had them.

Ramesh S. Balsekar
24th November 2008

LESSON IN A TEA CUP

A spiritual seeker who was eagerly in search of enlightenment and had performed many years of practice and study, now felt that he was ready for the 'final touch'. Thus, he went out in search of the guru who could grant him true enlightenment. Everyone told the man that high on top of a certain mountain lived an enlightened Master who could bestow enlightenment upon his disciples. The seeker travelled for weeks on foot to reach the Master in his cave at the top of the mountain. Upon arrival, at the end of his arduous trek, he fell at the Master's feet and expressed his earnest wish for enlightenment. The seeker then proceeded to tell the Master of all that he had learned, the practice he had done and all that he had experienced, and that which he felt he still needed to obtain.

The Master listened silently. When the seeker finally finished the long explanation of his own spiritual experiences, the Master said, "Let us have a cup of tea." The seeker looked

shocked, "A cup of tea?" he exclaimed. "I've practised for years, meditated for years, searched for months, and walked for weeks in order to reach you so I could finally be granted enlightenment. I do not want a cup of tea. I want to be liberated!"

However, the Master calmly insisted that his guest first have a cup of tea. Placing a cup on the ground, next to the seeker, he began to pour hot tea from the kettle into the cup. When the tea reached the brim of the cup, the Master did not stop pouring. Rather, he kept on pouring even as the tea flowed over the sides of the cup, out of the saucer and onto the floor of the cave.

"Stop!" The seeker cried. "The cup is full. It cannot hold any more. Please stop pouring the tea!"

The Master sat down and said to the seeker, "You are like this tea cup. You are so full of what you think you know, what you think you've achieved, what you think you've seen and what you think you need, that there is no room for me to teach you anything. Until you empty yourself, my teaching will only go to waste like this tea on the floor."

DISCOVERING A NEW WAY
OF LOOKING AT LIFE





In the Tarot, the Ace of Swords is usually depicted as an awe-inspiring, double-edged sword suspended from heaven, with numerous streaks of light reflecting off its dazzling blade. The card of knowledge and the intellect, it symbolises spiritual victory and total, uncompromising clarity of thought.

While this spiritual victory would most certainly bring peace and freedom, there may also be pain. Thus, it is a double-edged sword.

The Ace of Swords is the card of new beginnings – a fresh way of looking at life. A new life arising from the ashes of the old, like the phoenix. And how would new life arise from the old? Could it be through a change in the way one looks at life and living? That change would

require one to be clear about what one wants most in life.

In order to be clear about what one wants the most, one first needs clarity to see and understand the very basis of life and living.



*“The seeing is
the only doing necessary.”*

– Ramesh Balsekar

FREE WILL -
THE BASIS OF DAILY LIVING





When we go into the question of the basis of what we know as daily living, we may come to quite a surprising conclusion.

What precisely is ‘daily living’ – at any time and at any place in the world?

Obviously, it must begin with a human being facing a situation, at a particular moment. Dealing with any situation can obviously only mean deciding what one wants in that moment and doing whatever one thinks one should do in order to get it.

This is the basis of daily living which applies to any human being at any time – you and me now, or the caveman who lived thousands of years ago.

The situation, of course, may be totally different, but daily living must surely mean doing, in any situation, precisely whatever one believes one should do.

Daily living, as we know it, only happens because the human being has the total free will to do whatever he thinks or feels like doing in any given circumstance. It is, therefore, futile to ask if the human being has free will. If he did not, daily living could not happen!

THE VALUE OF FREE WILL
- IN PRACTICE





If we continue with the analysis we will find that while everyone certainly must have free will, our personal experience is that what actually happens after exercising it has never been in anyone's control. What actually happens is that:

1. Sometimes one gets what one wanted.
2. Sometimes one does not get what one hoped for.
3. Sometimes, what one gets is beyond one's expectation, for better or worse.

It is important to realise that this applies equally to an ordinary person as it does to a criminal. The criminal has as much free will as anyone else, and he is equally incapable of knowing what is actually going to happen after he exercises his free will.

So, while we have total free will and we can do whatever we decide to do in a given situation, society will only consider the outcome – one of the three alternatives mentioned above – as one's action. Based on what has actually occurred, society will judge the action as good or bad, and reward or punish the person concerned according to prevailing social regulations and legal provisions.

Reward means pleasure in the moment, punishment means pain in the moment – a fact that the person concerned must accept if he wishes to continue living in the society.

This clearly is what we know as daily living – situation after situation; action after action; society's reward or punishment; pleasure or pain in the moment – day after day.

Thus, two things become clear:

1. That the human being does indeed have total free will to do whatever he feels like doing in any situation.
2. That this free will is totally worthless in practical living because we simply have no control over the result of 'our' actions.