



---

# CONTENTS

---



<i>Foreword</i>	...	v
Talk One	...	1
Talk Two	...	15
Talk Three	...	35
Talk Four	...	51
Talk Five	...	75
<i>Afterword</i>	...	83





---

## FOREWORD

---



At ninety-two, the health of one of the world's leading Masters of Advaita, Ramesh Balsekar, does not allow him to speak for the usual length of time at his morning talks, with his customary vigour and zest. The talks are now shorter and the answers specific to the questions asked. These days, Ramesh seldom goes into an explanation of the basic concepts of his teaching like he would in the past.

The general theme of his talks over the past few weeks has centred around how he is looking forward to 'the end of duality', which he says is nothing but the end of the pleasures and pains of daily living. "Who wouldn't look forward to that?" he wonders. He simply cannot understand what all the fuss is about regarding death. He adds, "Isn't death just a deep sleep from which you don't wake up?"

I met Ramesh in the afternoon of the day his wife Sharda passed away in June. He looked peaceful, sitting on the chair in his bedroom. His face was aglow with the soft afternoon light filtering through the curtained window behind him.

I quietly went in and sat beside him. After a few moments of comfortable silence, he perked up and said, “Did you know, our horoscopes matched! No wonder we were married for sixty-nine years!”

I mentioned how some of us felt that the last two talks he gave had been very special. There was an indescribable beauty in their brevity; a special charge pervaded the room in which the talks took place, and his answers were punctuated by gaps of potent silence. I then added that perhaps they should be transcribed and edited so they could be published in the form of a small book, to reach a wider audience.

On hearing this, Ramesh’s face instantly lit up. He said that he felt exactly the same. The following Sunday, after satsang, he asked me to add three more talks to the book – the ones he gave after Sharda’s passing.

He mentioned that these talks were interconnected, and they needed to be brought out as a set.

After years of holding talks and writing books, the Master has of late been saying, “What had to have been said, has been said.” He is reluctant to talk but after a bit of persuasion comes out of his bedroom to give us the grace of his presence, and the gift of his lucid teaching – something we treasure even more than ever, as the talks get less frequent. For, we know that his precious words are beacons of light that will light up the road on our life’s journey.

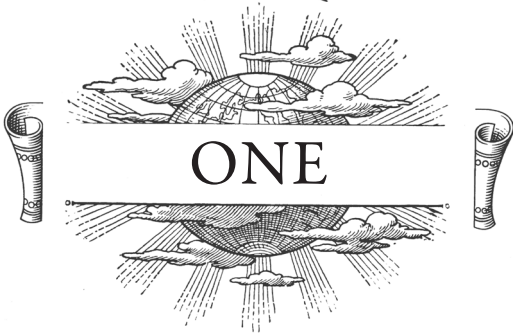
There seems to be a finality to the message being conveyed in these talks, making them priceless slivers of wisdom from one who has impacted the lives of countless people around the world.

That wisdom is now in your hands.

Gautam Sachdeva  
9th September 2009



TALK



ONE





*Visitor: The day before yesterday, I was at Dharamsala where the Dalai Lama stays. I have a very big problem and I asked many people if they could help me. They said maybe there is a person in Bombay who can help answer my question – Ramesh Balsekar. I laughed, because I said that I didn't plan to go to Bombay soon. Now, it so happens that I am here. My problem is that for the last one year, I have a feeling that I have lost my anchor, and that I am taken by an unknown energy from one place to another. I cannot resist ... it's like I have lost control and I have a huge pain here (pointing to the heart) that's coming from nowhere. I don't have it now, but it may come any time ... and it's very painful.*

Ramesh: You wish that it would rather not happen?

V: *Yes, my wish is not to have this pain.*

R: Therefore, the whole point is: what is this unhappiness?

V: *What is unhappiness for me?*

R: What is unhappiness for anybody? And, it makes you unhappy, doesn't it?

V: *Yes. Unhappiness for me is not feeling at peace, not feeling peace inside ... not knowing why I am here.*

R: You have described happiness and unhappiness.

‘I want something that is not there. I don't want something that is there’. That is happiness and unhappiness. See what I mean?

What is happiness and unhappiness? Happiness is being able to accept what-is, and what-is-not there. Unhappiness is to want something that is not there, or not want something that is there. That is the basic duality of daily living.

*V: So I have to accept what-is, even if it is so painful?*

R: Happiness or unhappiness is not in anyone's control. Trying to accept what you don't like, or trying to accept what you like but you cannot get, is not in your control. That is the basic duality of daily living and that is why my definition of happiness is 'contentment'. By contentment I don't mean that you should not try to get whatever it is that you want. But the basis of life is this: you can do anything that you feel like doing in any circumstance to get what you want but, after you have done all that you can do, you have to accept happiness or unhappiness. That is contentment.

Although happiness or unhappiness has never been in your control, the difference is that there is no feeling of helplessness. If you really want what you want, there is nothing to stop you from doing whatsoever you feel like doing to get it. I'm not saying don't get it – do whatever you feel you should do to get it.

How to be happy in life is the basic question. If you keep on saying "I've been so unhappy ... I've been so

unhappy,” ask yourself if you have been doing the best you can. That is the real question. You will find most people not doing their best. Instead, they are doing what the others like.

*V2: The problem is that being unhappy, I make other people unhappy. Making others happy is not in our hands, yet, many times I find that if your close relative ... let's say your wife is unhappy, then you're unhappy. You feel unhappy even though you are at peace in your mind. If she's troubled and suffering, you feel even more unhappy. I am not blaming the wife ... but making others happy is a very difficult task. If you want your peace of mind, which is better: looking at others' happiness or your own peace of mind?*

R: The answer is: by all means try to make yourself happy. Let there be no mistake about it – your happiness comes first! I must try to make myself happy. The important point, however, is that it may happen or it may not happen.

*V3: I am so happy going out in the morning to the park and greeting everybody – even the beggars. By making others happy, I also feel so happy.*

R: The important thing is that even that is not in your control. Making the other person happy is not in your control. I'm being very practical and my point is: what do I want most in life? Happiness! But, happiness for whom? Happiness for myself. What is happiness for me?

The ultimate happiness is contentment, and contentment means acceptance of the basis of daily living, not *seeking* happiness. But the point is that making anyone happy, either 'me' or the 'other', is not in my control. Therefore, what is happiness? The ultimate meaning of happiness is acceptance.

*V3: Acceptance...*

R: Happiness, according to me, means acceptance of what-is in any situation. If I am unable to make myself happy, I am unable to make the other happy.

The ultimate happiness is contentment and contentment means acceptance, not *wanting* happiness. I want happiness by trying to make my wife or sister or my best friend happy. But the fact of the matter is that whether it's my wife or friend, trying to make anyone happy requires one to be unselfish. The ultimate meaning of happiness is acceptance.

*V: Acceptance ... without trying to change?*

R: That's what I was coming to. That is the question. Does it mean I'm helpless? No, you're not! It is your total freedom to do whatever you want in any given situation – it is total freedom to try to make anyone happy.

Therefore, we come to the conclusion that seeking happiness is the problem. Therefore, not seeking happiness means accepting whatever is at the moment.

*V: Does acceptance mean resignation ... that I am completely helpless?*

R: It *seems* to be.

*V: The problem is that I don't know what to do!*

R: And that is the solution. Acceptance of whatever-is, and taking it as happiness. Acceptance means acceptance of happiness or unhappiness, as it happens.

*V3: Does it mean accepting whatever-is as it is – doing your best in any given situation, but not expecting what you do to result in what you want?*

R: Quite right. Expectation means inviting frustration. Accepting means surrendering, and the only thing or person you can expect to surrender to is the Creator.

*V: What to do if my wife, my friends or relatives want me to behave in a different way? They are very unhappy with the way I behave and I would like to make them happy, but then I would make myself unhappy. Is this the way to surrender?*

R: Surrender to what-is, is the only way. Surrender means expecting no change, wanting no change.

The real point of unhappiness is expectation – wanting

something, expecting something means expecting a change. Not expecting a change means not inviting frustration.

*V2: I have understood completely what you have just said, but when it comes to practising it in daily life, it becomes extremely difficult.*

R: Have I ever, at any time, said that living it is easy?

*V2: Practising non-expectation in daily life is not easy ... you tend to get frustrated. For example, the way my wife was driving, the way my wife was behaving ... she was cursing the traffic. I really felt I should be slapping her and I consoled myself saying ... that this is fine. I can't be with this person who makes me unhappy all the time. I have never broken relations with my family. Should I stay in this marriage only because we are tied?*

R: You want to be happy, that is true, but the thing is that the mind wants something changed. Therefore, I talk about practical daily living. The important thing is to let life flow.



*V3: If you accept your frustration, then frustration goes; you accept your expectation and then expectation goes. But, the trouble is one doesn't accept the frustration.*

R: What is the basis of expectation?

*V3: The basis of expectation is non-acceptance of what-is.*

R: Therefore, not expecting any change.

*V3: But why do I have this expectation?*

R: Ultimately, what do you expect?

*V3: Nothing.*

R: What do you expect? Nothing? You don't want or expect anything?

*(Pause)*

After all is said and done, what is the conclusion? 'I wish I were dead. I wish I were not born' ... but that is in nobody's control. Why do I want death? Death means wanting something which is there not to be there, or wanting something not there to be there.

*V2: Isn't expecting death also expecting a change?*

R: Therefore, let life happen. You don't want death, but that is not in your control. You want life, but even that is not in your control. Therefore, the important point is – let life happen. And by letting life happen, let death happen.

*V: I would like to ask about meditation practices. When we go for long meditation sessions like Vipassana, we all hope for a change. Then is it better not to do it at all? Or to do it without hoping...*

R: Sometimes, some practices are really hard. If you do not hope for results, then what is the point of doing them? Therefore, what is meditation? Meditation is death with breathing. And to remain without breathing is death.

Let life happen. Live according to whatever is happening. Therefore, accept life or death.

*V3: So, there should be no expectation of death.*

R: Even that is an expectation. Therefore, do not even expect death.

*V3: But Sir, I have seen so many people for whom the body has become a burden and, naturally, the expectation of death arises.*

R: You have said the right thing. Everything happens.

Nobody does anything.