

Self-Realization

And Other Awakenings



Ed Muzika

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

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Acknowledgments

I want to express my profound gratitude to Deeya Gair who is foremost among many students that have collaborated with me to develop a spirituality of embodiment which we call Devotional Advaita.

By embodied spirituality, we mean that traditional Advaita has to be grounded in a return to the marketplace, of reentering physical reality after finding our Absolute nature. What we are is not only That, but also an embodied human being, a personality with physicality and emotions which must be re-owned after transcendence, and accept that we are all in the same boat as sentient beings, each as precious as our own selves. We become our brother's keeper and the good shepherd of all living things.

Deeya showed me how her work as a healer can aid others not only to overcome physical pain and emotional suffering, but serve as a pathway towards Self-Realization at multiple levels of Consciousness.



We Are Sentience (WAS) is a California religious corporation with a federal 501c3 charity tax status. Its mission is twofold: to support the teachings of the two lineages of Sri Ramana Maharshi/Robert Adams, and Nisargadatta Maharaj/Jean Dunn as interpreted in the converging figure of Ed Muzika, and to function as an animal rescue and preservation organization in Los Angeles.

There are about 1,500,000 or more homeless cats living on the streets in Los Angeles, and there are only thousands of people who care for them: providing food, vaccinations and medical care, as well as trapping some and finding homes. Ironically, most people who manage these feral cat colonies are poor themselves, and the sheer burden of caring for 100 homeless cats each nearly exhausts their resources.

Ed is a caretaker himself and helps many other colony caretakers with food, medical supplies and veterinary services for several hundred cats.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

In addition, WAS aims to bring Los Angeles shelters to a No-Kill status wherein no healthy animal is euthanized. Currently about 80,000 dogs and cats are euthanized each year in Los Angeles City and County.

For more information about the mission of “We Are Sentience”, visit:

<http://www.wearesentience.com/no-pet-left-behind.html>



A cat colony in Reseda, California.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction.....	9
My Story	14
The First Awakening:	15
No Self; There is Only One!	15
Illusion's Realm	26
Robert Adams and I.....	33
Second Awakening:	44
That One Is Not Real!.....	44
The Absolute, the Void, and Identification	50
The Third Awakening: Self-Realization	54
Personal Love.....	59
The Self as Other: Self-Realization.....	61
Conclusions	63
The Helicopter	72
Consciousness Diagram	94
The 100 Room Mansion.....	98
Things Gurus Don't Tell You.....	117
The Majesty of Self	123
Of Energies, Ecstasies and Orgasms	127
Can You Go Naked Before God?.....	135
More On Robert:	143
I Am Here for My Students, Not for Me	145

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Self-Inquiry: With Affection and Love.....	147
Love, Surrender and Awakening.....	153
The Spiritual Processes Around a Guru and Ashram.....	170
Continual Seeking.....	186
Freedom!.....	193
Awakening in Daily Life, Letter from a Student	206
All is Love, All is Self	212
Faith.....	213
On Being Comfortable	221
Have Your Cake and Eat It Too	226
The Search.....	232
Robert Adams.....	243
A New Way of Teaching	248
The ‘True’ Teacher.....	254
Ramana, Siddharameshwar and Nisargadatta	262
Sex and the Guru.....	269
The Ecstasies of Women	279
The Difficulty of Awakening.....	283
Hunting the I and the Witness.....	289
Emotional Truth	298
We Are Also Human Beings	304
On Guru Concepts and Self-Inquiry.....	309
More on Being Human	313

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Role of the Teacher.....	321
Coming Alive to the Whole Self.....	325
The Void is Not the Absolute; Silence is not the Absolute	334
Who Says the I-Thought is the Ego or Self?	340
Creating a New World, One Life at a Time	364
Little Red	369
My Evolving "Depression"	372
Well, the Deed is Done. Little Red is Dead.....	376
Strong Emotions, Negative and Positive--a Path to God.....	383
Robert Adams II	389
A Dwarf and a Siddhi	391
Meeting Ramana	393
Into the Silence.....	394
Exodus.....	399
Dimitri.....	405
Poems From the Heart.....	409
Ed Muzika Online.....	418

Introduction

You are not who you think you are. You are much, much more than that!

You are not just your body or mind. You are not just your emotions, thoughts, images, and dreams. You are more than all your relationships, family ties, career, and loves. You are these but also much, much more.

There are rooms within the spiritual mansion which are ‘You’ that have never been explored because from infancy onward, You (and we all) have been educated, indoctrinated, acculturated, and nailed into boxes of social conformity and multiple networks of thought and communication.

The world of our senses is really an interpretation of an underlying “real” as experienced through multiple cognitive filters. Both the “real” external world and the “real” Self are far different from what we now experience.

This book is about that real world (and real You) which can be experienced and lived in after many of the filters are unlearned.

This unlearning is done through various kinds of self-investigations, both through the use of the mind,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

but mostly through exercises, learning how to shift awareness out of the “brain,” thinking and cognition, into the heart. Experiencing the world through the heart's senses reveals a very different ‘You’, and a very different world that is far more fluid, far more alive, far more energetic than the relatively flat world most of us live in.

This is a world where our bodies, our hearts, and even our minds become drenched in bliss so remarkable that all we can do is swoon and fall to our knees, feeling the ecstatic grace of total self love and love for another. There comes a peace so profound you do not want to move so as to not disturb it.

Finally, there may be an inner explosion like an erupting volcano of joy, energies, light and love that reveal the deepest levels of the Self to the 'little self' you had always thought yourself to be. I call this Self-Realization in contrast to the multitude of other kinds of awakenings or enlightenments so much talked about in Eastern and Western spirituality, although these other awakenings are thoroughly explored in this book.

Remarkably, you lose nothing in this realization, for you are still much, but not all, of what you were before. You still have a body and mind. You still have relationships with family and other. But you have also found the much larger world of flowing and healing energies of the subtle body and world, as well as a

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

basic grasp of the flowing nature of the manifest universe. Going even deeper you become aware of the ground state of consciousness, the so-called Fourth State, or Turiya that interpenetrates and powers all other states of consciousness, including the waking, dream and deep sleep states.

Finally, you become aware that you are watching all this unfolding of consciousness, and it does not touch you—you are entirely beyond it, as if in a different dimension. This part of you is not touched by anything in consciousness. This absolute part of you cannot be cut, killed, or injured in any way. This part of you, the Absolute, the Unmanifest, the noumenal Self, in one sense is immortal, and in another, beyond even immortality.

All these levels of consciousness, including the body and emotions, as well as these other states, are 'You'. 'You' have expanded yourself from a limited identification with your body, emotions, mind and daily life, and added the phenomena of the Subtle Body, pure emptiness, pure beingness, and the knowledge of an unseen and unseeable Absolute to your identity.

Adding all these levels to our former identities allows us to choose any identifications we want, from immersing in and processing emotions, to identifying with our bodies in the Now, to resting in the bliss of Turiya, or in healing energies, or in the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

internal Void of Consciousness that becomes lighted by its own awareness.

After gain facility in moving around in one's own inner mansion, including an explosive realizing of your Self not only as the Absolute, but as the embodied sentience, the pure ability to cognize, to know, to feel, and to sense, then you begin a return to the marketplace, bringing your light back into the world of humans and animals.

The above outline portrays more or less the progression of my experience. But I do not want you to travel my path. I want to help you travel your own path by taking away your illusions, concepts, contagions, and conditionings. I want to rob you, strip you naked of all your spiritual and scientific clothes so that you can see and experience yourself as something extraordinary, beautiful, loving, and 'divine', but still as a human living in a sometimes harsh and ugly world.

The following essays and talks work at whittling away one belief or conditioning at a time, preparing the way for you to see yourself and the world more clearly day by day. I will suggest techniques for self-investigation and increasing self-love to prepare you for that inner explosion of Self-Realization. I will tell you how to use love for another as an avenue for your own Self-Realization. I will guide you away from teachings that are so shallow that they have a million followers and almost as many teachers, but yield no

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

real happiness.

This book is divided into two sections. The first is my own story, one of a pure cognitive approach to enlightenment, followed by falling in love with a deeper world both within and without, which led to my own Self-Realization. The next section is devoted to helping you see yourself and the world without filters and convention, so that you have your own Self-Realization based on who you are and where you came from. It may be very different from mine, because I do not try to capture you into one way, one system, but to escape them all to find your own truth.



All nature photographs were taken by the author, either at La Jolla, CA, or Sedona, Az. This pelican photo was taken just above the Cove of La Jolla.

My Story

Forty-five years ago I left my job as a regional planner in Cleveland to begin a journey looking for “Truth,” which to me at the time meant finding the most basic particle of knowledge, an irreducible “true thing.” I had studied both Eastern and Western philosophies, had practiced meditation, had read extensively in Zen Buddhism and decided finally to stop wasting time and devote myself totally in a search for the “quantum” of truth, around which all others revolved.

After many years study with six Zen masters; Muktananda, and after having met every Zen Master and High Lama that came to the United States during the 60s and 70s, I finally found my two gurus: Robert Adams, a student of Ramana Maharshi; and Jean Dunn, successor to Nisargdatta Maharaj. Both led me to discover the “truth-quantum” which holds the universal network of thought together, guided me through several awakenings, and ultimately to Self-Realization a decade later.

Briefly what I found was that the central core concept that supports the network of thought standing matrix-like behind all appearances is the belief in the existence of an inner I-entity that was me. The thought there is an inner me was the dominant thought

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

of my life, and without that limiting thought, the whole structure of my understanding fell apart. With the destruction of that concept, I became one with the world, not as a concept, but as an experience of “awakening to no-self - 'I Am' the world.”

The beginning and end of what I am is what I identify with as ‘I’ or ‘me’. I am not just a body, or just the mind. I am much, much more than this.

The First Awakening: No Self; There is Only One!

One morning, I returned from my morning walk, which that day seemed especially invigorating, and took a shower. I felt unusually relaxed; the warm water was incredibly inviting. Feeling the water's delightful touch on my back, I looked within, into the inner emptiness of consciousness, trying to see if I could find ‘who’ it was that experienced the water's touch. I had done this observation thousands of times before, in thousands of different circumstances, seeking the 'I' who was the experiencer and never finding it, yet clinging still to the notion I was an ‘I’, an inner person.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

This time, like all the others, there was nothing there, only a vast inner emptiness that contained everything: the kinesthetic sensations of moving arms, back and neck muscles, the touch of the water, the sound of its spray, and a few thoughts, but mostly there was a silent emptiness that felt inviting and full. I saw no one, no thing, no 'I' there at all for the ten thousandth time, but this time, only God knows why, it was different.

The reality of 'no-one' sank in! There was no person, no one experiencing the water's touch. There was no one home, so to speak. There was just the touch of water, the feeling of my feet against the bottom of the shower. My hands were touching my back and neck, putting on soap, but there was no one experiencing any of this. There was just experience happening in awareness.

Briefly, I felt intense fear. The fear was, "Who is watching the store?" I felt, or better, there was a feeling of insecurity, because no one was there to protect and control. All that there was, was experiencing, happening in consciousness.

All the air left my lungs, almost as if it had been knocked out of me, and I relaxed. Years of tension drained out of me. I did not breathe for what seemed like minutes. There was no need to breathe. There was

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

no me, no I to pump up anymore, so my body just relaxed and deflated.

My mind (actually, 'the' mind since there was no 'I') became utterly still. No thoughts, no special attention to any one thing, just the grand, silent, all-pervading emptiness, illuminated by the inner light of consciousness, and which contained all experience. My mind was gone.

I felt too weak to stand up, so I dried myself off and laid down on a couch to explore the innerness from the viewpoint of the discovery that I had no 'I', no me, no personal self. With the utter mental silence, 'my' consciousness expanded to fill up the emptiness which was everywhere, rather than remain affixed to the mental chatter that normally exists.

This is what I discovered: The 'I' was not there. There was no central kernel that gave illusory life to me as a person. There never was an 'I'. There had never even been an idea that there was an 'I', the doer and experiencer; even that was gone. What I had thought to be 'I', was really 'I Am', the sense of presence, of being-ness. But that I-Am-ness, the presence, the consciousness contained no point of 'I', and it never had. 'I' had only been a belief; an idea held tenaciously, that created an apparent experience of 'I' as a person.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

When the idea of 'I' died, the whole realm of conceptualization changed and became clear. All other ideas depended on the belief in a separate 'I', set apart from the rest of the experienced world, and when this duality was exposed as fantasy, so were all other concepts that depended on the 'I-Other' duality.

Looking within, the I-Am-ness, the presence I had called consciousness, seemed to have a center or source near the heart (of my apparent body); it appeared that consciousness arose and flowed from this center. Yet that heart center was only a happening in consciousness and had nothing to do with the belief in an 'I' as the doer and experiencer. The 'I Am', the sense of presence that pervades all inner and outer emptiness and experience has no 'I' as a central core. It really is an Am-ness, not an I-Am-ness.

Without an 'I', there is no 'not-I' within consciousness. There is only consciousness, only One. The One contains all experience. All experiences are only modifications of that one consciousness.

I turned my attention to thoughts, and saw that thoughts just floated through Am-ness, as if from outside the body. There is no mind as such, just thoughts passing through Am-ness or beingness. Without an 'I', the illusory personal center, there is no one to take possession of a thought or desire and to act on it or make it real. The Am-ness has no

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

inclination to participate in the thoughts, and is free of their tyranny. The Am-ness is free to take delivery of a thought briefly, and make it real, such as an idea that I need to do some chore, which may be transformed into action, or it can let the thought or desire pass through, unaccepted.

Thoughts, forms, and imaginations are infinitely changing and moving. They have no permanent existence. They are just modifications within the overflowing process of 'I Am'. The only reality was Am-ness, which contained all experience, and which was being witnessed. So, I then asked myself, "Who witnesses all this?" The answer came as an inner voice: "No one at all!" I realized there is only witnessing, but with no witness. Just like there was no 'I' to take possession of a desire or thought, there is no witness to take possession of any experience. The idea of the witness, and the apparent experience of the witness, arises from the apparent duality the 'I-idea' creates. When this fundamental duality disappears, so do all the others, including the imagined duality of the witness and the witnessed, the observer and the observed.

However, if there is no witness, then there are no objects to be witnessed. If the 'I' is unreal, everything observed by the 'I' is unreal. You cannot have only one half of a duality. If half is unreal, so is its opposite, or else the duality was only apparent. The objects, the body, the mind, the world, are all unreal, only mind

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

stuff, dreams in consciousness. With no 'I', and no observed world, there are only happenings within consciousness, and consciousness - Oneness, is all that there is.

A few moments later came the feeling that even this consciousness, the sense of presence, of Am-ness is unreal, a kind of visual-auditory-tactile illusion added onto pure silence, pure emptiness. About this time, all the forms, sounds, sights and feelings began to flow together, and I could see their temporary and evanescent nature. There was no 'I', no world, no body; there was only presence, and even that, I am not.

Even the 'I-Am-ness', consciousness, was only mind stuff – a construct. 'I am that I-Am' only as long as I live in the illusion of consciousness. Imagination, ideas, and all phenomenal experience were all just mind. The mind does not create the world, the mind is the world; mind is everything.

With that I began laughing. What my teacher had said was true. It is all a joke, a tale told by an idiot, implying nothing. Anything said here too is only a conceptualization, mind stuff, and therefore a mistake!

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

The whole experience lasted a few hours, and I eventually returned to a place where a chair was a chair and potato salad was a food. I was different though.

Over the days following the shower experience, other understandings of what the experience of 'no-I' meant became clear. First, all understanding, whatever can be said in words is untrue or misleading. Everything is mind stuff – everything! Anything said, is said in illusion about illusion. Anything said is a mistake. Mind cannot grasp anything other than itself. It cannot go beyond itself. Conceptions, phenomenality, and what we call dreams, are all made of the same illusory substance.

Second, there was no one to take delivery of 'my' life. It was just being lived. There was no one to take possession of any thought or responsibility. There was no decision maker who willed an intended end. Intentionality, the idea we can conceive of and then create an outcome, was a fraud.

Life is just lived by the illusion of existence some call 'Maya', others call it 'consciousness', others call it 'God' or the 'Totality of Phenomenality'. The apparent individual mind just creates a story for some unknown reason; it projects a pseudo existence onto an external apparent reality.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

We don't even have an individual mind; the 'I-idea' just makes it appear that we have. The 'I-idea' entertains those thoughts that yield the appearance of a consideration process, of a decider and of decision to pursue some path.

If those thoughts had not come, the apparent body-mind would have taken on some other bundle of thought-forms and given itself a different existence. On the personal level, that meant the world I lived in was purely conceptual, and I could have led an entirely different conceptual life had that different thought complex taken possession of my 'I-thought'.

That is, all pseudo realities are appearances in consciousness only, there was no human to take possession of that identity in a solid space-time continuum. There were just complexes of thoughts and mental patterns – waking dreams made of the same substances as what we call dreams. Life has no solidity at all; solidity, perseverance, continuity are concepts that allow us to take the world for real and set the stage for all apparent worldly activity.

That is, if I were meant to relocate to New York, that thought would come into my mind, otherwise some other thought would take hold, such as to become a computer consultant in Santa Fe. When the 'I' shuts down and the ego disappears, the happenings in consciousness will do what they do, the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

psychosomatic apparatus walks through its paces, watched as we would watch an interesting but not too involving movie.

I also understood why the older I was the less interested I had become about anything. The ego, the desires and habits that I took to be me, shriveled through constant inner observation, there was progressively less willingness by 'me' to take hold of any random thoughts or desires that passed through, and if I did, there was little energy behind manifesting them.

As Robert Adams said, "The sage's thoughts and desires are dead thoughts, they have no strength and they pass quickly, only barely touching the apparent person." As one who watched him in action, I could attest to that. Someone might mention the idea of founding an ashram or writing a book, or moving to another city, and he would show momentary interest; but a day or a week later, the idea, and the will backing that idea, were gone. Around Robert, there was nothing to hold onto; nothing stuck.

When the first person 'I' disappears, the idea of Him, a second person, a personal God disappears too. There is no God, no power, and no planner running things. God is an idea in consciousness. Things just happen in consciousness without me or God doing it. Consciousness and events appear out of nothing and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

disappear into nothing. If you want to call 'Nothingness' or 'consciousness' God, feel free, but what is achieved by giving the illusion another name? There is only One, and even that One is not real.

All this became temporarily quite depressing. It was as if I were waiting for the winning lotto numbers to be announced, knowing that I would win this time, and then to wake up to discover the lottery and the certainty of winning was only a dream. The notion that a better life was just around the corner, and that I could influence its outcome was just fantasy. There is no decision maker, no doer, not even an experiencer. My career trajectory had just vanished!

There was a feeling of loss of my ordinary world and ordinary relationships, including the feeling that I was a doer. I did not exist; there was only consciousness, which was everything, but it did not exist either. For days I would sit staring at the world with a sense of wonder that neither I nor it existed.

Over the next few days and weeks strange things happened. My body felt hot all the time, 'energy' currents coursing throughout it, and strange new muscle tension patterns replaced old ones. I felt my body was trying to reject something, as if it were trying to fight off a disease. Robert laughed when I told him, and he half joked, saying "It's trying to reject

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

you!" The sense of unreality of both 'I' and the world persisted and deepened, along with the depression.

One day I called Robert in despair and said, "I'm depressed! I am not real; nothing is real!" Robert responded forcefully, and loudly, "Of course you are real, you are talking to me on the phone aren't you?" The sense of unreality persisted, but I felt perplexed by his answer that I was real, since he almost always said everything was unreal.

A few days later when looking at that feeling of unreality, I suddenly realized that feeling was itself taking place within that unreality; it too was merely a happening in consciousness and no more real than that which I had formerly considered real. The thought 'I and the world were unreal,' itself was just a concept of no more power or importance than any other.

I understood Ramana's response to a devotee who asked whether the world was real or unreal. He said, "The world is as real as you are." The world appeared unreal once the 'I' disappeared; before the 'I' disappeared, both seemed real. The world, 'I', real, and unreal, were all just concepts, and the world of appearance were just forms in consciousness with no 'I' to observe them.

Forms come, forms go, they are observed, but there is no observer. The apparent depression lifted

instantly. It was just another phenomenon in consciousness, not a state belonging to me as a person.

Illusions Realm

Over the following months the experience widened and deepened. Sometimes the world appeared real, sometimes unreal, sometimes both; but I understood that these appearances of real or unreal were just judgments added onto the basic illusion of phenomenality and of consciousness itself. When there is only One, all judgments or knowledge about qualities or parts of the One, such as 'the world was unreal,' or 'that is a car,' are themselves illusory because they are divisive, and there is only One. The sentence, and the knowledge, "That is a car," and the car itself as an object separate from the One, are both illusion. Knowledge is illusion; objects are illusion; distinguishable qualities of the One are illusion.

Days and weeks would pass where I felt I was living in a hologram. I felt as if I could see through objects in the world and my own body because my focus was on the emptiness which permeated all things, inside and out. Everything was 'hollow,' insubstantial images and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

sensations projected onto an underlying empty space of still silence.

Sometimes too, I would see an object out of the corner of my eye, an automobile for example, and it would only be half there, like a movie set where only the front existed. Days passed into nights and then into days again with barely the feeling of the passage of time, and each afternoon, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. I would experience an involuntary withdrawal of consciousness – a 'trance' that limited full participation in the so-called reality on any consistent basis.

The whole process was great fun – sometimes, seeing the world as empty and insubstantial images changing rapidly through time, without the personal involvement that had formerly made the world seem so real. When I told Robert about the phenomena of half disappearing objects bereft of substantiality, I jokingly asked whether this was part of the awakening process, or an entering into insanity. With wry humor he replied, "They go hand in hand."

A week later, I asked again whether seeing the world as an empty and hollow dream was a temporary state, or something one leaves behind as a passing phase. "It's always like this," he said, waving his hand around the room to include everything. Then he said,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

"In the end, fundamentally nothing has ever existed, nothing has ever happened."

It became more difficult to motivate myself to do anything, for when the dreamed character understands he is part of a dream, how can he take it seriously and make any effort to control outcomes of the dream? Things that had severely bothered me before had lost any ability to perturb me. I lived day to day just watching the changing manifestation, the all-permeating emptiness that made a mockery of the world and my own existence as a separate human being. Sometimes the humorous aspects of Jnana (Knowledge; Wisdom) gave way to a feeling of not wanting to participate in the joke any longer. Everything is absolutely false the way it is perceived; why persist in playing the game? Sometimes it felt better to just refuse all involvement in the illusion.

A central phrase from the Buddhist Heart Sutra became very clear about this time: Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form; feelings, thoughts, sensations and even consciousness are also like this.

With the knowledge that my personal self and the world were illusions, personal qualities, such as ambition, ego and intentionality became empty. There is no free will because there is no willer, no willing and nothing to be willed. The world itself was only

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

insubstantial images, ever changing; there were no things that existed, No-Thing at all! With no things comes the recognition that 'No-Thing' has ever happened, nor ever will happen. There was no World War II, no Vietnam, no Bill Clinton...

These were only memories (or images) circulating in 'my' mind, or images from TV sets. There was no proof that any of these had existed in any other form than an image in mind. History never happened! Somebody might show me a history book about all this, but that was no proof because that book was part of my present waking dream, and nothing within the dream can prove the reality or existence of another part of that dream. Even though physics postulates the existence of time, this is still just an idea within the One Mind, which is dream stuff.

Science, like the history book, is part of the dream, creating a structure for the images. Nor did the rest of the world, out-of-sight exist: Not France, not Russian, not Cleveland. These were all ideas supported by seeing them on television, or from memories of a prior visit, which are parts of the dream too – like a history book.

The past does not exist except as memory, which is a present happening in consciousness. The future does not exist; it is only mental speculation in the now, about what might happen in an imaginary future.

Finally, and most importantly, the apparently real

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

present does not exist either, because 'reality' is only sensations, perceptions, objects, created by mind, suspended in a mental emptiness, and in the end, neither forms nor emptiness exists. Here-and-now has the same mind stuff existence as all other happenings in mind and consciousness. Avalokiteshvara, in the Heart Sutra says further:

“Thus, Sariputra, all things having the nature of emptiness have no beginning and no ending. In emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no perception, no discrimination, no consciousness itself. There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no skin, no mind. There is no sight, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no mental processes, no objects, no knowledge, no ignorance. There is no ending of objects, no ending of knowledge, no ending of ignorance. There is no enlightenment, nor path to enlightenment: no pain, no cause of pain, no ending of pain. There is no decay and no death. There is no knowledge of enlightenment, no obtaining of enlightenment, and no not obtaining of enlightenment.

Why is there no obtaining of enlightenment; because enlightenment is in the realm of 'No Thingness,' and in 'No-Thingness' there is no personality to obtain enlightenment. As long as a man pursues enlightenment, he is still abiding in the realm of consciousness. If he is to realize enlightenment, he must pass beyond consciousness, beyond discrimination and knowledge, beyond the reach of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

change or fear. The perfect understanding of this, and the patient acceptance of it, is the highest wisdom, the essential heart of wisdom. All Buddhas of the past, present and future having attained the highest Samadhi, awake to find themselves realizing the heart of wisdom.”

Life is the doings of an apparent body-mind living in a dream, aware that life is a dream, but with neither the will to change it because the personality is dead (or seriously dying), nor the power to change the dream. Dream characters have no autonomous will to change the contents and script of the dreamer's sleeping dreams, and just so, we cannot change the script of our waking dream. Each of us, as apparent humans has a part to perform, but no substantial means to direct dream outcomes. Any control we appear to have in directing our lives is only apparent, part of the dream script. We are supposed to believe we are directing the dream outcome, otherwise how could involvement in the illusory dream be sustained?

With the coming of knowledge, my searching mind came to rest. I had tasted Absolute Truth for the first time, and no relative truth of the world could touch it. History, economics, and physics were all just complicated knowledge about the waking dream, and that kind of knowing was irrelevant, a joke – part of a world viewed as a bad art movie. Absolute

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

knowledge, Jnana, Prajna Paramita, cannot be sought or learned. It comes to you, is always with you, and is you! However, even the taste of Absolute Truth passes until one tastes nothing, metaphorically.

With the end of searching, I began to experience moments of peace beyond description, a peace so deep, so profound, that nothing mattered, nothing! All knowledge, all power, all worldly pleasures and even the experience of 'divine bliss' faded in comparison. Peace dissolved everything; nothing penetrated it; nothing remained to be done.

The sense of beingness, Sat, persisted even though I saw it as illusion. It felt like an energy, yet it was as substantial as matter. It permeated me; it was me, my sense of 'My-ness'. All the while emptiness pervaded everything, all objects, my body, and me as the beingness energy itself.

Underlying beingness was 'Nothing', experienced through a filter of being. 'Nothing' perceived from beingness was still beingness. What lay on the other side of this perceived emptiness and consciousness of the perceived illusion? I saw everything as the One; and that One and everything in it was illusion; but the illusion persisted. Was there an end to this illusion?

Robert Adams and I

Robert was imperturbable – nothing bothered him. He never complained, never lacked a ready smile or humorous comeback, and I never saw him angry. Yet, for years, I harbored niggling doubts about him, though I knew I could not find a greater teacher. His behavior was so 'human' at times, and just plain confusing at others, that sometimes I doubted he was a guru at all. In this I was not alone. Mary, one of his longest-lasting disciples almost always had doubts. Robert's own wife, Nicole knew he was very different from anyone else, but did not, at that time, consider him to be a spiritual teacher or guru. At that time, she even lacked the concept of guru-dom.

In his very low-key way, he would say one thing to one person and a very different thing to someone else. Sometimes he would appear not to remember promises, though his memory was excellent, or he would equivocate in a way that everyone thought he had agreed to their separate and contradictory wishes. He denied being a guru, but acted like one and constantly extolled the virtues of the 'Realized being,' or sage. He even appeared to set people up so that they would clash with each other causing friction at our meetings, which we called Satsang (meaning, being in the presence of Truth). In other words, he

appeared to be an altogether normal, if not meddlesome person, acting the part of a guru while publicly denying he was one, using the Hindu teachings of Oneness – Advaita Vedanta – as his 'schtick.'

Deep inside though, I trusted him and his teachings, because of his utter peacefulness, and because he was absolutely consistent in his description of 'reality'. He always maintained the same bearing and teachings, whether in Satsang, while riding in a car, and while sitting in the park or at lunch. His teachings were always consistent, as if he were talking from a living and absolutely constant experience, instead of just mouthing philosophical knowledge learned from books or from Ramana.

Now that I tasted Knowing, I no longer cared for knowledge – secular, spiritual, or absolute; my focus changed. Rather than regard Robert as a source of teachings, seeking his presence for the transmutative effect he had on me, I began to watch how he behaved in different situations and how he dealt with me and with others. I began to understand how a real master operates with his disciples, and operate he did! As soon as a student gets close to a master such as Robert, the game of awakening begins.

I watched how Robert operated on his disciples once during lunch. One day, while we were eating at Follow Your Heart in Canoga Park, he appeared

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

preoccupied. He did not talk; he did not look at me. Feeling left out I asked, "What are you thinking about Robert?" He responded, "You!"

"Me," I said – "What are you thinking about me?" His answer made everything that had occurred during our relationship clear. He said, "I am thinking how to cook you." 'Cook' is the term applied to the spiritual heat that comes from spiritual practice (Sadhana) or from being in the presence of the guru. One cooks off the ego. So he was thinking about how to process me while we were at lunch, and by deduction, every other moment we were together. I was lunch.

Presumably, this happened with everyone else too. He was always stirring the pot, adjusting the fire, cooking egos, yet he always denied he was doing anything at all. After that I let him cook me all he wanted, because I knew he had no self-serving intent behind any of his acts, and by extension, none of his actions towards anyone else either. He was the guru playing at being human, curing us of our human illusion.

Spiritual 'old shoes,' those who had spent a long time with recent great teachers such as Muktananda, Rajneesh or Yogananda, know all about cooking and how the guru sets up situations to cause self-consciousness and the ending of that portion of the ego. However, Robert lacked all the external trappings

of being a guru, so few people expected him to cook

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

people – they saw him as a spiritual friend, or perhaps as a father-figure or as a prophet, but not as an operator. He never explained what he was doing when he operated on someone. His 'victim' would be 'innocently' walking along, thinking everything was fine with what he or she was doing with and to others at Satsang, when suddenly Robert would thrust a whole new situation on him.

For example, I initiated transcribing his talks with the idea of selling them at Satsang, giving a percentage to Robert, and keeping part myself to start a publishing company for Satsang. It all made sense. Robert did the talking; I recorded the talks, transcribed them, edited them to perfection, and wrote an introduction to cap things off. Thus, a 50-50 split was fair. No? Things went fine for a while, until one day I arrived at Satsang to find new transcripts done by Mary, on the table at no cost, asking only for a donation. Then the next week, more transcripts appeared from yet another transcriber. I had lost the cozy post of being Robert's voice, and this new business had also gone down the tubes, and Mary and I were at loggerheads for a time. Yet Robert never, ever explained to me, or Mary, how he had let me dig my own grave, and then used others, with their own ambitions and agendas to bury me.

So too, was it the same with everyone else. Robert let them walk into the quicksand, get attached and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

stuck, and then let them sink. At other times, he would put people together for a work function that just rubbed each other the wrong way, or he would arrange for the two largest egos around to be placed in apparent competition.

One recipient of Robert's 'operating', described him in these belittling words: "He is very controlling. He pits one person against another, and gets a great delight at watching what happens. He lies incessantly, telling one person one thing and another something else, then denies to both that he said anything."

When I heard this, I just smiled and said, "Of course he appears to do these things, how else can he work with people at their own level of psychological focus? He is the guru and he'll do whatever it takes to get someone to move spiritually on levels we don't begin to understand; what we see on the surface is only a small part of his work."

From that recipient's own viewpoint of frustration and disappointment, what she said was true; but she saw only the man, not the source, the Self-embodied guru. She saw only actions she interpreted in terms of what people like herself would do. Nothing Robert did was from malice; nothing was done with intent to harm. Everything was done from love, with the intent

of 'stirring the pot,' to make egos bump together creating a scenario where grosser aspects of the personality, such as jealousy, envy, the need for

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

recognition or control, could be brought into the open and destroyed by Robert's grace. Robert was a steel chisel knocking off the ego's flinty edges in a shower of sparks from his heart's flame.

Nothing Robert did was as it appeared, because disciples would project their own understanding and moral conditioning onto his actions, and their understanding was based on a wide spectrum of maturities. What appeared to be the intent of his behavior on one level was usually irrelevant to the level he was really operating on. What they saw was their own appearance, their creation. Long time students did not even bother to try to figure his actions out – they were unfathomable as seen from the outside. Robert was not of this world and worldly logic did not apply. The only thing you needed to know as his student was that he would do you no harm, and that nothing was done maliciously, no matter how painful a situation appeared.

By 'Robert's grace' I mean that he drew nothing out of the person that hadn't been brought out a thousand times before in a thousand life situations involving spouses, parents, employers and friends, but which had never been resolved in everyday life. Around him, once the ego showed itself in the situations he created, it was eventually destroyed, and Robert was a master of making the ego show itself. Unfortunately, many people, especially once they got used to him as a person, just saw a normal man doing unexplainable,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

'self-defeating' or seemingly hurtful acts, not a Master burning a field of egos.

Another example of his power was Satsang where he and his disciples sat together for his talks. Many people, especially those coming from other traditions emphasizing Shakti, or 'teaching philosophy,' found our meetings boring. The teachings of the complete unreality of everything were essentially unfathomable, even by seasoned swamis from different traditions who regarded Advaita as mere philosophy. Robert did not present techniques to find bliss, God, or to make life work better. There was little chanting, and few external signs of devotion among his disciples, who kept mostly to themselves.

Lastly, Robert's Parkinsons Disease moderately slurred his speech, hindering easy understanding of his words. I used to accuse him of getting the disease just to make people listen harder. He also spoke slowly with long gaps between sentences. He emphasized silence rather than content. Some newcomers just found the whole experience lacking energy, understanding, devotion, or even basiccomprehensibility. However, because so much was lacking externally, those who stayed were welcomed by silence to go deep within to find perfect peace, happiness and emptiness.

Just being in his presence had a profound effect on

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

many people. Some were overcome by happiness, others by peace. Much more frequently, at Satsang, people felt a deep relaxation that lapsed easily into a barely conscious 'sleep.' Most, who were fortunate enough to go to lunch with him, experienced an overwhelming need to sleep afterwards, a deep, relaxing and totally incapacitating sleep. I witnessed one disciple who went into this 'sleep' state during a meal with Robert. She was lifting a fork to her mouth, but it never arrived. She froze with uplifted fork, her eyes closed, and she was 'out' for a long time. I think we left her behind at the restaurant, in that state, as Robert said not to disturb her. Of course, she would eventually have been disturbed, but he wanted the state to last as long as possible.

Of course these sleep states were actually forms of one or another kind of Samadhi, of entering the 'causal body' level of consciousness, but to use that term is to create unnecessary mystical connotations that explain nothing. The subjective experience was of the involuntary turning of consciousness 'inwards,' closing down the body's functioning, of feeling great peace, and a total inability to attend to the external world, even while remaining barely aware of everything. Some people experienced a sinking into light. Others experienced a dissolving into emptiness or the world dissolved into them. For each it was different.

One of Robert's favorite 'games,' I called, The City

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

de jour, which was loosely based on Marpa's handling of his most famous, hard-case disciple, Milarepa. Milarepa had been a black sorcerer, and had killed several relatives at the urging of his Lady Mac Beth-like mother. At some point, he began to feel extreme sadness and guilt over what he had done, and sought the teachings of peace from Marpa. Marpa refused to teach Milarepa, and instead made him an employee, building Marpa a new home made from loose rocks on Marpa's land.

Each time Milarepa completed a house, Marpa found fault with its layout or location, and had Milarepa dismantle it, and begin anew. Milarepa built seven houses this way, and dismantled six of them before Marpa relented and initiated him.

In *The City de jour*, Robert hinted darkly of an impending earthquake that was going to destroy Los Angeles, and we all had to get out immediately. If the earthquake ploy did not work, he embellished on his prediction, saying it would be a 7.2 to 7.5 quake on a

new fault near Cucamonga, near the juncture of San Bernadino and Riverside Counties, during the last quarter of 1995, most probably during November.

If this did not work as motivation, he found other reasons to motivate people to move. To one, he said, "You will be my right hand." To another, he said, "You will be my secretary." Behind the scenes, he would tell different people different locations where he wanted

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

to move. Those who were about to build a house in Santa Fe anyway, were told he was moving to Santa Fe shortly. Those who wanted to move to Dallas, he said he would move to Dallas. Those who wanted to move to Arizona, were told to find a house in Phoenix or Sedona.

Of course, everyone knew what he told everyone else, and house finding was happening in four cities simultaneously, with everyone's life in constant uproar as they contemplated living vicariously in Sedona, Santa Fe, Dallas, Phoenix or even East St. Louis. Disciples were traveling to these locations, lining up houses, jobs, locations for Satsang, and agonizing over the disruption to their lives. Others, who felt they could not move, due to employment, homes or just plain attachment, felt abandoned and angry.

Because of his fragile health, Robert never traveled more than fifty miles to visit family, and even this, very, very, rarely. As a dramatic touch, he decided to visit Sedona, where a group of 15 or so disciples had offered him several houses for his use, and offered relocation assistance for other disciples that wanted to relocate there. Naturally, this aroused everyone's anxiety to the highest levels, for now it appeared he really was going to move, and disciples contemplated either losing their present comfortable lifestyle by moving, or losing their guru.

Actually, at that time I urged Robert to pick Sedona, as one of his students, Marty, who owned a

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

jeep tour business promised me a job driving. Sedona was beautiful and I wanted a change from Santa Monica. Lastly, I was unemployed as were most of Robert's close students, so there were no strong ties to Southern California.

At this point, the game became even more chaotic, with Sedona disciples constantly flying to LA, and LA disciples scoping out real estate in Arizona during the mid-August monsoon season. Phoenix during August is unpleasant at best, and even Robert's wife remarked, "You've brought us to hell!" Another disciple, a well-known author, called Robert and said, "I can't do this! I am driving through Scottsdale, it is 108 degrees, and I am covered with sweat! I can't do this. I don't like anything about this state!" She did come and purchased a huge house. She wanted one large enough to hold Satsang to be close to Robert.

This is typical guru behavior; creating chaos and anxiety where once there was order, which loosened attachments and roiled egos. He would do the same in all areas of life that could involve his disciples emotionally. He worked on people whenever they opened themselves, even a little, to his power.

***Second Awakening:
That One Is Not Real!***

On the third morning after Robert left Los Angeles, the moment that I awakened from sleep, something wonderful happened. I discovered in one instant who I was, and that I had always known who I was. I discovered that I had always been Self-Realized!

Once again, for the ten thousandth time of waking up, I had transitioned from the sleep state to the waking state, but this time, there was no change in the sense of who I was. Mostly, the sense of 'I' in dreams and the sense of "I" in the waking state, were similar, yet the sleeping 'I' disappeared when the waking 'I' became alive. The sense of palpability and clarity were very different and I emerged into a world that was relatively constant every day.

However, this time, there was no difference in the experience of 'me'. None! As I awakened, there was no transition. The same subjectivity prevailed unchanged throughout the apparent transition. I, whoever or whatever I was, was not touched by the phenomenality of the waking world or the dreaming world. I was beyond and apart from existence. Both

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

were just mind states added onto me, whoever that was, since there was no me.

You might say the dream me, and the waking me were gone but I was the same; both 'Me-s' were merely thought forms along with the entire dream world and waking dream world. All were thought stuff or in a mental space, what I called imaginal space which pervaded all reality until one wakes up.

A poor analogy would be like watching a movie on television. Then there was a commercial. Although there is an apparent transition from one sort of flickering light on the screen to another flickering light and different sounds, the watcher was not changed, not affected. The analogy fails if the watcher gets upset with the timing of the commercial.

Another analogy was as if you were lying under a sheet on the bed and someone took the sheet off. What you viewed would change, but you would not be changed at all.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I realized that the sleep and waking states were just superimpositions on me. Consciousness was a superimposition on me. Even the nothingness of deep sleep was a superimposition on me—at least it felt that way. Consciousness did not touch me. I was beyond sleep, dream or waking states. All these were happenings in consciousness, but none had anything to do with me. Consciousness had nothing to do with me. I was beyond all.

Consciousness itself is not real, but the awareness that I am not touched by consciousness is a knowledge expressed by consciousness within consciousness. Absolute subjectivity is beyond understanding. The Absolute does not know itself, it knows of itself as the constant substratum of changing phenomenality. The Absolute just is. However, knowledge of this and the expression of such knowledge is through consciousness.

This was a marvelous experience of Self-knowing, of recognizing and accepting my true nature. I could say at last, with full conviction, "I know who I am." Despite the body pain, despite the fear that still lingered, despite the anxiety of indecision about the move to Sedona, despite my desire to be with Robert and to save my cats from the animal shelter, all of which still crowded this mind, I now knew who I was. The body-mind would continue to do whatever it was supposed to do according to time and place, but it had

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

nothing to do with me. I was beyond the apparent ongoing turmoil of the body-mind.

In the Absolute, there is no body, no space, no time, no knowing and no non-knowing, no ignorance, no enlightenment, no vastness and no consciousness. All of that is happening in consciousness.

I wrote Robert of my turmoil and of the sudden experience of knowing who I was, but I did not have to seek verification. I knew who I was and I did not need confirmation. It was just icing on the cake when I talked to him a week later, about the experience, and he responded by saying, simply, "Congratulations, you are Self-Realized! Now do you feel completely happy?" I do not remember what my response was, but I did know that I was not touched by either happiness or unhappiness.

Although I would get tied up into being the body and into normal everyday life concerns, they no longer mattered, because I knew who I really was. As a matter of fact, I could now more easily return to the human condition because it did not frighten me. I did not like it much, but it did not frighten me. My body might still experience the appearance of fear, but that was phenomenality's concern, not mine. This feeling of being the owner of reality was associated with an increasing sense of certainty and boldness.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I also knew now that it was right for me to stay in Los Angeles. Robert, on the other hand, moved to a place apparently much worse for him. Of course, over and over he had said about everything, "It is only an appearance."

He had told me what would happen in Sedona after he moved there and he did not paint a pretty picture. He told me that the many promises of financial support would never be kept. He told me that the people there would fight among themselves to gain his favor. I think he felt the change in the physical surroundings might help his health because he knew something was wrong with his body, at least this is what Nicole told me later. The move to Sedona temporarily rejuvenated his health. He was as energetic as he had been in years, and even his voice improved. Perhaps he felt they needed him more.

That Robert reveled in chaos was a fact. I think he found it interesting. It kept him grounded and in this world, while mostly he was elsewhere, lost in the experience of the Absolute, even beyond Turiya, the seed consciousness of Self. He used to create this chaos everywhere around and among his students.

His wife, Nicole, after the 1994 Northridge earthquake, became obsessed by the notion that California was about to fall into the Pacific. From what she had read, Sedona was as close to the ocean as one could get and still be safe. Part of his moving, I am

sure, was due to her insistence.

In the end, I do not know why he moved and I don't think he did either. He just did, just as I did not.

I missed him terribly. I missed the walks, the drives, the lunches and dinners, and the constant teachings he gave by both word and deed. However, nothing was happening to open Sedona to me. My feral cat colonies were not being miraculously taken care of, and no one but Robert called me from Sedona asking me to come. I felt comfortable here even with many self-accepted responsibilities.

During the subsequent weeks, many people from the Los Angeles Satsang called me, telling me of their troubles, and asking how Robert was doing, and why I had not moved with him. They all urged me to stay in Los Angeles, saying they felt this is where I belonged, and that they couldn't picture me in Sedona, and frankly, neither could I.

I reiterate; the Sedona people never kept their promises, even the ones who went on the claim Robert as their teacher. Once Robert got there, he became their captive. He told me this is what would happen, yet he did it.

The Absolute, the Void, and Identification

While investigating deeply for years through meditative introspection, I found that the ‘I-thought’ actually pointed to nothing; there was no inner entity that the ‘I-thought’ pointed towards. Inside there was only emptiness, a vast inner space illuminated by its own light, which acted as a container for all kinds of mental objects, emotions and internal “energies.”

After awakening, It was so easy to mistake this self-illuminated emptiness as the Self, as ‘I’.

But it is not. It is still an experience occurring to a witnessing principle entirely beyond the world of existence: the unmanifest, the noumena, the Absolute, the ultimate subject, sometimes referred to as one’s unborn, true nature.

The ‘I-thought’, instead of pointing to an object, a ‘me’, actually pointed to the feeling ‘I-Am’, which, in turn, pointed to something completely different from a psychological or spiritual entity. It pointed to the subject of everything, the subject of all experience and knowledge, the Self, which was universal, and which is the Self of all.

The freedom I found in my awakening experience revealed that there was no inner objective entity, that

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

there was no Ed. Instead, there was only an inner emptiness. I did not exist!

By now you probably recognize that both the personal and spiritual life are all about identification, whether you identify with your body and your problems, with the inner Void, with emotions or thinking, with the Oneness of the first awakening, or with the Absolute, lying in a different dimension, watching the phenomenal world.

Do you identify with the objects of the imaginal space emanating from your non-existent mind?

Do you instead identify with the entire manifestation of consciousness, all phenomenality, the comings and goings of consciousness and objects in consciousness?

Or do you identify with the background witness to whom all comes and goes?

One might be tempted to call this background Pure consciousness or the Void, but it is beyond any concepts or pointers. Let us explore this more deeply.

At some moment you will become aware that there is at once a sense of existence and then it passes. In the morning, a sense of existence arises and disappears at sleep. There is something that is firmly aware of the comings and goings of this waking

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

consciousness. The "feeling" is that the existence and then non-existence states come to you. You know both that you are, and you know that you, at times, also are not.

This knowingness of the coming and going of the oneness consciousness state automatically reveals you are not that oneness state. That oneness state comes to you and then it leaves. You have nothing to do with it.

Once this conviction of a prior to "existence" is strong, a "disidentification" with the body/mind and the totality of the comings and goings of the world, dream and sleep can take place, supplanted by the firm knowledge that you are beyond all that.

To use ignorance producing words, there is an identification with that which cannot be perceived as who you really are. One becomes "That", but cannot be aware of "That", the final Witness, the Absolute.

Freedom is a disruption of the identification with phenomenality. First it is a disidentification with the objects in the imaginal world, both dream and waking, then a disidentification with the process of the coming and going of consciousness itself. You rest in yourself, having the position of "That" beyond all.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

You are before being and not being, awake and dream take place in time. You have no time.

With this knowledge comes peace, happiness, and an end to searching.

You have not attained 'You,' instead you have lost the false identification with the transient part of 'You,' the imaginal passing show of consciousness. You are the awareness of that consciousness, 'something' entirely separate from consciousness and sharing none of its characteristics.

When this disidentification comes, all the Jnana (Wisdom) sutras become clear.

When this disidentification comes; you realize 'You' are beyond all.

That realization is felt as absolute conviction associated with an immediate 'apprehension' that 'You' are beyond the comings and goings of consciousness. It is not merely an intellectual discovery or just a conviction, but a conviction that arises from a direct apprehension of your true nature. This apprehension is not an experience. Both experiences and ordinary convictions come and go. This is an apprehension at the deepest level of existence of that which lies prior to beingness, which Zen masters and Nisargadatta call the Unborn.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

This is not the end; it is the real beginning of sadhana. Before there was only practice and effort, but now you have the taste for and the direction of the Infinite; your unborn true self.

You are beyond even the knowledge that you are beyond all; but that knowledge liberates you from the all. Then you are totally free, abiding in that which is entirely beyond. Once you know this, stay there as often and long as you can until all humanhood is burnt out and exhausted and you live in peace.

Then, as Robert often said, you are happy beyond belief, fearless, for you cannot die as you realize you, as a human and even as consciousness, were never born. Then, though you appear to be human and functioning, and that identification is still possible for a long while, the sting of suffering is gone, and you are happy.

The Third Awakening: Self-Realization

My first and second awakening experiences occurred in 1995, the year Robert left Los Angeles. In 1997 Robert died of liver cancer. A few months later, my favorite cat, Satchi, also died of kidney failure.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Satchi was the most remarkable cat I ever knew. A small, tortoise shell, Exotic Shorthair with the fiercest look on her face due to an under bite exposing her lower fangs that scared the hell out of our other six cats.

Satchi ruled the house. If any two cats had an argument, within seconds Satchi was there, standing directly between them, challenging either to move, telling them there was no discord in her house. She dominated me with her love, daily mounting my lap, sitting on her throne of absolute rulership.

During the middle of 1997 she began showing the usual signs of kidney failure, a disease process confirmed by our vet, which caused weight loss, diminished appetite, and excessive thirst.

Having just lost Robert, I was determined that I was going to save Satchi no matter what. I had sort of a magical belief that reality was sort of fluid and could be changed purely by love and intentionality. My love for her grew in proportion to the care and attention I gave her.

Yet she grew weaker by the day. During her last two months, Kerima and I would take walks with her every evening. She would walk between us or a little behind as we walked around the block, stopping frequently to smell the grass, plants and trees.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

At first we walked entirely around the block taking a half hour or so, but as time passed, the walks got shorter and shorter.

One day I found her in her usual hiding place in her book cabinet. Her pupils were large and fixed. She was slipping into a coma.

We took her to our vet and blood tests revealed multiple organ failure and whole body rigidity. We had her put to sleep just in case she was in pain. Subsequently, we have had two cats die peacefully at home due to kidney failure, rapidly passing into a coma and dying within minutes. But in 1997, we did not know death could come so peacefully and lovingly absent medical help.

Satchi's death crushed me. I felt I had invested my entire life's spirit into her care and healing and I had failed. I had felt if only I loved her enough and cared for her enough, she would have lived. Yet, I had done just that: I had poured my life into her healing and had failed. My love had failed. I had failed. I felt shattered and my belief in the power of love was also shattered.

Very shortly after that I began to slip into a deep depression that was to last almost three years. The Great Void swallowed me entirely. I barely moved as the darkness and bleakness of the darkness descended

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

on me. I was barely aware of the world. Everything was only the deadness inside.

One may ask, “How can anyone be depressed if no Self was experienced?” To that I can only answer that even if there were no Self experienced, there was just the experience of deadness of emotion, the absence of any emotion except grief, and that the experiential world had become very dark, as if wearing perpetual sunglasses everywhere.

In any event, in 2000, I entered a UCLA medication study of the effectiveness of a new drug for the treatment of depression, and the depression was gone within six weeks. The darkness lifted; light returned to my world and heart.

This all goes to prove that you can have realized no-self, oneness, and even realize that oneness is not real, but the darkness and heaviness of depression can still pervade the body-mind. Emotions and moods continued to manifest, spread, and then pass away. They happened to consciousness, not to Ed, in the same way that cancer or heart disease is not cured by awakening.

By 2003, for the first time, I felt a movement to share Robert’s teachings with the world and put up the website www.itisnotreal.com, which eventually grew

into a teaching site with a question and answer section.

The site expanded and I added a teaching blog in 2006, www.itisnotreal.blogspot.com, and began receiving questions and responses from students of Robert, or of Advaita, from all over the world.

By late 2009 a few readers had put together an online Satsang forum using various programs.

By this time the depression was long gone. For years I had felt nothing but the peace of a detached resting in the Absolute, into that intuition of a noumenal existence entirely beyond, or more precisely, lying prior to the world of phenomena. The peace was so exquisite, so profound and totally impersonal.

I had no idea what was to befall me over the next few months; a situation so remarkable, so enlivening, so breathtaking, that I was to be awakened out of that peaceful repose by the most astounding love and an ignition of internal energies so very powerful, energizing, and exciting, that it changed everything. I was to change from someone attuned only to understanding, to one hopelessly entranced and changed by the power of love.

Personal Love

In 2009 I met a woman who came to satsang in Los Angeles. We only saw each other face to face three times over two years, but we developed the most intense love relationship imaginable which culminated in the development of sensitivity to internal energies: Kundalini, Chi, Prana, whatever you choose to call them, and an experience of Krishna or Christ Consciousness.

I am not a romance novel writer so I will make no attempt to write about what we actually experienced in this love in real time, but I will talk about it. I will use a pseudonym of Rene to protect her identity, and change some data, but Reno could be anyone. It is not important who she is; I am only suggesting that intense human love can result in Self-Realization for those who are open to levels of love beyond the physical or emotional.

Rene was married with two small children and unhappy in her marriage, while I was a dried-out Jnani busy spending my life as a witness, watching events and emotions pass by or through me, leaving me a peaceful and happy observer—a little dry, but definitely happy.

Over a two year period we each developed an

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

ability to experience love both more deeply and more intensely than either of us had experienced it before, as well as to “tease” out subtleties and different “colors” of love.

We also learned how to feel and to a degree, control the flow of internal energies experienced in a myriad of ways.

Sometimes these energies felt something like subtle electric currents that would flow through our muscles. Sometimes they felt like a fluid flowing through nerve channels. Sometimes they almost felt like a breeze that flowed through our internal sense of emptiness and presence.

Rene and I both experienced these flows becoming increasingly blissful. Sometimes the flow would stop, like a bottled up ecstasy, which for Rene culminated in frequent and sometimes almost continuous orgasms, and for me remained as ecstatic states that could last for days.

It felt also that when I loved her, and she I, we experienced the love we had for the other as our own love alone: something we created for the “other,” but which was totally our creation. At various points both she and I identified with the love itself; that is, we felt as if we became love and only love, and that was our identification.

With this love we felt and expressed over a 2,000

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

mile separation, we both sensed an immense growth in the I-sensation, the I-feeling, which gradually expanded into a sense of presence, which was like a

sentence bubble surrounding and interpenetrating our body/minds and extended into the external world. That is, that which I considered myself to be, was that sense of presence, when before that, I had identified with the witness, and before that, with no-self. Now I identified with that energy-sentience presence that surrounded my body/mind.

I had come 360 degrees, from a sense of being an I-entity, to No-I, to a no-Consciousness witness, to once again a sense of 'I' as a presence with an 'I Am' center of awareness.

Even after that the love continued to grow until it became so profound and ecstatic that we often just fell to our knees in awe of its intensity and wonder. It began to feel like God's love as it seemed bigger than either of us, so ecstatic, so powerful and awesome. It began to feel like a continuous state of grace.

The Self as Other: Self-Realization

During March of 2011 we both had an identical experience of the 'I Am', of the Self of all arising in us separately.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

One day in March, I awoke feeling intense energies permeating my body. It is hard to explain what it is like, but it felt like my body and sense of presence were empty, a vast inner emptiness that contained all of my body's experiences like a balloon that was expanding by the pressure of the intense and ecstatic energies pushing outwards from my heart.

Suddenly, I felt a tremendous energy and light explode from my gut that slowly worked its way upwards, powerfully, inevitably, towards my heart. It is so hard to describe it, this "Self."

It was like a violent volcano of exploding energy and brilliant white light, like an expanding explosion arising from within, upwards into my heart and even further upwards into my head and beyond.

The energy was so beyond anything I had ever felt that it blew me, Ed, away, yet there was a residual personal left who felt nothing but awe at the ascent of the divine within me, which I felt as other from the personal me still present, but which I now recognize as the I-Am or Self that Ramana, Robert, and Nisargadatta talked about, and also referred to as Krishna or Christ Consciousness.

Any words I use miss the point entirely and diminish the experience. There are no words grand

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

enough to describe the purity, power and enlivenment that the arising Self gave me.

This experience needs to be repeated over and over until the little self becomes merged with that Self as a continuous presence.

Nisargadatta describes his own experience of Krishna consciousness in his little book about his own awakening, titled, *Self Knowledge and Self-Realization* found on the www.wearesentience.com and the <http://itisnotreal.com> websites.

Conclusions

It is in this way, through personal love for another human, that I found another “awakening,” both personal and transcendental, that made all previous awakenings almost meaningless in comparison. I found out that the most direct “path” for any realization must pass through that Self-Realization experience, the seeing and then becoming the Self of all. The awakening to oneness and to witnessing consciousness from Beyond, from the position of the Absolute were both absent of emotion and humanity and required Self-Realization for completion.

They were not states of being human or personal,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

while Self-Realization, though “divine” in the sense that at first it felt entirely beyond the personal, in the end merged with the personal and brought the divine back into everyday life as transforming energies and love. This is essentially the descent of the divine back into the flesh, becoming human once again.

Only in this way can a teacher truly transform anyone else because he can see directly into a person’s heart, not just into their essence, and use that seeing to effect change, directly from his own heart, or by creating a context that will change the student. That is, he learns how to cook with love and heart energy, and “entrain” the student to his own beingness and love.

One’s humanity is reclaimed through love and devotion towards all inner phenomena that arises in consciousness, but also by loving devotion in the world, to another person, a lover, a child, a guru, or even an animal.

Here, real-world change happens where before you were merely an explorer of the inner world. After awakening to one’s non-existence as a mental object, one now needs to become a lover of all experiences arising from within, such as emotions and energies, and also a lover of everything and everyone in the world.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

At this point, a whole new world and a whole new me can be born, one of an infinitely changing fullness of the heart, where emotions and internal energies, the so called Chi and Kundalini energies, and their blissful and ecstatic offspring, have as much or more power than anything in the formerly experienced external world.

A new world is experienced, one of magic, where walls, trees, grass, and the moon are seen more as sentient and living entities as opposed to mere objects. We begin to see the entire world as energies and consciousness which constantly changes and flows. It is the mind with its network of thought, which imposes an apparently solidity and permanence onto the flux of consciousness.

All this too passes as we begin to understand the transitory nature of all experience, even transcendental experience, and allow ourselves to open to all movements of energy, emotions and thought through our bodies and our sense of presence.

We accept all experiences. We accept love, loss, fear, jealousy, and hatred first as guests, passing through our consciousness, and then sometimes as identified with us, as the host. We identify with the feelings rather than as an entity experiencing feelings. Nothing is solid and fixed.

The 'I' and reality flow and change constantly, but

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I, as a law-abiding member of society, taxpayer, husband, or wife, is not destroyed, but I realize that I am much, much more than this. I am without boundaries or labels. I am beyond both body and mind. I am the vastness of space and the light of consciousness at the same time. I am also the presence that pervades all of space, both inner and outer, and through which ecstasy and bliss commonly flow and then spill out into the world of men.

I am also human. I have a body. I have desires. I have emotions. I seek love and give love as part of everyday life, just as I dress each morning and sleep each evening. I am everything, human and divine, and nothing is to be despised or thrown away once you live from the heart with the mind now functioning as an obedient servant.

To me, the only truth to be found anywhere is one's own truth as found in one's own uninterpreted experiences left unexpressed, for as soon as you open your mouth, you have lied. You have put the underlying fluxing consciousness into fixed words and concepts. You thereby tell a falsehood, which someone else will interpret in their own way, and then tell their version of that lie to someone else as a new truth. Only when you are silent, with mind quieted, living from the heart, only then will you live in truth.

This is so very, very important. You do not live in truth as long as your attention and energies are

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

focused in your brain, dealing with images, concepts, ideas, communication, and doing. The closest you can come before awakening, is to rest in the sight and love of your beloved, whether teacher, lover, parent, or child.

As long as you look to perfect yourself, to “kill the ego,” to become more “pure,” to become enlightened or more loving, to become what you think you should be, instead of honestly being who and what you are, you will always be unhappy, dry and incomplete.

The only spiritual concept that means anything to me is “Self-Realization,” gaining knowledge and acceptance of who and what you are, and you are so very, very extraordinary, far beyond even your most exotic concepts.

You have no idea of how extraordinary you are until you start looking within yourself instead of outside in spiritual books, poetry, the various gitas, Bibles, Koran, and to all the gurus in the world. None can show you how extraordinary you are, because your inner and outer worlds are unbelievably rich beyond your present imagination, once you begin to explore all levels of your existence with an open mind and heart.

The world you will discover is like a spiritual mansion with hundreds of rooms of differing experiences, such as emptiness, love, ecstasy,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Kundalini and Chi energies, auras and healing, silence and peace, and each could take months to explore.

Other rooms are not so nice to dwell in, but they need to be explored also or else they keep showing up at the oddest and most inconvenient times, demanding recognition.

There are vast riches inside, many, many kinds of emptiness and Voids that act as containers for all inner and outer experiences. There is love and self-love, so deep, so vast, yet so ephemeral and so sweet that you will drop to your knees in awe and utter shock at the grace someone or something has bestowed on you. You can feel love as grace, as healing, as an all-filling sweet fragrance that then dissipates into objectless samadhis and utter devotion to God or consciousness, whatever interpretation you bring to that experience.

You may have experiences of the rising of a deep power and energy from inside your torso and heart that arises and shows you, the human you, the splendor of your true deepest Self, the 'I Am', the so called Fourth State of Turiya.

You truly will experience love so deep you feel like you no longer need to breathe and you become as light

as a cloud, totally complete and fulfilled, and this experience will fill your life and body with such bliss that you will feel you cannot tolerate it any more, that

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

you will explode in ecstasy.

You can fall in love like you were 20 again. You can discover an aspect of self, one's sense of presence that permeates both body and mind, and fills you with energy, love, and the life force itself.

Finally and gradually, all the great spiritual sayings, all the works of all the masters will become increasingly clear to you after you have let go of the need to understand, for you will be dwelling in your heart, operating from the heart, with a silent mind that is the heart's perfect servant. One will reach out into the world from your heart, feeling the world, touching it, loving it, others, and yourself, totally, tenderly, and compassionately.

This is what this book is about, it is a manual on how to escape being the servant of your mind, to find your true self in the heart as well as all the other spiritual rooms of existence that are also you on many different levels. You are a very, very complex entity, with many levels of existence. Yet, the paradox is, the more you know you, the less you appear to exist!

As wondrous as these discoveries are, I am not saying the path is easy. In a sense it means a radical

falling away of all ideas and self-concepts, of all beliefs, and of the conventions which are your life. I am not saying you will lose everything, but you must be ready to lose everything; and much will be lost,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

such as ignorance, pain, and a numbness to life: and with it, you will also feel more deeply the sorrow of the world and an awakened sense of compassion and the need to be your brother's keeper, along with the power to actually make changes in the world. Yet, some of you will find so much peace and happiness that you will not feel moved to change or perfect anything in the world. You will be at peace and at love.

So, this is a spiritual book which provides the message and tools to study yourself, find your sense of core existence, the 'I Am' and to love it. Also it strongly suggests that you find someone or something in the world to love, to awaken the ability to love in you, watch the love grow until it is completely unbearable, and then you will discover that love is from you, you have created it, **YOU ARE LOVE ITSELF!** That is one of the major rooms one finds in that inner mansion.

With that discovery and many others like it, you will become complete, whole, loved, find that your essence transcends even life itself, that all of existence is only your plaything. Not that you can

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

always change any of it, but the bite, the sting will be gone from your own suffering, and you will find a profound self-courage.



Self Realization Lake Shrine, Pacific Palisades.

The Helicopter

One day while listening to a Teisho at Mount Baldy Zen Center given by Sasaki Roshi, he mentioned that one of his students from the Los Angeles center had complained about helicopters flying overhead during meditation and at night. The student was deeply disturbed and distracted by their passing. Cimarron is located in one of the poorer and more crime ridden parts of town, and police and news helicopters are ever present.

Sasaki had responded to him, “You only feel this way because it is not your helicopter. If it were your helicopter you would delightedly point to the sky and tell others, ‘That is my helicopter!’ Because it is not yours, you feel irritated because it interrupts your pattern and what you are doing. But if it were your helicopter, it would be following your bidding.”

Is not that true for all of us? It is when we think something is out of our control, that it becomes an irritant, whether it is our obsessive thinking, or the noise of the air conditioner at the apartment next door, or a barking dog.

Now this is what spirituality is all about: identification and what we identify with. If we can

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

identify with everything as me, then there are no problems.

As I have said many times before, spirituality is exploring all the dimensions of self, and the analogy I used is that the self is as a hundred room mansion, and we need to enter and explore every room so we feel comfortable in any part of the house, even those parts that we have not so far owned, such as rejected anger, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, depression, and jealousy, as well as the entire “apparently external” world.

Through the spiritual “work” process, through internal investigation and abiding in the ‘I Am’, and eventually abiding in the Self, we experience all the dimensions and aspects of the Self, all the hidden rooms and closets, the basements and the attics, and the penthouses of our inner and outer mansion. We own it all, and then we are able to pass easily from room to room, emotion to emotion, apparent problem to apparent problem, from depression to bliss, from physical pain to sleep, from sorrow to deepest love, all without batting an eye, totally identified with whatever arises, or with the emptiness that contains it, or with both, or with neither, because it is all us, me, ‘I Am’; nothing hostile, nothing threatening, just me.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

We become infinitely pliable, sometimes being the witness or host, sometimes identifying with the feelings, sometimes both simultaneously, becoming oneness, and sometimes we identify with none of the phenomena, taking the position of the Absolute, as pure, untouched witness.

In essence, we accept everything as ‘me’, which is the first stage; meaning we can pass easily from room to room, state to state, engage in any activity or rest, while equally enjoying everything. This is the first stage, learning everything is me.

For example, we look around us; we look at the walls of our room that we are in at this moment, or the trees and sky if we are outside. It feels external to us, that we are separate from it as the “outside.”

But there is something you have to realize, without you, as the subject, there is no object, there is no external world. People in that external world can tell you there is an external world, but they are telling ‘you’ the subject. They are just objects too. But you “precede” any of them. If you did not exist, there would be no “external world” from the viewpoint of where your body is in that particular, apparent space-time of that external world.

That is, there may be an external world that is objective to all, but without you being present as

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

sentience, as the subject; there would be no awareness of that external world at your apparent place in that space. You are an individual drop of sentience sitting in a chair at Starbucks, creating the huge infinity of the world. This is the greatness of your power, part of the magnificence of your mansion, but you miss it because the world does not appear to be yours, but an “other.”

In this sense, with you as creator, that external world and everything in it is yours. Without you being present, as subject, as witness, there would be no external world. You must understand this.

Secondly, if you go very deeply inside during meditation, when you plunge deeply into your inner self experience, at some point you will suddenly “turn around” and face the “outside” again, and totally emerge outside of yourself so to speak, outside of that “inner self” that you had been diving into deeply, and reenter the world without any mind, without any mental activity whatsoever.

Your body and mind will have disappeared, and there will only be the external world. Then there will only be the sound of an airplane passing overhead, the sound of the wind in the trees, the green forest blowing in the wind against the blue sky background, and you will “BECOME THE WORLD”.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

That is, you as body/mind will have disappeared, and only the “external” world as perceived will exist, and you will become that. This is called Nirvakalpa samadhi. There is only Oneness here; one consciousness, one world and you are that.

Everything is me in this world. You identify with everything in the external world. You know by direct seeing, direct feeling, that everything in the world is you because your body and mind do not exist anymore. Your mind is not thinking, and you are no longer aware of your body. You see your identity with every THING in the world which moments before were apparently external to you. When the ‘you’ disappears, ‘YOU’ becomes much larger, embracing everything as your identity.

But this is not awakening. The state is temporary, but it does show you that consciousness is Oneness, that it is the mind that creates the separation between the apparent you when you are not in samadhi, and the external world which is ‘YOU’ when the self-awareness of being a little person confined to a body disappears. Then there is only one consciousness, at least on the surface, identification with the world as seen by the senses, but we have yet to penetrate the many levels lower into consciousness, heading for the deepest level of consciousness, and then beyond. This

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

identification with the totality of the world is just a beginning of mansion-exploration.

The next level down after the gross external world percept is the world of thought, which is part of what the Jnanis (Self-Realized persons in the eastern traditions) call the subtle body. When we have practiced meditation long enough, we can actually watch thoughts come and go, as external waifs, subtle entities, much like tiny ghosts that are translucent, the size of a nickel floating around inside the visual field around us.

These are universal thoughts; these are the thoughts of the human race and our culture. These are thoughts like “chair,” “right and wrong,” “should and should not,” “atom,” “molecule,” “racial identity,” “dog or cat,” “husband,” “wife,” and “family.” All these thoughts float around throughout our culture, through our sense of presence, inside of our bodies, and some come to rest in our brain where they take root and we think, evaluate and judge, and create an external world versus an internal world, me versus not me.

Thus thought creates the apparent external world, it divides the YOU into me versus the not me or world.

Sooner or later you begin to understand that thinking is the problem, and that you have to sink

deeper into consciousness to find reality, whatever that is.

Then you go deeper, you let your awareness sink deeper into the consciousness of yourself, deeper than the mind or emotions. Some neo-Advaitins believe that emotions arise only after the mind creates stories to sustain them. This is not true, although the mind can create stories that do cause emotions, mostly the emotions arise first, and then stories arise.

For example, a growling dog running towards us creates fear, and fear is an emotion. Then we may think about being bitten, and then run like hell. Emotions are like that; sometimes they are immediate responses to situations in the apparently external world, and are very primitive ways of adaptively reacting to the world.

Or else we see our girlfriend talking to some other guy in what appears to be a very intimate way, and instantaneously we freeze, we feel an explosion in our chest, our whole body freezes, with shock and utter disbelief, and then fear arises. This is jealousy, full-blown. Then we may create stories which sustain the jealous feelings, but initially it is felt as a crushing explosion and being stunned into silent disbelief that our lover may disappear.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

This emotionality is perhaps the most difficult level of our existence we have to explore. This is the level that is most frightening for most people. This is the level of our existence that most disturbs us, and it is what causes most people to run into spirituality in the first place, to escape emotional suffering.

This is the world of depression, rage, anxiety, fear, jealousy, hopelessness, helplessness, sorrow, loss, but also of love, longing, and desire, which can lead to pure energy states of bliss and ecstasy, which themselves are created from internally moving oceans of love, longing and devotion that we begin to feel.

This is the level where psychotherapy works, where psychotropic medication works, where your devotion and love lead to increased sensitivity and desire to feel all of your emotions, no matter how fear provoking, no matter how frightening, no matter how dense they appear, because we know that with the full feeling of them, and the full acceptance of them, comes increasing fearlessness to experience all the parts of our self.

This is the most difficult level of all. Very few people ever completely experience all aspects of their emotionality that have been repressed since childhood, by society, convention, and parental teaching. It is my belief that this area is mostly

ignored by all of the Asian religions and spiritual

practices, except the part about devotion.

It is this level that Asian spiritual practices mostly miss, and this explains the “failures” of many eastern teachers in our society. A few deal with emotionality, like Rajneesh, and utilize emotionality to make spiritual progress, but others, such as Ramana, Nisargadatta and my own teacher, Robert Adams, ignored this part of the Self.

For example, many Ramana followers refer to emotions as “guests,” as they are temporary, transient, and in that sense, unreal, and we should not identify with them. I think this is a big mistake to reject portions of our experience as ‘not-I’, just because they are temporary. Such a mindset can lead to a sense of aloofness, an uncaring attitude towards suffering, and also of being authentic in the moment.

We are taught from an early age what feelings are acceptable and ok to express, and those that are unacceptable and must be repressed, especially in the area of sexuality. We learn morality, create a super ego that tells us what to do in particular situations: which feelings to repress, which feelings to deny, which creates a tight container of repression around an area of feelings which are always trying to escape and be owned by the totality of our consciousness. Psychology explores all the kinds of mechanisms that

the mind uses to suppress these emotions, and how the emotions gradually leak through mental mechanisms in

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

order to express themselves unconsciously, and often in destructive ways.

Most people who go into spirituality should really be with a good psychotherapist so that they learn how to dwell in a full acceptance of the personal, the vulnerable human side of oneself, as opposed to the transcendental side that Ramana, Nisargadatta and Robert Adams talk about.

Most spiritual seekers have an idea of the transcendental side, of what Ramana's interior life was like, and want to reach that stage of "imagined" love, self acceptance, and being untouched by life, and want to go there without going through an opening of all of their emotionality, vulnerability, fragility, brokenness and fear.

But as Ken Wilbur pointed out, as well as many others, the stuff that was never completed, the emotional work that was never completed, especially revolving around issues of love and losing love, will always come around to bite you again, no matter how much progress you make towards the transcendental, no matter how many states of samadhi you have experienced, no matter how many times you had lucid dreams, no matter how many times you have touched the 'I Am' and then been immersed in it, you will

always be pulled back into dealing with your humanity and the human condition. You can do it now, or do it later after years of frustrating seeking and trying to

attain the Absolute.

Next we go a little deeper, into what Siddharameshwar called the “causal body.” This is an extremely important experience for the foundation of finally attaining the Absolute.

The essence of the causal body is of “ignorance” of the absence of knowledge, otherwise known as consciousness. The causal body, when witnessed itself, also provides the special structure which allows the world to be created in, for the world cannot be seen except as spread out in three dimensions within the flow of time. This is the inherent internal structure of sentience to arrange all things for consciousness to make sense of the world by creating inner and outer space, and is called emptiness or the Void.

The Causal Body is that Void, and to reach awakening, Self-Realization, requires thorough awareness of the Void on every level of being. We must know and love the peacefulness of emptiness, of the Void, because that peacefulness “eats” the fear, blocking further exploration and self-acceptance.

When entering the causal body, the mind becomes hard like a rock. The brain feels heavy. Thinking stops. There is no room in the brain for thought to enter. One feels as if one is going unconscious, because in many

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

ways, thinking and awareness go together, and when thinking stops, awareness sometimes stops also. One feels that one is sinking into sleep, into nothingness, non-existence. We are self-aware that our awareness is getting dimmer and dimmer.

Then a moment passes, and we recognize for a period of time, we were not aware at all. We “remember” that for a moment we were not conscious of anything, we were not self-aware, yet we know we existed because something in us remembers that we did not exist for a period of time.

The same with sleep; is it not true that we can have dreamless sleep and awaken during the middle of the night and feel “in our guts” that some hours have passed? We may not know how many, but even if in a dark room we know it is not time to get up yet. Our body is not yet rested enough. We know we have been asleep for more than 10 minutes, but do not know exactly how many hours. However, we are aware, that we were not aware of anything or of ourselves during some period of time. That is, we know it in our gut so to speak, that we existed, but were not aware of our existence for some duration in time. We know that we

did not know anything for a while. This is called “knowing ignorance.”

In other words, we are aware that sometimes we are not aware, not self-aware, nor aware of the world.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Then at other times, consciousness appears, existence appears, phenomena appear. This is what Nisargadatta calls “knowledge.” The phenomenal world, its appearance, he calls knowledge.

Then he says, there is a principle in us that is aware or awareness, and also is aware of not being aware at times. The way he puts it is there is a principle in us that recognizes knowledge and the absence of knowledge or ignorance. There is in us a principle which recognizes consciousness, and then the disappearance of consciousness.

This is something you must study profoundly. You must become deeply aware yourself, of that principle which is there before consciousness arrives, is there while consciousness is present, and is there when consciousness leaves, and this consciousness is knowledge of existence of the world and all other levels of inner awareness, as well as the leaving of awareness. Siddharameshwar and Nisargadatta call this the supra-causal body, or the ‘I Am’, which is also known as Turiya, or the fourth state.

This is the fundamental state of existence; this is the fundamental level of consciousness; this is where the sense of ‘I Am’ arises; this is the fundamental state which permeates all the others, the causal body that recognizes the coming and going of consciousness, the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

intellect, emotions, and the gross world and body that we see on the surface, what most people call the “real” world. It is the attaining of the recognition and direct experience of Turiya, the ‘I Am’, which is called Self-Realization.

I mentioned above that when one passes through the causal body when diving deep into one’s inner space, the void, suddenly the mind drops totally out of the brain, and the little you disappears, awareness of the body and mind disappears, and suddenly the big ‘YOU’ appears, which is identical with the totality of the world—just one consciousness, and you are that.

This is the ‘I Am’ state of Oneness; Turiya permeates all the other states. But in Oneness, you have identified with Turiya, the totality of existence with no division between ‘YOU’ and the world. There is just Oneness.

Now the exploration of Turiya can actually take years, because it has so many different facets, so many different essences, so many different qualities, such as love, bliss, ecstasy, devotion, grace, and a sense of the divine, of being held in “God’s” hands so

to speak. It is an experience of the transcendental, of being beyond this world, of being the totality of love and all of the other qualities we miss-attribute to God, which is really part of ‘YOU’, yourself.

This is when you may begin to experience amazing

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

things, such as experiences of the rising of the Self within one's own consciousness as an ordinary human being-witness, and recognizing from some mysterious place that you are that majestic, awful, huge energetic being that is rising in you like God with immense majesty. You cannot take your eyes off of this ecstatic entity that you are, filled with light, love, devotion and energy; then follows repeated experiences thusly of Self-Realization.

However, even this is not the last step. There is one more.

At some point you realize that all of this experience, all of the world, all of consciousness including the various samadhis, blisses, ecstasies, love, and Self-Realizations are happening to that basic principle of sentience, that which is aware of the coming and going of consciousness. Even Turiya is witnessed, but by what?

Consciousness may come of these huge experiences, all of these life-changing experiences of Self-Realization, unity, oneness, bliss, ecstasy, yet

there is a principle which is aware of all this, and then also is aware of all this passing away into ignorance. Consciousness and the lack of consciousness, with the disappearance of consciousness, are both seen as not touching that basic principle of Sentience which witnesses both, which is prior to both, which is prior to

consciousness and unconsciousness.

This is what Siddharameshwar, Nisargadatta, and Robert mean by “Para-Brahman.” This is the state beyond states, Turiyatta, or the Absolute, or the Witness, which in Zen is called the Unborn. This “state” is not a state because it is entirely beyond existence. The term “state” belongs to consciousness and the Absolute is beyond consciousness, as if in a different dimension of non-existence, like the universe before the Big Bang.

This is yet a further understanding, a refinement of your spiritual intelligence, a final growing up.

The entirety of the hundred or thousand room mansion of spiritual experience rests on this Sentience. Without this underlying principle there would be no awareness of anything, not of Self or of the world.

At first you hear this truth as expressed by Siddharameshwar, Nisargadatta and by me. After a while you begin to feel it is true. After a while you

begin to feel the truth as a deep conviction spread throughout your entire body, you feel it is true in a completely different way than you experience knowledge of the world, or book knowledge, or knowledge of the sutras, or knowledge of what gurus say.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

You feel it as truth in your own deepest sense of being. The truth permeates throughout you and your body as utter conviction. Ramesh Balsekar refers to this way of knowing as “apperception.” One apperceives that one exists prior to existence, and that this “witness,” “entity,” Para-Brahman is ‘You’, the deepest part of you, and with it comes utter self-confidence and fearlessness.

You also realize that that state of Nirvakalpa Samadhi that you experience after the mind disappears and you become the whole world, is where the absolute, Para-Brahman, identifies with the ‘I Am’, with oneness. This is the highest experiential state, but now you realize it as the “knowledge” of Turiya, the fourth state, by that which is beyond any state, any existence, and you are “That”. However, unlike Advaita, our way is not to exclude the temporary, the world and emotions as us, but to be able to dive into that human flux, and not get stuck in the transcendent.

At this point, you are now able to go back and explore all other rooms of your spiritual mansion left unseen by your haste to get to the conclusion. You can begin once again to explore the inner world of feared emotions that could not be faced before, feelings of guilt, worthlessness, hopelessness, jealousy and rage, but we do it in a different way now, fearlessly, and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

having passed through the causal body which gives us the space to experience everything, we can explore and feel now as never before, fearlessly, without the sting and hurt we used to feel.

In the Zen scheme, this is returning to the marketplace, being totally oneself, for everything is me and I am comfortable with me wherever consciousness takes me, however it unfolds.

Letter from Student:

I have been reading all your notes and they have truly been speaking to me. I just feel like sharing with you. I feel deeply understood by your words.

I am 47 years old now. For the last 12 years I lived with a man, a good man. We started like any couple, fully in love, but gradually, with all the pain that comes from an attachment (He flirted a lot), I grew to witness it and reached a place with him where we became like close platonic friends. There was a lot of pain but it all went away. I painted. I wrote poetry. I

headed a team of 26 physical therapists. I was busy and contented, I thought.

Till one year ago, a young man, 22 years of age, joined as a therapist and we fell in love. I think I must have suppressed so much. I did not realize how many beliefs I had lived with, but they all went out of the window. I told my partner I had fallen in love with this

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

new person and I left his home with a suitcase. He was very hurt but there was no holding me back. I was ready to live with this 22 year old and we even tried. In fact, my boss, for whom we both work (in different capacities) asked us to shift together to another city.

I went crazy. Nothing and nobody's judgment on this mattered to me. But soon I found out he was not as much in love with me or ready to live together as I was, and it all broke down. I became like a 20 year old, madly in love. Now he has gone. I live alone and work, and it was revealed to me, a past lifetime with this person where he died 2 weeks before our wedding. So much is the same this life.

I know better, I understand and even feel the truth of things, as in, the joy and peace of not needing anything; but for some reason, I just cannot let go of this person.

I was like a spiritual person seeking freedom (I was initiated 15 yrs ago), but became so dead.

And this person 'kissed alive my dead days'. And now I am in deep anguish and a feeling of such loss. He has moved on. I feel so deeply alone and deserted. Some days, there is a quiet acceptance of all things but mostly a deep and unfathomable craving to be with this person; just trying to live. My heart feels so very broken, so shattered.

I tend to be very intense and very vulnerable in

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

love. And I think I have scared away this person, even though I 'gave' all the freedom to him. I never held him, never made rules for him; I even helped him to decide to meet an old girlfriend of his whom I knew he felt like meeting.

I feel like a schizophrenic person - one part of me longs, pines away for him and the other part of me made choices that helped him go his way. I don't even know how to explain this.

I don't know how closure can happen here. How does it all heal? I just felt like talking to you; something so kind in your face.

My Response:

You have made a tremendous discovery. Much of spirituality ends in deadness. After 15 years of spiritual practices, which I assume means meditation and reading about non-attachment, and going into

Krishna or Christ consciousness or such, or to Para-Brahman, and being in a love relationship that died, you had died. Then, like me, you were "kissed alive." Now your heart is torn open and you feel great anguish, self-doubt, second guessing, wondering what you did wrong, depressed and angry.

But in fact you are just beginning a new journey of aliveness, rawness, and intensity that eventually can result in the greatest of all awakenings, Self-

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Realization through love of others and of your own Self, your 'I Am'. Though the intense emotionality may seem hard to bear now, it will likely get even worse, and by that, I mean more intense. It is this intensity, gradually growing in strength, that prepares your body, and your sense of presence, which is your self-awareness of who you are, for both an awakening of spiritual intelligence, but also prepares the way for the Self, as 'I Am,' to reveal itself to you, as 'You'.

Self-Realization and Other
Awakenings



Siddharameshwar, Nisargadatta's guru.

Consciousness Diagram

This diagram characterizes one model of consciousness as “experienced” by meditators in one Advaita tradition, namely that of Nisargadatta Maharaj and his teacher Siddharameshwar. You need to understand that all models are false, incomplete metaphors, but at the same time can offer the seeking mind a conceptual structure to hang on to, allowing the seeker to stop philosophizing about consciousness, and to just dive within. Other teachers will have other models, other methods, and the students will make other discoveries. There is no one best way, or best awakening.

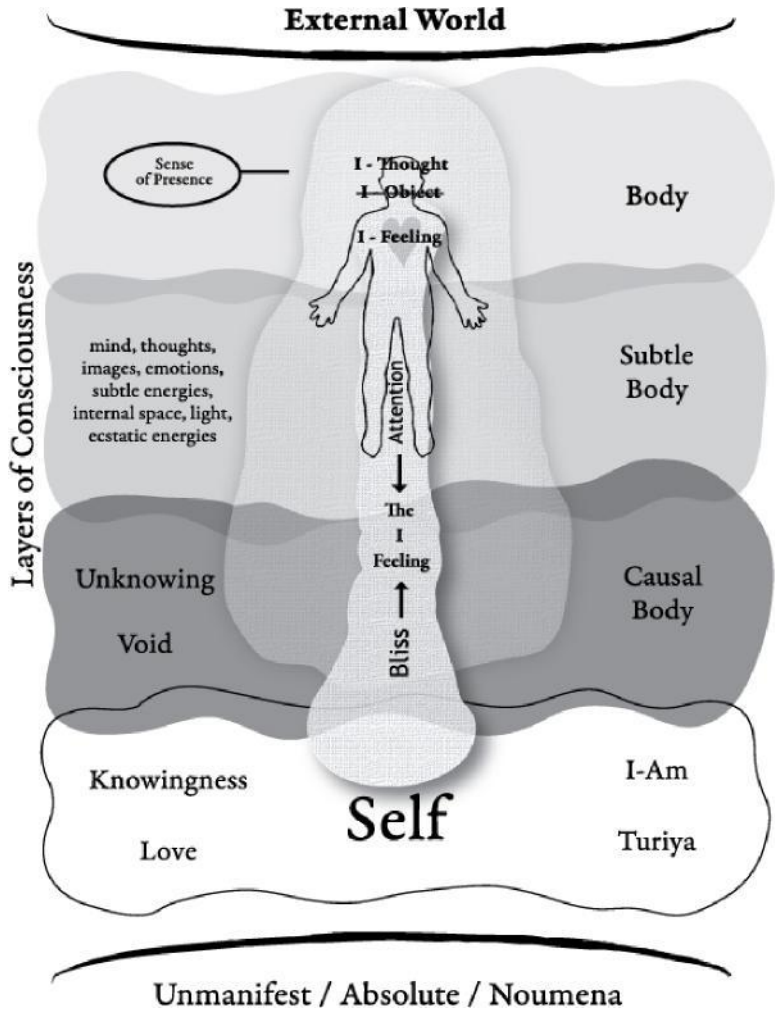
Siddharameshwar states there are four levels of consciousness, starting with the everyday experience of body and world. This is where everyone habitually lives.

“Below” that, or one might say, more “subtle” than that is the Subtle Body, which is our inner, “mental” world of inner space or void, the light of consciousness, emotions, and the internal energies, whether called Kundalini, Chi, or Prana.

Below that is the great dark Void where the meditator entirely loses awareness of the world, the Subtle body, and even all self awareness. It is a state of conscious sleep, wherein after one has returned from this state, he or she “remembers” that he or she was still existent, but there is no trace of what this state was like experientially. It is a veil of forgetfulness and is the flip side of “knowingness.” The Absolute knows both knowing and unknowing.

Below that is our core Self experience, the 'I Am', Turiya. Its nature is of brilliant light, ecstatic love, and infinitely flowing energies, or Shakti. This bliss energy “leaks” upwards, through the Causal and Subtle bodies, into the everyday awareness of the persistent meditator.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings



Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

One arrives at this state by locating the sense of 'I' within one's Subtle Body and following it "downwards" through the Causal Body into the core Self, Turiya. Bliss and the 'I Am' feeling open a "tunnel" for the meditator to follow in order to claim the deepest state of personal consciousness.

After experiencing this state for a while, the meditator recognizes that although this state IS the 'I-Am' feeling, that he or she is still apart from it. He or she really is beyond the totality of consciousness itself as the supreme witness, the Absolute, the Noumenal Self which can never be seen as an object, but only experienced when becoming the Absolute. To the meditator in this state, consciousness is felt to be insubstantial, an unreal presence that comes and goes, and the only reality is the unmoving witness of the Absolute, which 'I Am'.

It is from this noumenal, non-existence that the world and all four bodies of consciousness emerge. One might say all of existence is only a reflection of the mystery of "me" as the Absolute. Here we make the very clear distinction that the 'I' feeling, the 'I-Am', is really a reflection of something deeper, unknown and unknowable, the eternal mystery of me.

The ghost-like entity is one's sense of presence, which is what we consider to be 'me', and this changes as we get deeper and deeper into consciousness. "Me" gets wider and deeper through meditation until it expands into Krishna consciousness, Turiya: the full-blown 'I Am' experience. Yet even this is "transcended," after which the entire structure of consciousness, body, 'I Am', and the Absolute are owned as 'me'.



Nisargadatta Maharaj

The 100 Room Mansion

I want you to join me for a minute, and do an introspection of your subjectivity along with me. Some of what I will talk about you will not find inside yourself, some you will; and a lot of what you will find inside yourself I will not talk about. We come from different places, different experiences, and different spiritual practices. But I would like to start. I am going to tell you what I find when I look within. Perhaps you can join me. After every paragraph or two, please close your eyes and look within to see what you will find.

When I look inside myself, the first thing I see is emptiness. And by that I mean it is a pure visual space that contains everything, the body including the organs, muscles, bones—none of which I really feel. I feel energies and circulating sensations inside.

Now this space opens up and contains everything around me: the entire content of the room and the sounds. It is self-illuminated, meaning that although the inner space when I look inside is dark, it also becomes illuminated the more we practice inner awareness. The space itself is lighted, and expands everywhere including inside me and outside into the rest of the room, and into space outside.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Besides that, where I imagine my legs to be—because my eyes are closed, I cannot see them—I feel energies rising from my toes into my calves and into my thighs. And I feel energies arising in my abdomen, rising into the muscles of my back and shoulders, into my face and my scalp, and into my arms, into my hands and fingers and then out into space. At least that is how it feels.

From that same space in my abdomen, slightly—four or five inches below the heart—I feel an uprising of energy. The energy has the specific color of love, which fills the heart area and radiates out into the world. My face feels flushed with these energies. My body sometimes feels like a powder keg. This varies. It will change in fifteen, twenty minutes into something else, some other configuration.

But throughout that empty space inside my body and out is my sense of presence, my sense of being alive, of being sentient, of being aware. This is the so-called ‘I Am,’ Nisargadatta’s ‘I Am’. And this is what we need to meditate on: the ‘I Am’, in all its aspects and colors and permutations. The ‘I Am’ contains the totality of our existence and of our consciousness.

If you look around inside, there are more things to find. There is the witness of all this; the witness of the ‘I Am’, of the sensations and of the void.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

There are two things I can do with this witness, the watcher, which Nisargadatta calls the Absolute. The first is to look at this source, and try to witness it as an object, in which case it would just become another part of the 'I Am'. Actually, this is extremely difficult to do, as the subject cannot be seen as an object; you can only "be" the subject.

The other position is to fall back into the witness, and become it. When we do this, suddenly the world appears extremely vivid without an awareness of the witness, because the witness has become the world, and its identity is the world.

Find the witness and fall back into the witness, falling ever backwards following the sense of I. When you fall back into the witness you become the witness, and then all of a sudden the world opens up. Sometimes it feels like impersonal watching. Go as deep as you can.

Lastly, we can go deep into meditation, falling deeply until our heads get hard as a rock and thinking stops. We go deeper and it feels like we are going to sleep, and everything disappears including our self-awareness. We are entirely unaware of our own existence, or of the world. The next moment again we become the witness, and the world appears or sometimes our body opens up, and we become the entirety of the world. Just oneness!

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

However, increasingly we are aware that during the moment when we and the world were not conscious, we still were. We still existed as something, or better to say “some” and not the “thing,” because it is not an object—it is beyond objects. Consciousness only knows objects, but the witness is not an object to be known. It is a subject, and the subject is not an object—it cannot be an object.

That something, that witness, is not in this universe; but is entirely beyond it. It is not a direct cognition by consciousness which we can say we see or we know, it is before consciousness; and we know that we are “That”, untouched by the world, emotions or anything else.

When I was at Mount Baldy we would sit silently for many hours every day, and within five minutes of sitting in meditation—meditation becomes more and more powerful the more days you are there—body and mind would disappear after about five minutes of sitting. We would become the totality of the world around us, and seen as oneness.

Sometimes when a bird or an airplane flew overhead, we felt ourselves flying over the landscape as if we were that bird or airplane. Our identity was with the sound of the bird or the sound of the airplane.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Our identification changes; it changes from the Void, from the totality of the world, to an airplane, to an emotion. It can change and change and change and change and not be stuck being Ed Muzika, or anybody else.

Sometimes after deep meditation when we were walking in the courtyard—there is a little courtyard on Mount Baldy—if we saw a tree, our boundaries would disappear and we would become that tree. It was like there was no longer any space between the tree and I, and my identification was with the tree as the object in front of me. I was no longer Ed Muzika, I was no longer a body, I was no longer a presence here—but I was a presence over there, and that presence was me; and I was the tree which was being observed.

It is all a matter of identification, and what you identify with—even if you do not choose the identities, and the identities choose you. In other words, you can become anything and everything. Sometimes you are a person with personal problems, sometimes you are a samadhi state, sometimes you are an action figure driving a car, sometimes you become a cloud. At any time, with the slightest provocation, you can become empty space. If you want, you can identify with love itself and find a resting place there, as love.

Sometimes—and this was Robert's definition of awakening—you could be in a place I would call 'You';

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

and you witness the coming and going of the various states of consciousness. When these states pass by, you do not feel any change whatsoever. It is not as if I woke up and was alive, or I went to sleep and I disappeared. It is that ‘You’ stay the same and these states come over ‘You’ like clouds—waking, dream, sleep—and I am removed from all of these.

You pass from sleep into dreams without ‘You’ being affected. The sense of ‘You’ does not change at all. You watch the dream state arise as witnessed by ‘You’, and then you see the waking state moving into and replacing the dream. And neither state has touched ‘You’. You are beyond both.

Then sometimes—this is more rare—you can pass from the waking sleep (the waking state is called the “waking sleep” by Ramana) into sleep, and again it does not affect ‘You’. You are still there, watching the transition from waking to sleep, and ‘You’ are separate. Your identification is with that home state, so to speak; the Turiyatita [the „fourth state“ described by Ramana Maharshi,] which witnesses all the comings and goings of all of the states and is not touched by them.

When you know this you know that no sword can cut you, no bullet can kill you. You are beyond that. The body dies, but that is not you.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

And what is this; Being untouched? It gives ultimate freedom; freedom by going beyond to the other shore; as the Buddhists say. “Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi svaha!” Gone, gone, gone away, gone away to the other shore; totally beyond phenomenality in the world.

Then comes the knowledge that you are “That” which is entirely beyond consciousness of the world. You witness the coming and going of the world, and the various states, from beyond the world. You are the knowledge that ‘You’ are beyond everything—the Absolute; the witness beyond even the ‘I Am’.

So what? You have spent ten, twenty years in spirituality, and you have all of these experiences. Sometimes you are the void. Sometimes you are love. Sometimes you are a chump. Sometimes you are a hero. Sometimes you are an emotion. Sometimes you are your body. Sometimes you are nothing. Sometimes you go beyond. But so what?

Using the analogy of a hundred-room mansion, what does this mean? There are so many places you can be, so many places you can go, so many emotions to experience, so many voids to experience, so many sensations, so much love and so many personal identities. What do these experiences and knowledge do for you? When do you stop? When does the seeking stop? When does the exploration stop?

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

What these experiences do and the knowledge does, is free you from the places that you are stuck as a person, in a place or a situation. You can accept many identities, many situations, many experiences, without leaving your house. It's Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!

If you go into the void or into the witness, you can gain freedom from emotions, pressures and stress. If you go into emotions, you gain intensity and freedom from boredom. If you identify with love, you can be the lover or become love itself. Freedom!

But I want to address an important problem that affects many of you out there, who are in relationship with another. If both of you pursue the same path, that is wonderful and your resonating energies can make your path so much easier and enjoyable. Yet some of you have differing, and apparently conflicting paths. But they are only conflicting if you rigidly hold onto one method or dogma, such as Advaita, or Bhakti approaches, or any other approach—raja yoga, hatha yoga... whatever.

I want to read a portion of a letter sent to me, and my response. This is from a man in relationship with a woman that has a different path, so to speak; and he is talking about the conflicts. It is a long letter. I have cut it down to about half the size:

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

“Dear Edji, I have been doing marvelously. Every day another layer of onion peels away, so to speak. It is really amazing. Thank you so much for your sage council to find my sense of Self and don’t budge, and to trust my own experience. After so many years of seeking verification through books and myriad other outer sources, it has been refreshing and revelatory to finally trust the guidance that continuously wells up from the guru within my own heart.

I do, however, continue to find myself faced with an issue that has been plaguing me for quite some time now. I am a bit sheepish about asking for your advice concerning this issue not only in light of the comments I just made, but also because I know the guru is not a marriage counselor and I do not wish to put you in such a precarious position.”

Actually, at one time I was a couples counselor, and I was a miserable failure. I think I had a total of about seven people that I counseled, and five of them broke up after I did it. So, you know—don’t listen to me! But that was a long time ago.

Maybe I am worse now.

Nevertheless, because I do not know anyone else I can turn to for advice on this matter, anyone else who would understand the context of sadhana that frames it, and because my wife has repeatedly implored me to

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

see if you, as my guru, can shed any light on the situation, I have decided to place the issue before you.

As I have mentioned to you before, sadhana is the number one priority in my life. Over the past year, I have been engaging in more and more formal sitting meditation. I do two to three hours each morning, another two hours in the afternoon, and if possible when my wife is out of town, another one to two hours in the evening. The depth to which I've been able to plumb my inner being during such extended sessions has been really remarkable.

And I can attest to that. When you sit a long time, you gain experiences you never otherwise would, unless you do formal meditation.

I must say, however, that I feel a little remiss in calling the length of these meditation sessions "extended", as Himalayan yogis would probably scoff at such minute scraps of time. Moreover, Michael Langford, in his book, "The Most Rapid and Direct Means to Eternal Bliss," refers to the many days he spent meditating for twelve or more hours a day, suggesting that if one is serious about reaching the goal, one has to quit fooling around and devote all of his time to this endeavour. I so often feel like somehow I should be doing more, but for now this is about as much time as I can find for meditation, given that I am married and have a job as a teacher.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

As you can imagine, my wife has found my meditation practice to be a bit obsessive. Nevertheless, she has been pretty supportive of it. In fact, she has even said that she doesn't mind how much time I spend in meditation as long as when I come out of it, I am fully present with her.

As you can imagine, in order to most effectively maintain this state of awareness throughout my daily activities, I tend to see through the drama of situations and don't necessarily say or express anything a whole lot. Given this focus on my part, my wife's main complaint is that even after I have emerged from my meditation room, I am still rarely, if ever, fully present with her.

She says that I act as if I don't want to be on this earth, that I am a hermit, and that I have a responsibility as her husband to come out of my shell and engage in a more active relationship with her. In essence, she said she is lonely. She also says I am very selfish, and that I place my path above hers and only care about taking care of my spiritual needs.

My wife, I should tell you, is a XXXXX who has been initiated as an elder in a YYYYYY tradition, and she also sees auras. She has blended these three areas of specialty in her work. This being my wife's profession, she often engages me in conversations about spirits and energies and chakras and auras and whatnot, and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

how these are in various states of imbalance, and so forth. From my point of view, all of this is merely illusory mind-stuff. I don't want to get mixed up in it, and I don't see it as having any reality or validity outside of the mind's habitual tendency to give it such.

During our many discussions about the issue, I have expressed quite directly my feelings that my practice is intense and it is my top priority—even more than marriage, if it must come down to a choice. Ideally, however, I would really like to resolve the issue in a way that enables me to meet my wife's needs, while at the same time neither dampening nor impinging upon my sadhana, and perhaps even strengthening it. From your perspective and experience, is such a solution possible, Edji?"

Now, this is an extraordinarily well written letter. I mean, it really points out the problems in couples, one of which may be two people that have different spiritual journeys. And the solution is suggested that I have been presenting for the last few weeks. I think this is a perfectly compatible couple, if they can open to each other.

My answer to this writer was as follows:

The short version is that you are a perfectly complementary couple. You need to be able to immerse yourself in the experiences of her world, and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

vice versa. Together you can build a much larger mansion of openness, intensity and experience than if you had stayed separate, and stuck in separate agendas and ideologies and concepts.

From her spirituality you will gain intensity and the ability to initiate activities, you will gain flexibility and practical insight; from yours she will gain meditation power, samadhi, spiritual insight and stability. It might take each of you longer to achieve the individual ends you had conceived for yourselves from where you are now—you finding the Absolute, and she finding her spiritual Heart—but both journeys can be enriched and deepened.”

In other words, let us say that this person has explored twenty rooms in the mansion—the hundred-room mansion of spiritual experiences—while his wife has explored thirty rooms, and there is an overlapping of ten or fifteen rooms. He, I found from another letter, is caught in some old concepts about how spirituality was supposed to be—the pre-Buddhist concepts of making extraordinary effort, devoting yourself full-time to your practice, of understanding the Absolute, understanding the 'I Am'; understanding everything, seeing through it visually. Then there were prescriptions against certain kinds of behaviors and certain ways of eating, whether to have sex or not...

all kinds of concepts that sort of prevented his advancement

She, on the other hand, I have not spoken to, so I don't know. But I would assume from his description, that she is a woman that... I don't want to say anything more. I will wait till I see her. But she could benefit from the stability that he could present her in his life, and also in his samadhis, in his sense of presence that he radiates having developed all that meditation power.

Because, you know, it is not words so much that exchange between couples, but their energies—and by that I mean their sense of presence, how they are perceived, what wavelengths they give off, so to speak. How we perceive them. Whether there is a resonance, or there is a lack of resonance.

He would resonate with that emptiness; he would resonate with samadhi power. He would resonate as stability. A lot of anger though, a lot of other things too, on a personal level. But the spiritual qualities would be of power, stability, straightforwardness, purposefulness, persistence, effort.

She, on the other hand, appears to be a lighter being who is more aware of her body, more aware of energies—a New Ager, so to speak—who probably has a lot more practical insight into everyday life, a lot more

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

accurate grasping of emotions in people and sensing what their emotions are. She is probably a healer, an empath, possibly. So many things she could be, I have not spoken to her.

They can learn from each other; and by that mutual interplay enrich their own spirituality, put power into their own spiritual path, expand their path in their own direction that they were going, and also build a wider base in their relationship to the other. So, I would say that the couple can give each other power to go where they were going and also at the same time to broaden the base of their spiritual experiences to include those of each other.

Rather than the fear of slowing down one's progress, I think that there is such an enrichment here that it is worth losing your concept of where you are going, because when you enter spirituality—even if you have been in it for many years— you really have no idea where you are going.

You should drop any ideas about accomplishment, or some end that you are going to achieve, whether it is unity with God or unity with the Absolute. Drop all of these concepts. Explore yourself. Explore yourself and any other that you are open to; but this is only going to work if you can open deeply to that other person. That is another thing all together, because if

you have a long history together, it is really hard to do that.

In the meantime, those of you who are not couples or do not have a spiritual counterpart, you have your teacher, whoever that is; and within that teacher's experience is probably all that you seek, whether you consciously seek it, or it is something you unconsciously seek. Whether it is an experience of the Absolute, the void, energies, being able to witness the coming and going of states of consciousness from the witness state to any other state; whether it is love, whether it is emotionality—it is all there in some teacher or another, some person or another. It does not have to be a teacher.

All that you are looking for can be found in the presentation of someone else, and looking into that presentation, that energy, that sense of presence that is projected, the unconscious knows what it wants, where it is lacking, where it is fulfilled. And it can empathize, it can identify with that spot in the other, and through that identification and communication, find that spot within itself.

Look into that presence. Find what you were looking for. It is there—just look for it, and you will discover it in yourself.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

You know, spirituality is all about identities—which identities choose you, or which identities you choose; but in order to identify with anything you have to first experience it. To identify with the void you first have to experience it, and explore it, and expand it. To see the clear light of the void, that takes longer. And in that void, to find the witness, look at the witness and fall back into it—that takes a little longer.

To go into the samadhi states, you can do it by yourself like this guy in the letter— by just endless practice, Self-inquiry, going deep; or by being with a teacher, like I did with Robert. I gave up Self-inquiry when I was with Robert, and just hung around him. I got it by osmosis. And those are the traditional spiritual traditions of the East: Advaita, Zen.

Or you can go the other way, the way of the bhakti—of emotions, energies and love. Either takes you to a resting place inside of yourself. When there is no hindrance in love, either giving or receiving, you can become completely love—you identify as love; complete, at rest. No need to do anything. This satisfies what almost everybody is looking for: complete unconditional acceptance and love. From this state, anything that is brought to you is okay. But this is a state of phenomenality.

There is another resting place—the resting place of going beyond this world, Nisargadatta calls it

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

turiyatita; and staying there for a while. It is what this guy in the letter was talking about—becoming the Absolute, staying there for a while, and then coming back; bringing the Absolute with him, and the power of meditation.

Yet both these paths together—Jnana [wisdom] and Bhakta [devotion]—creating a jnani and bhakti both—is so much richer, so much more complete.

But there are dangers to each of these paths. The danger of the Jnana path of Advaita and Zen is to become lifeless, seeing the world as illusion and not wanting to be here, staying in the Absolute; dying out, so to speak.

The path of the bhakti on the other hand is dangerous too, because there can be a total immersion in the immediacy of day-to-day life, and you can get sort of lost there—forget the transcendent, forget the void, not know it exists, not know that there's a resting place there, too. And being so caught in the absolute moment, you can miss love, too.

All these states in the bhakti's approach—they come and they go, they come and they go—they are very changeable, while the states of the jnani are very secure, solid, and they don't come and go much.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

So you have a dynamic tension between the activity and the silence, love and knowledge. And what a mansion is in between!

What a wealth to explore.



Ed Muzika with Kali, a street rescue—2008

Things Gurus Don't Tell You

Robert used to embrace uselessness. He used to embrace leaving your job and dropping out. He would say do not worry about bills, payments, medical insurance, obligations, etc., just leave the world behind. Do not worry about the pragmatics of day to day life.

The neo-Advaitins of the world really do not talk about life during the awakening process or afterwards as all of your cherished beliefs and concepts are blown away. One day you are ignorant of yourself, the next day you are awakened, self-aware and all problems have disappeared and are resolved.

This is bull. The process of awakening, losing beliefs, attachments, concepts, and even the belief you are the body causes tremendous changes in your day to day life. This is a sign you are really changing and awakening.

Relationships fall apart, you may no longer love your husband or wife, the idea of being pinned to a 30 year mortgage creates nausea. The struggle to maintain payments on your BMW, \$700,000 house, and student loans becomes too much. The belief in the benevolence of friends and the government goes out the window. You know the wealthy are trying to take

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

more and more from you. The health care system is rigged to extract the most money from you.

Fox News and MSNBC are both mouthpieces for a partial perspective. No one speaks to you honestly, they lie a little each word they say so as not to drive you away. Sometimes they smile and you can feel their hatred.

Strange energies awakening in you cause changes in your sleeping patterns, and you can't sleep or you sleep too long. You do not talk to the kids anymore because you are immersed in indecision about everything. You just want to be alone, or you just want to be with someone else or be somewhere else.

All your self-told lies disappear and you are exposed to your own truth more and more, and that which is not part of your truth falls away.

Things no longer unfold as they did before, but unfold in a new and frightening way as your entire past is seen as a lie and yet you still do not see your own truth clearly.

In other words, your daily life goes from a boring certainty, to an insecure emptiness, yet an incredible and frightening aliveness.

Intense practice or intense involvement with a free teacher creates situations with a lot of out of control

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

emotions; matched at times with an inner deadness: followed by periods of intense self-doubt and self-inquiry.

Do these gurus tell you of this? Do they warn you of this?

You see, Robert did and incorporated this inevitable collapse of your belief systems and lifestyle, and made it a part of leaving the world behind. When your whole lifestyle and thought structures are deconstructed due to self-inquiry, self-abidance, or watching one's thoughts in emptiness, radical changes to one's outside life are inevitable, as well as to one's emotional composition and self-boundaries.

In other words, the walls come tumbling down and chaos reigns for a long, long time. If there is not a bit of chaos, then there is no real change happening on a deeper level. This must be obvious is it not? One cannot continue in the old lifestyle with the beliefs you had before when everything is being radically questioned and whole new worlds of perception and cognition are opened.

I warn my students of this. Robert incorporated this falling apart into his teachings and made it a goal, the goal of becoming good for nothing, meaning really not good for anyone or anything in your previous lifestyle. And, you will be good for nothing until you

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

live your own truth, rather than society's, your spouse's, your children's, or your employer's "truths."

Intense practice or intense involvement in the movement towards freedom has to produce such external chaos. Is it not obvious? Freedom means freedom from your past conditioning and the known.

What Krishnamurti missed when he talked of such freedom, are all those states and understandings beyond the mere recognition that there is no separate 'I' or separate doer. He did not talk of the ecstasies, the awesome Void, the feeling of the sacred, the feeling of surrender to the divine, to one's own Beloved. Nor did he speak of rivers of love that move through one's body and one's sense of presence. Nor did he talk of a love so deep that you disappear into the 'Other', or of a void so vast that you fall to your knees in awe and sometimes fear. He did not talk of the awesome power you feel sometimes when you feel aligned with your own destiny and feel its inevitability. There is so much that teachers do not tell you, both of the richness and the sadness and desolation you will encounter.

It is like the Matrix Trilogy. When you take the Red pill, everything changes, enlivens, collapses, becomes chaos, reorders, and you become alive. But sometimes you crave the Blue pill, to let you return to your old life and its security. Once you take the Red pill, you

have a tiger by the tail and you cannot let go because he will eat you.

Student Number One:

It all sounds distasteful, but then, what are the options? I think, "I don't want to do this to the people in my life," but then automatically the question comes up, "Who are these people? Where did they come from, if not my mind? Who am I?" It's a circle. What is the alternative to seeking the truth: subscribing to life in a house of cards that will always be unsatisfying and inevitably collapse? So, one must soldier on.

Number Two:

Maybe this is what Jesus was referring to when he stated, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away and behold all things have become new."

It is that process of the 'old' things passing away and having no idea of the 'new' that is the shocker. In the middle of it, there is just falling away, loss, and nothing 'new' is experienced as of yet.

No books I have ever read prepared me for what I am going through.

The rebellion, the doubt, confusion, intense anxiety, paralyzing fear, terror, despair, relationships

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

falling apart (and all the drama that goes with that), losing interest in almost everything; as well as the intense energies that effect my eating and sleeping patterns.

I am realizing that resistance is futile. It's all reaching such an intensity that 'surrender' is appearing to be the only viable option.

Ed, you and Robert did give warnings, but I'm not sure anyone could have prepared me for this. It's one thing to hear about it, another altogether to experience it.

I am grateful you are here for me.



Lakshmi, another street rescue found living in a tree.

The Majesty of Self

Even after one first awakens and even continuously knows the self for a long while, it is easy to forget who you really are when you are too concerned with the world.

I remember when our Sangha started its latest dissolution phase on January 2nd. I felt upset and confused the first day and possibly even the second. But then, the pull came from within to go deep inside once again: and for three days I felt near continuous ecstasy and bliss, but still really on the surface, permeating my body and my sense of presence.

As the losses continued, and I dropped Satsang because so few were coming, there was a sense of aloneness and even sadness. I no longer had as many emails to respond to, nor had I a need to prepare for Saturday evening Satsangs. Instead, I just performed a backlog of medical reports and sort of enjoyed a vacation from doing.

Then this morning, “It” came back; the ‘I-sense’ came back in a very powerful way, which seemed to have been lost due to involvement in the world, Satsangs and relationships; as well as a lostness in my inner states as a reaction to these external events. It is not as if I lost the sense of ‘I-ness’ completely, but it

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

was not at the center of my sense of being. I witnessed my 'I-sense', but it was distant and not me-pleasurable, but not me.

But this morning I felt it as a strong pull to go within, to immerse myself into the deepest part of myself: deep, deep below the level of surface consciousness. I felt pulled down inside and it was impossible to resist the call of Self, of the sense of me, which is really the state of Turiya shining through the ignorance; the darkness and Void of the Causal Body, through the intellect, mind and sense perceptions of the subtle body, and of course, entirely separate from this physical body of Ed.

It was as if I had been lost in a fog of appearance, and the "real me" of the 'I Am' emerged out of the fog: much like the brilliant beam from a lighthouse is suddenly observed from a few hundred yards away when there is a brief break in the fog.

Yes, I am THAT I AM!

The feeling is really indescribable in words.

I felt a great happiness and joy, but not on the surface. It was a joy buried deep within myself, deeper than the mind, deeper than the darkness of deep sleep, or the sleepiness of the dream state. Yes, the real 'me' was shining through all those more

superficial layers of consciousness: as a deep light inside, with a sense of fullness, completeness and joy.

The surface flowings of emotions, thoughts and energies meant nothing now. I was pulled within into a deep silence, and the mind, body and Void were seen as really nothing worth bothering about; only pictures and noise giving the lighted fog the appearance of existence and meaning: and my attention was no longer on the show, but on “me,” so deeply buried within.

Yes, I was still occupied in the world. I was sitting at a Firestone dealer, getting some repairs done on my car. I was aware of the passing time, the television blaring with the Jerry Springer show, and people talking all around me, but this was only 10% of my attention. The rest flowed just to me, my sense of ‘I Am’, and that certain knowledge that I am that ‘I Am’; and with it a complete sense of fulfillment as well as a recognition of who I am and that the world really was not that important. I was entirely beyond the world with just a fingertip of involvement therein.

The experience itself is indescribable. It cannot be put into words because words are only about external things, like food, automobiles; or closer to the heart, about ideas, relationships, emotions, etc.; which emerge from the causal body and flame out into a magical display in the world of the mind, intellect and

body, known as the subtle body (which I call the “imaginal world”).

Once again I knew what Robert experienced when he felt distracted; his main attention was always on his immortal sense of Self, the ‘I Am’; and understanding this, one realizes that one is even beyond ‘I Am’: a total mystery, standing alone, immaculate, complete. This understanding cannot be experienced or known by mind in any way. Mind and intellect cannot touch it or describe this heart of the heart. Therefore one is left just experiencing the majesty of one’s own Self!

Note: I want to make clear that this powerful incandescent and arising of the ‘I Am’, still occurs within me. What I am includes that radiant ‘I Am’ but I am actually much larger than that. It arises within me, but I have no features, no characteristics, and no words. I am utterly a mystery, unfathomable, silent, stillness.

I am lost in the Self! Such happiness! Enraptured in the bliss of Self. Yet, even as I worship the Self I recognize I am entirely beyond my Beloved. When it comes to ‘Amness’ - ‘I am that I Am’; but when I move beyond knowledge of existence, or the darkness of unknowing, resting only in silence, my nature has no character, no handle, and no name.

Of Energies, Ecstasies and Orgasms

Many of the readers of my blog or Facebook have noted that several students are continuously speaking of energies they feel, currents traveling through their body or sense of presence. Sometimes the energies are extremely pleasurable, turning into bliss as the currents move, and then into ecstasies once the movements stop and the body/presence becomes “filled.”

The most common experience with these energies are intense feelings of love and orgasms in women, either of the genital sort, or most often felt in the heart. Then the orgasms spread to the entire body and become so intense that one feels they are going to explode. This happens as the body comes alive through abiding lovingly in the ‘I Am’, or loving another while on the path. Those who hitherto dwelled in their heads are now becoming intimately aware of the aliveness of their bodies and sense of presence.

These energies have a million manifestations and are always accompanied by feeling ecstatic love and grace at some point. One just wants to surrender to God or guru or to another person who is an external representation of your own Self.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Sometimes the energies flow intensely for days or weeks (or years) at a time. One becomes incapacitated. Feeling the bliss and orgasms, one's attention to the external world ceases. The inner world work of the energies and bliss is so captivating that one becomes useless in the world.

Chores do not get done. Children and spouses are ignored. One's ability to maintain employment is severely compromised. One is beginning to be aware of the bliss of the Self.

Then the struggle begins to continue to remain in the external world. One feels guilty for ignoring the children and fear arises for their continued employment. One begins to do all sorts of things to bring these energies and "attachment" to the ecstasies and orgasms under control, but to no avail.

Once you have been bitten by the ecstasies and orgasms, they will stay and bug you until you stop trying to control them. Just let them pass through. Force yourself to work and pay attention to the kids when you can, but other times, go off by yourself and let the energies flow.

Along with the energies and orgasms, comes the arising of all kinds of intense emotions, from anger and hate, to the most sublime forms of love, surrender, and peace. One begins to oscillate between poles of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

pleasure, love and peace, to outrage, hate and destructive breaking. It is as if you had become two years old again.

So, what do these ecstatic states mean? Why are they there? What is to be done with them?

First, you have to recognize they do not happen to all people. Really, only a subset of highly emotional and sensitive people encounter all these experiences during their Sadhana. These people often are healers and empaths, highly sensitive already to their inner states and the inner states of others. Also, they occur far more often in women than in men.

Often too, these people have had “broken” childhoods that have left “fissures” in their personality structures that allow easy access to unconscious movements in the “Id,” the pre-egoic unconsciousness.

Secondly, you need to recognize that the ecstasies are always there, but when you begin practice, either by going deep inside and finding, then loving your sense of self, or by loving someone else as an object-substitute for your own Self, maybe for the first time, your attention, your energy leaves your brain and thinking, and you become aware of these energies that are always there and moving and “playing” within you.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

You have become aware of a deeper part of yourself, a deeper level of consciousness, and this is good. The ecstasies and bliss mean you are escaping from the mind. It turns your attention towards your heart, your gut, and your genitals. Really, it is quite liberating. You become alive again. You have escaped the poverty of mental life and also quietism of superficial meditation states. The pleasure of the ecstasies turns your attention away from thinking, doing, planning and performing, towards just being inside yourself.

But, you will soon learn that all these experiences are just temporary, and they are not 'You'. They just happen to you, just as do thoughts and thinking. They are separate from you and do not really affect 'You', the witness of all.

However, they are also harbingers of the event of Self-Realization, where the Self reveals itself to you, the little I, as the big 'I'. Then you will fall to your knees in worship of God and guru, who are really you.

This whole area of energies can be immensely fascinating, but at some point you have to move on. It is not you that moves on, but your attention moves on. You see the energies and orgasms for what they are, just another set of phenomena, and they really have nothing to do with you, nor are they really in your body. They are really in your sense of presence, and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

as such, you move beyond a body-identification towards an identification with consciousness itself.

However, the most difficult “annoyance” that occurs to most who are experiencing sensitivity to these inner movements, is the arising of some extremely painful emotions and often terrifying hallucinations, and great fear. There is fear of being destroyed, or fear of going insane because these experiences are so unlike anything you experienced before.

There is often jealousy as you associate the love or ecstasies you feel as having an object source outside of you, a lover, a guru, or God, and you feel your ecstasies and orgasms can be taken away if that external representation of your own true Self, even looks at another person, or does not pay enough attention to you. There is an intense regression to being a two or a four year old level of personality.

Now you are even less engaged in the world and you feel guiltier for being so child-like and dependent.

But you see, you are being prepared for a new life, one centered in your own beingness and heart as opposed to living from a role and concepts.

Utilizing the spontaneous sexual energies and non-sexual energy flows within the body and one's sense of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

presence, triples the benefits of just turning within and focusing on the 'I Am'. It gives Self-abidance practice real juice, a wetness that Ramana-style self-inquiry lacks. It leads to loving the apparently external other with such passion and abandon that you lose the small self, who just wants to surrender and die in that other.

Then comes the big surprise one day in a recognition that the immense love and surrender you feel is really you. It is your true nature, and the love just flows and flows, coming from a directly perceived Self that absorbs and swallows the small 'I', leaving one living from the heart.

Now, some remarks on managing the processes.

Do not take these energies or sexuality too seriously. All this stuff will pass. Just enjoy these preparatory processes while they last. If your husband or wife leaves you because you cannot pay enough attention to them, so be it. They were not meant to stay longer in your life. The same with your job: maybe you were not meant to be a V.P. of finance or Information Technology. Maybe you want a simpler employment, or maybe you want to become a teacher yourself by mastering all levels of the teachings, the Dharma.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Also, the energies are exacerbated when you don't eat or go on a fast. Do not fast in an attempt to enhance or decrease the energies, they will only get out of control this way.

Eat three or four times a day. Try, try, try to get some sound sleep even if you have to take medications to do it, because good sleep is usually one of the first victims of the arising energies.

Try to repress nothing. Just let the energies and emotions flow through you. In fact, if you try to impede them in any way, you will soon see your powerlessness to stop the volcano.

Do not do any Kundalini or tantric exercises while this is going on. The energies will get out of control this way. Do not do too much meditation at this time. This level of your beingness needs to be fully explored and integrated before you go deeper. Just go out on the back porch or to a park, sit quietly and let the energies and emotions race through you. Just watch, see how they are not you.

I am really against engaging in any sort of practices to manage or control these energies, because you will likely get even more attached to them and utilizing them. Let them spontaneously flow through you. Trust that the Shakti knows the way to Self-Realization

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

as it is unfolding through you better than any technique you might learn to modify or control it.

Just realize that soon all these states will pass in the sense that it is your attention to them and the pleasure of them that is sustaining them. They all will pass and you will sink lower into even more silent and peaceful levels, not so jarring or enthralling as constant orgasms. Take them only as being a sign of progress. Nothing more! But even more importantly, relax and enjoy them as much as you can. Get passive and enjoy them.



Ed in Sedona.

Can You Go Naked Before God?

Some have asked, “Where is Robert Adams in your current teachings?” Others have been more sarcastic, and have remarked (of me), “Some have ears but do not hear; some have eyes but do not see,” intimating I was around Robert for years but never understood him as deeply as my critic obviously thought he or she understood him.

I will say something here that they will not hear.

Robert taught freedom, not just about the absolute, God, Brahman or even consciousness. His last words at his last Satsang, was only one word, repeated over and over: Freedom! Freedom! Freedom! But he used concepts and situations to affect the direction a student was heading in, and at Sunday Satsangs, he was pure Ramana.

On Thursday evenings he sometimes went much deeper. Sometimes someone would ask a question and Robert would go on a roll. The words that poured out were pure truth, insofar as truth can be expressed in words. A few of us close to him and maybe a few visitors would be stunned. Our minds would become weak and then wash away.

For a few minutes he stopped talking about karma, love, the guru teacher relationship, or anything else

we could remember. It was more or less about the Infinite, going altogether beyond knowing and unknowing, going beyond Brahman even. We were transfixed. There was a transmission of some sort; an energy, a grace descended. These were Robert's true teachings, golden words about that which is beyond concepts, the world, and ANY experience, no matter how transformative or transcendental.

Then he would return to earth and be Robert again. But we were changed.

The concepts Robert taught about karma, God, oneness or consciousness itself, would be untaught during a Satsang a week or two later. He knew all concepts, especially spiritual concepts, were illusory, empty. Once in a while he would give an entire Satsang talking about the Four Principals, Three understandings, or something like that, and at the end of Satsang he would become silent for a moment, and then announce that all he had just said, all the knowledge and concepts were rubbish. He would say, "I gave you a story and concepts because that is what you like to hear." Robert considered Satsangs, especially Sundays, to be pure crowd entertainment.

In addition to some of those hot Thursday night Satsangs, a few of us met with him weekly or even more frequently on a personal basis, for lunch or a movie. Here quietly, Robert would work on us to help

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

us win our own freedom, either by setting up a situation within the Sangha to make us let go of certain ideas, conditions, desires, or ambitions, or by offering concepts opposed to those we held on to.

Robert taught many different methods of meditation, and each in the audience was free to select whichever method they liked most. But the method he taught most was self-inquiry in its myriad of forms, and self-abidance. He taught us to go inwards, into our inner emptiness where dwelled the mind, images, emotions, and everything we called subjective. There we were to just watch. Watch for the 'I-thought' and find its origin. Watch the other thoughts come and go. Look for the subject.

This place is as close as we can come to our true nature in consciousness, but from time to time, he would say we were beyond even that. AND SO WE ARE!

You know, so many students say they want that, complete freedom, enlightenment, but in fact they do not. They hang onto concepts and exploration of concepts and new experiences. Many, many came for a year or two and thoroughly understood what Robert was saying, took those concepts into the world and the experiences they had with Robert, and became teachers. Some just left and looked to a new teaching, thinking Robert's teachings lacked something. Eventually the fire of seeking dies out,

and maybe after 10 or 30 years they come to peace and stop seeking. But in most, even after 30 years there is a hunger to find the real, a final resting place of truth, which is so hard to find because they use the mind and “teacher of the day” to find ultimate rest; which is really discovery of their own true nature which is always with them.

The problem is they have accumulated so many spiritual systems which remain as contaminates of their pure nature, that it is impossible to ever find their Self unless there is some life crisis that shakes them and their belief systems to the core.

To use an analogy, through the years, people accumulate a wide variety of spiritual clothes which gives them some warmth and safety in a cold and harsh world. But to see the Self, become the Self you are, you need to shed all those clothes. You have to undress and shed all of those hard bought spiritual clothes, the koans, prayers, beliefs in karma, the ‘I Am’, the Beloved, concepts of family, guru/disciple, spiritual progress, compassion, and even concepts of transcending.

I am trying to do with you as Robert did with me: undress you until you become naked, exposed for you and all to see clearly. Nothing is hidden; no private treasure is kept in the closet not to be touched by self-inquiry. Everything is thrown away.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

But this often brings terror. “I have no clothes, no security, no stability, what am I to do? I am frightened and terrified. I need someone, something to hang on to. I need the warmth of soft teachings and maybe a father or mother figure as a teacher. I need to feel safe.” This is the dilemma of the sincere student. He comes looking for the Absolute and finds only that the teacher wants him to become naked before God and his own Self.

The teacher says, “I am here. I can take you, but can you receive? Can you stay by me and walk into Nothingness without all your clothes, books, and concepts? Are you courageous enough to drop the mind and tolerate the cold harshness of the world in order to discover who you are?”

So few are! Robert knew this and dished out Advaita concepts on Sundays and maybe deeper concepts of no concepts on some Thursdays. He sold a lot of spiritual clothes, because for some, that is all they could take.

Even I failed with Robert. I failed to move to Sedona to be with him through his last days. I was terrified and even got deathly ill when I got close to Sedona. My mind and my entire beingness rebelled and failed me, the Self. I could not take Robert’s cooking anymore, his “games,” his created situations, and the lack of security I felt going there.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Robert, on the other hand was fearless. Before he left he told me he would be betrayed by all the people who were trying to seduce him to leave Los Angeles with promises of financial support, and support of Satsang.

One by one these people came to me and told me how they were going to help Robert and also me to get settled and find a job. I reported what they said to Robert, and he frankly told me that they would never keep their word. He told me that every one of them would betray him, yet he went to them knowing this.

This turned out to be truth. They did not support him as they promised and finances were always desperate. Robert often called me or I him just to talk, and he continually wanted me to come, but I could not. I was afraid because there was nothing there for me. The people there made it clear I was not wanted. They wanted Robert all to themselves alone. All the former promises disappeared once Robert was their captive. Yet he went into the unknown, knowing this, and out of fear, I did not follow.

So I ask, “Do you trust me to take you to an unknown goal of freedom?” I will not even take you to the safety of the “Absolute,” or “Brahman,” or “God,” for these are just words to give comfort. Are you willing to shed all your concepts, beliefs and security

to enter the unknown? Or like most, are you more interested in the excitement of buying new clothes, and shopping at the niche shops of Advaita, Sufism, mystical Christianity, Taoism, Jainism, or being with an energy guru?

Student Comment:

Thanks for this writing Ed. It promotes nothing, it attacks nothing, it defends nothing, yet threatens everything that my mind holds onto for security.

We are so addicted to learning that we think the spiritual process is about learning 'spiritual' stuff; acquiring a 'spiritual' wardrobe. And for a while we think we look good, we are happy about our new attire and the way it makes us feel. Hell, we even get a whole new set of friends, a new language, new teachers, new books, and new concepts to decorate our already cluttered minds. The novelty is irresistible. When will we tire of shopping? This is the core illness that goes undetected. We are addicted to acquiring in every realm. We want more, more, more. In spirituality this addiction is known as 'seeking'. We have become professional seekers.

We are not interested in losing anything. Yet this is the major message in all main religions. Jesus puts it this way, "For whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." We are afraid of nakedness, afraid of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

emptiness, afraid of standing alone, afraid of losing, afraid of the terror that comes with 'not knowing'...and so WE SEEK! And we protect our 'seeking' with spiritual phrases like, 'everyone has to do what they have to do', 'all is well', 'it's all good', 'everything is unfolding as it should', and on and on and on.

For 22 years, I thought Christianity was 'the' camp. It grew old. I packed my bags and moved on to 'spirituality', making short pit stops in its various mini camps along the way. Four years into this and I realize that the same tendencies, the same core illness is still there. I am still a seeker, looking in another camp for what was not found in the last one. I have a new language, oh god, I don't even know what it is (crying); a new way to do church called 'satsang'; a new form of praise and worship called 'chanting', my minister is now called my 'guru'; my bible is the spiritual book of the week, and I am still as lost as ever. Still gullible, still floating purposefully in a sea of concepts, hoping to find myself there, quick to accept what someone else says is true and defend it as my own, still afraid to stand behind my own truth...whatever they may be.

I see the similarities, the core illness. It has just become clear to me over the past several days...and I feel deep rage. Not at anyone in particular but rage at

having wasted so much of my life in service to someone else's truth, someone else's ideas, beliefs, opinions about how I should be, what I should be, who I should be. Rage at being so out of touch with myself, so untrusting of myself.

There has been deep despair, waves of absolute terror, confusion, doubt, uncertainty...as I question everything, hold to nothing...and shake and cry...

More On Robert:

Some think there is a great distance between Bhakta and Jnana: only in the outward form. Though Robert is called a Jnani even in the Ramana Ashram, I remember his famous story of meeting Ramana. I do not know whether it occurred when he first met him, or later when walking around Arunachala.

Robert said this story with great passion; I was there at a Satsang: He was electric. He sat on the edge of his chair perched somewhat forward and looked upwards and into the distance, as if he were again seeing Ramana.

He said Ramana and a group of people walked towards him and suddenly he felt complete surrender

and devotion. He felt utter humility and wanted nothing more than to touch the guru's feet and surrender.

He said he took off all of his clothes and dropped at Ramana's feet, totally surrendered; totally loving and devoted.

At this point Robert said, "This is how you have to be," as if the story was self-explanatory as to the need for surrender.

Ramana supposedly either grabbed him or told him to arise; I don't remember the story exactly and said, "I have been waiting for you." I'll bet Ramana did not specifically mean Robert, but he had been waiting for any of the devotees that showed such devotion and surrender, because these people, these devotees already were close to God and felt the ecstasies of being with the Infinite.

I Am Here for My Students, Not for Me

Recently people have complained that some weeks I sound like student A, then student B, and wonder where Ed's central thread went. They ask, "Where is the Jnana, or what happened to the lover?"

I can only say I am much moved and influenced by conversations of those who I am close to and who are burning. Their burning catches me on fire and I write from my heart whatever comes up. Each of my "lovers" is in a different place. One is shedding concepts and conditioning, another is learning to love herself, another has gone entirely beyond the world into the Absolute, and yet another is lost in unending bliss, a rapture from which her body is forgotten. Another begins to burn brightly in the Rocky Mountains, another is half a world away who always feels my presence.

When they talk to me, I am blown away.

I used to see this with Muktananda. When someone came to him and spoke with clarity and passion, it was as if he blew in the wind, he bent and surrendered to their shakti, and this juice then became his truth of the moment. Teacher and student were equal, and he was like clay bent and wriggled into a new form for a moment. Then moments later

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

someone new came, and if they came with passion, energy, he was transformed again.

Such happens to me. People come to me and when they burn I see their truth. I feel their truth. One is becoming a new Krishnamurti, another is becoming Kali, another becomes Krishna, and there is room in me for each for that moment.

Then I write, and when I write, I express their truth as it unfolds and it appears my central thread is lost. Their process and truth inspire me. Their expressed truth will be of some help to someone, somewhere.

But the truth is, I have no central thread. I have no truth. I am there for them, not for me. I feel like I take on the clothes of whomever I talk to at the moment. Those I talk to most, those are the clothes I wear at the time.

Of course in the center is the untouched, the origin of the manifest world. All the rest is mind, including all the writings that spill from these fingers. And a few are always with me, inside me, sharing my emptiness, sharing our mutual purpose in the world. Above all are Robert and Nisargadatta smiling downwards.

Self-Inquiry: With Affection and Love

I have become convinced over the past year that self-inquiry, practiced only by itself (basically as described by Ramana Maharshi and my own teacher, Robert Adams) is far less effective than simply going within looking for the ‘I-sense’; the feeling that I exist, as opposed to looking for the ‘I-thought’, or for the place that the ‘I-thought’ comes and goes to: and then loving that ‘I-sense’ when it is found; become devoted to it.

Both Robert and Ramana became self-realized without a method, they never had to struggle blindly as do most of us through a quagmire of differing concepts. And, through Self-Realization, they became full of love for the self: and though they taught the need to love the self, it was not made an essential part of self inquiry.

The essence of the ‘I-sense’ is the experience of the Turiya state of Sat, Chit, and Ananda: existence, knowledge, bliss.

Self-inquiry, Self Realization is all about finding the source of the ‘I-sense’, which is Turiya, Satchitananda.

When Turiya is found, meaning when it is isolated from all the other distracting experiences of appearances; mood, emotion, the body experiences,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

etc., one rests in bliss. Bliss and ecstasy permeate all. One rests in oneself, happy and complete.

Then one begins to understand something further: there is nothing other than Turiya, the Self. The Self, Turiya, interpenetrates and pervades all the other mental and physical states. There is nothing outside of the Self—YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF YOU AT THE DEEPEST LEVEL.

The proof is the bliss that penetrates every fiber of your beingness; your body, your mind, your sense of presence: all are enveloped in bliss, and you see that there is nothing but YOU. It is all your show, your emotions and moods, your body and mind, your self-created world with your reaction to apparently external events and beings. It is all you!

Then religious and secular mores vanish, prescriptions and proscriptions vanish. Concepts vanish as they are only the ravings within the mind which can know billions of concepts, billions of theories of life and love, science and magic. All disappear in the experience of your bliss. All concepts are eaten by your ecstasies. The heart then knows no boundaries, no limits, no shoulds or should nots.

This is the real beginning of the spiritual adventure, not its culmination or end. Self-realization is the beginning of living in mystery, completely happy,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

and as Robert and Nisargadatta both said, living absent the sting of misfortunes in the world. The bite is gone. Yes, suffering remains everywhere, it is so clear. You see it so clearly, but the bite is gone, mitigated by your own happiness.

One other thing I discovered as perhaps the biggest aid to self realization is that of loving and surrendering to a self-realized being, because the identification can sweep you into your own sense of Self. You recognize the Self-of-All in the “other,” the guru; and absent that, in a passionate other person, for the Self is at both ends of the perceiving: the Self is both the lover and the beloved. When you feel deep love, surrender, wanting, and a sense of servitude with and for another; if it persists long enough, you begin to recognize that the love is YOUR love, experienced within you towards the apparent “other.”

The identification caused by loving the apparent other allows the Self to arise in you because that Self, the Turiya state, is attracted to love and worship, and that Self reveals itself to you.

Then comes the magic moment when you realize that the Self you sought so long outwardly and inwardly is you and only you. You were both the seeker and the sought, now enveloped in bliss. There never was an “other,” there always has been only you.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

You see, it is so strange. Everyone, all over the world seeks love, the love of another or of God. This is the way the human race is set up, seeking love for and from another. This is what makes the human race persist. This is why we want money and possessions and power, to get love.

This is the way the game is set up: so I say, why not use that “fact” to facilitate Self-Realization?

The terrible, burning, desirous mad love for “another” also summons the Self to show itself to you, to yourself, once you realize that that mad love is really the Self, loving itself through fixation on the Self in another. For many people, this is the way to Self-Realization and Self-love, by first feeling it, by perceiving the Self in another.

So very many people write to me saying they have read Robert Adams or Ramana and having been practicing one year, two years, or ten years and sometimes much longer and they feel stuck. I tell them to add the bliss of chanting along with sacred music, and sometimes that helps for a while, but often they still complain about being stuck.

So, I tell them to go out for a while and see if they can fall in love with another: a guru, a man or a woman, hopefully of spiritual bent. Love them totally, worship them, surrender to them: but all the while

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

keep one inner eye always open to your own heart and inner sense of presence. Then you will discover that the love you feel is totally within you.

It is not that you have created it, but you perceive it as being part of your own nature, always there if you know how and where to look in profound silence.

The “other” is only apparently the “other.” The other has a separate body, a separate mind, a phenomenally separate life, but their essence, that which is at the heart of their existence is the same Self, the ‘I-Am’, that is you. You and the other are one in this ultimate state. The Self is discovered at both ends of the seeking, loving, devotion, surrender.

At this point love of the other serves as a constant reminder of who and what you really are. The devotion to the other even while aware of the Self within is one’s constant reminder of one’s own bliss-nature, and what Siddharameshwar called post-realization devotion as a forever-practice of Self-remembrance.

Student Comment:

Ed, without you prodding and challenging me at every turn, I would have never had the courage to open up my heart.

It is so wide open now it's scary...but so alive.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Jesus said something that concurs with this post. He said, "How can you love God whom you cannot see, if you can't love man whom you can see?"

Is he not inviting self discovery from the place of one's own current reality?

Where does the differentiation between God and man lie but in the mind?

It is my conviction that to Love, I mean to really love with the desire to give yourself in every way you possibly can, to surrender everything, to lose your self in another, that in that Love, in that act of surrender, one will find the totality of mystery, one's own SELF.

To drink of another as if they were your last drop of water, to thirst for another with this intensity...nothing will be hidden from the man who does so.



Gopi, Ed's "favorite cat of all time"

Love, Surrender and Awakening

Robert Adams tells of his awakening experience and what followed as below. After that I discuss what his story means to me based on my time with him and my own life since he left us.

Robert:

“When I had my spiritual awakening I was fourteen years old. This body was sitting in a classroom taking a math test. And all of a sudden I felt myself expanding. I never left my body, which proves that the body never existed to begin with. I felt the body expanding, and a brilliant light began to come out of my heart. I happened to see this light in all directions. I had peripheral vision, and this light was really my Self. It was not my body and the light. There were not two. There was this light that became brighter, and brighter and brighter, the light of a thousand suns. I thought I would be burnt to a crisp, but alas, I was not.

This brilliant light, of which I was the center and also the circumference, expanded throughout the universe, and I was able to feel the planets, the stars, the galaxies, as myself. And this light shone so bright, yet it was beautiful, it was bliss, it was ineffable, indescribable.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

After a while the light began to fade away, and there was no darkness. There was just a place between light and darkness, the place beyond the light. You can call it the void, but it was not just a void. It was this pure awareness I always talk about. I was aware that 'I am that I am'. I was aware of the whole universe at the same time. There was no time, there was no space, there was just the 'I Am'.

Then everything began to return to normal, so-to-speak. And I was able to feel and understand that all of the planets, the galaxies, the people, the trees, the flowers on this earth, everything, were myriads of energy, and I was in everything. I was the flower. I was the sky. I was the people. The 'I' was everything. Everything was the 'I'. The word 'I' encompassed the whole universe.

Now here's the point I am trying to make. I felt a love, compassion, and humility, all at the same time that was truly indescribable. It was not a love that you are aware of.

Think of something that you really love, of someone that you really love with all your heart. Multiply this by a jillion million trillion, and you will understand what I am talking about. This particular love is like no thing that ever existed on this earth, consciously. There is nothing you can compare it with. It is beyond duality, beyond concepts, beyond words

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

and thoughts. And since the 'I', which I was, was all-pervading, there was no other place for anything else to be.

There was no room for anything, because there was no space, and no time. There was just the 'I Am', ever present, self-existent. The love of everything was the love of the self.

This is why, in scripture, it tells you to love your brother, and your sister, to love everyone and everything under all circumstances. This love could not differentiate. It could not say, "You are good, so I love you. You are bad, so I do not love you." Everything was going on as myself. I realized I am the murderer, I am the saint, I am the so-called evil on this earth, I am the so-called goodness of this earth. Everything was the self. And it was all a game. All of the energy particles changed from one thing to another thing. But the love never changed.

Another word for this love was compassion. There was this fabulous fantastic compassion for everything; for everything was the Self, the 'I Am'. There was no differentiation. There was not me, what you call me, and those things. There was only one expression, and that was consciousness.

Of course, I did not understand all these words at that time.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

There were no words like I am talking about now. I am trying my best to speak intelligently and try to use words to explain what happened, but you cannot. All the games that people are playing and all the planets throughout the universe is really the Self. It was all the Self, and I realized that nothing else existed but the Self. Yet all of these things, the multiplicities of planets, of galaxies, of people, of animals, were really the Self. Again, there are no words to describe this. I felt and knew that these multiplicities do not exist. Things do not exist. Only the Self existed, only consciousness, pure awareness.

Yet, at the same time, creation came into existence. And there is no creation. We cannot understand this in human form. As long as we are thinking with our brains it is incomprehensible, for how can they both be simultaneously creating each other? There was creation going on, and yet there was no creation at all! There was no creation taking place, and creation was taking place. Sounds like the thoughts of a mad man. And it seemed normal. There is absolutely nothing strange about this at all, being nothing and everything at the same time.

So this great compassion was there. Since I was everything, the compassion was for everything. No thing was excluded, for the things were really the Self.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

And then there was this fantastic humility. The love, compassion, and humility are all synonymous. I am trying to break it down to make you understand, to an extent, what was going on. The humility was there not to change anything. Everything was right just the way it was. Planets were exploding, new planets were being born. Suns were evaporating, new suns were being born. From the suns the planets came, and then life began on the planets. All this was taking place instantaneously, at the same time and yet nothing was taking place at all.

Therefore the humility is that everything was alright. There was nothing I had to change. There was nothing I had to correct. The people dying of cancer were in their right place where nobody dies, and there is no cancer. Wars, man's inhumanity to man was all part of it. There cannot be a creation if there is not an opposite to good. In order to have a creation there has to be opposites. There has to be the bad guy and the good guy. I was able to understand all these things.

The next thing I remember is my teacher was shaking me. I was the only one left in the class, everybody had gone, the bell rang, and I had not even started the mathematics test. Of course I got a great big zero.

But those feelings and the understanding never left me. From that time on my whole life changed. I was

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

no longer interested in school. I was no longer interested in the friends I had. I will not go on any more than that for now, as far as that is concerned.

The point I am trying to make is this. If the end result of realization is love, compassion, and humility, what if we were able to develop these qualities now? Do you see what I am getting at? If we are able to develop this love, this beautiful joyous love, for everything, without exception, without being judgmental, and have a great compassion, for everything, without being judgmental.

Then of course, there is humility. Humility means we do not have to try to straighten things out, to get even, to stick up for our rights, for there is no one really left to do that. If some of us were to work on those aspects, it would lift us up and make us free.

This is something for you to think about. We have to learn to leave the world alone. We become so involved in politics, in family life, in work and the rest of these things we are involved in, that we forget that we only have so many years left on this earth, in the body. And what are we doing with all of the time we have? We're spending the time on things that do not really exist, things that make no sense.

Imagine you are in a play in the theater, and you are playing a role, and you are playing a part. All the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

time you are aware that you are playing a part. You are not really that person. It is only a part you are playing. In the same way you are now playing a part, but you have forgotten you are playing a part.

You think your body, the way it looks, the way it appears, what it does, what it acquires, is real, and you put all your energy into the game of playing the part. This is indeed a waste of energy. Put your energy into finding the Self that you really never lost. You can do this by developing the qualities of love, compassion and humility.

This is another method you have to work on. As you are working on self-inquiry, work on the love, work on compassion, and work on humility. Do not just practice self-inquiry for a while, and then react negatively to the world, and have your feelings hurt. Be yourself!

Awaken from the dream. Refuse to play any longer. Look at yourself all day long. See the things that you do, the thoughts that you have, the feelings that you have. It makes no difference what situation you are going through. It makes no difference what is going on in your life. The only thing that matters is what is going on inside of you.

Karmically you are put on this earth as a body, to go through karmic experiences. Therefore, the experience you are going through is part of the maya,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

the karma. Do not reflect on these things. This is important. You have to drop this. Leave it alone. If you only knew that nothing can ever happen to you. There never was a time when you were born.

There will never be a time when you die. You have always lived. You are consciousness. You have always existed. Identify with your existence. Merge into the existence of nothingness. I tell you this again and again. Leave the world alone. Remember what I mean when I say to leave the world alone. I am not saying that you should voluntarily, consciously make a plan of how you are going to leave the world alone. You will not be able to live up to it. By leaving the world alone I mean, entertain in your mind higher thoughts.

Always have in back of your mind, "I am not the body. I am not the doer. I am not the mind." Feel this. Feel it deeply.

Do not feel good or bad about it. Do not try to prolong your life. It is a waste of energy. What you call your life will take care of itself. It knows what to do better than you do.

We are very limited in our understanding about the body, the affairs of the body, and what is going on in the body. Do not try to do anything with your body. Your body will do whatever it came here to do. It knows what to do. Separate your-self from that. Of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

course, you may do this by inquiring, "To whom does the body come? Who has this body?" and remain in the silence.

Many of us here this evening are making tremendous progress. I have been talking to many of you who are really getting there. Of course, I use all these terms loosely.

There is nowhere to get. But I have to talk to you this way to remind you to leave yourself alone. I know some of you may be in pain sometimes, and you say, "Well I want to live a life free of pain; therefore I have to do things to myself so I do not feel that pain." This is really a mistake. If you could only realize who has the pain. To whom does the pain come? I have the pain. Then who am I? If I have the pain, it means that the person who is thinking these things does not have the pain, for it is 'I' that has the pain. You are free of pain, for you are not the 'I-thought'. Remember the 'I' we are talking about now is the 'I-thought'; it is the 'I-thought' that has the pain and the experience of being born, the experience of dying, and the experience of having problems. This is the 'I-thought' that has these things. Not you.

You have to vehemently make up your mind that the only thing that matters to you is to become free, liberated, and let go of all the other things that keep you bound. This is why you have to work with love,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

compassion and humility. For if this is the end result of awakening, if you do this first, the awakening will come faster.

Even while I am talking to you, some of you are thinking about your body, you are thinking about the mind, you are thinking about your work. This is what keeps you back.

Destroy the thoughts through self-inquiry. Become free. Do not fight. Do not fear. Observe, watch, look, but have no opinions for or against. Some people think if they act this way they will not be able to function in the world. You will function. Always remember, there is an appearance of the body, and the body came here to do certain things, and it is going to do those things. It has absolutely nothing to do with you.

Many times when I talk to you I have to keep from laughing, (laughter) explaining all these things, talking about all these things, when you are already free, and you already know these things. Sometimes we are pulled into the illusion; for there is really no thing.

When I talk of God we are speaking of nothingness. God is nothing. And that nothing is you. We get more deeply involved when we constantly study, when we constantly read about so many spiritual topics, we get more deeply involved in maya which prevents us from waking up.

Why can't you be yourself and wake up? Why do you have to go through all these things and make me sit here talking to you like this? Just think what I could be doing if I did not have to talk to you. I could be watching Tales From the Crypt. (Laughter)

Be your Self. When you are yourself the thoughts come slowly to you until they cease. When the thoughts become slower and slower in your mind, and the thoughts begin to disappear, you automatically become loving, compassionate and you will have humility. In other words, the faster you get rid of your thoughts, the faster these other things come, these other qualities. So it is a matter of stopping your thoughts. It is the thoughts that see everything in this world as good and bad, right and wrong. As the thoughts begin to subside, love comes by itself, compassion comes by itself, and humility comes by itself. So again, we have to stop thinking.”

DISCUSSION

So, what was Robert's awakening experience? What was it all about?

It was a brief, time-limited transcendental experience wherein Robert perceived himself to be, the sense of 'I', his sense of 'I Am', to be Pure Consciousness; and that everything in the universe also was Pure Consciousness, and was him. In addition, he

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

felt that that an essential characteristic of the 'I Am,' of consciousness, was love; a great love far beyond what humans feel towards each other. Along with this, he felt compassion for all sentient beings, for everything that is alive, as well as a great sense of humility.

Then he returned to normal consciousness, but with the belief and conviction that he was consciousness itself, and the basic nature of that consciousness was love, compassion and humility, and a total acceptance of the world as it was.

At the same time, the recognition that he was consciousness itself, the totality, relieved him of the illusion that he was bound by an individual body and mind.

Then Robert proposed one more step and suggests a method.

First, he suggests practicing self-inquiry into the sense of 'I', looking ever more deeply into one's own sense of 'I', or 'I Am'. This is the classic self-inquiry process which is the mainstay of both the Ramana tradition of which Robert is a part of, and also of Nisargadatta Maharaj.

Then he states, the feeling that never left him subsequent to his awakening experience, was his deep

love for everything and everyone, and a profound sense of humility, and a compassion for all living things.

Then Robert proposes, “What if we work on developing this compassion, this love, this humility here and now before the awakening experience?”

This would be an additional practice to self inquiry, of looking into that sense of ‘I Am’: gradually becoming that sense of ‘I Am’ in meditation and in everyday self-witnessing, self-awareness.

He says awakening will come more quickly this way. In a sense, he’s saying “Fake it till you make it.” That is, grab onto the lasting after-effects of the awakening experience.

Deliberately cultivate being kind, develop love for another, feel love for another very deeply and totally lose ourselves in love. Every day we should cultivate increasing compassion for all living things, for hungry animals, starving babies, towards trees, insects and even rocks and a running river. And at the same time, we lose our arrogance, wanting constantly to bow in complete surrender to one's beloveds, whomever or whatever they may be. We drop to our knees in humility. We touch the feet of our beloved. We become like dust in service to those we love. And by such deliberate cultivation of love, humility,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

compassion and surrender, there is built in us a receptivity for the transcendental awakening experiences; which in a sense, really are no longer necessary because we are already living the fruit of awakening.

For this reason I emphasize loving one another as deeply, as extensively compassionately as possible, until our love for another is so intense and deep that naturally we drop to our knees in deep humility and surrender.

That is why I recommend human relationships so much, to practice increasing loving in the most personal and powerful way to open us to the deepest love for sentience, surrender to the unfolding of consciousness in its own way and time. It is a way that the limited becomes the infinite.

By practicing love, compassion, surrender and humility, we take on the cloak of God, until, as Nisargadatta puts it, the 'I Am,' God, consciousness loves you back and releases you.

Nisargadatta's experience was similar. His guru told him he was not his body and he immediately accepted that. With that conviction he concentrated on his sense of 'I Am'. In less than three years he had a great awakening, but which he never described.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

What I would note though, is that Maharaj grabbed onto one fruit of the awakening experience, that he was not his body. That conviction, along with focus on and love of the 'I Am', released him from suffering and distress and created one of the great Jnanis of our time.

Student Comment:

Why did I get into spirituality four years ago; boredom, the desire to escape from life as I knew it, and an over all feeling of being imprisoned as a woman. I began to realize that my whole life I had been an echo for another man's truth, that of being a 'man-made' woman, a second-class citizen, and I was dying in many ways.

I was pondering today my ascent out of many of the binding tenets of Christian Orthodoxy, a system I had managed to shove every aspect of my life into.

Reflecting back, I was stunned at how powerful 'belief' is and how the ideas I used to believe in years ago seem so silly today; meaning, they no longer have any power over me to a large extent.

I wondered how I had come to be so easily convinced of another's ideas and if these ideas could be seen through and dropped.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I wondered if those primal beliefs of, 'I am the body, I was born, I will die' could be dropped in the same way as any other belief, by constantly questioning, investigating, contemplating. I pondered how I came to have these beliefs, who told me these things? Are they true? Can I know for myself?

I wondered if these things are squeezed out of us, gently, mostly without detection and we find we feel more natural, more whole. I am finding that patience is a must in spirituality.

Another one of the reasons I got into spirituality is because when I began to question and see through my religious beliefs I became terrified. I couldn't imagine life without God and since I only knew God within the context of Christianity, I was convinced that to drop that religion as the blueprint for my life meant that I would be without anything. The fear and the terror were too great at the time; so unconsciously, I turned to spirituality in order to feel 'safe and secure' and became deeply conditioned with the learned conceptual idea of what awakening was.

The more spiritual books I read the more I was convinced that I would experience something like the 'big bang'; a huge, one time, cataclysmic event that would relieve me of 'my life.' I notice from time to time that the residue of this idea still lingers in the back of my mind. I find myself sometimes, 'waiting' for

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

'IT'. I am realizing that this has all been learned just as my beliefs in Christianity had been learned. I have merely exchanged one belief for another. Must they all go? Can they all go? Is it possible to 'be' without 'belief'? I must find out for myself.

I am seeing that the search 'without' is endless.



Malibu.

The Spiritual Processes Around a Guru and Ashram

A year ago I was watching a video moderated by Andrew Cohen, of my friend Shankarananda with two other swamis from the Muktananda tradition, who had run ashrams for a number of years. Mostly the program addressed the personal difficulties the three had encountered. I want to make clear that this powerful incandescent and arisngounterred running ashrams with a combined experience of over 90 years.

The uniform theme was that it was quite difficult. People in the Sangha always came to the ashram with tons of preconceptions about what spirituality was about; what and who the guru was and should be in terms of who or what he or she was supposed to be, and what he or she was supposed to deliver. These ideas and preconceptions varied widely, as did their own preconceptions about their own obligations to the teacher and the ashram.

One swami discussed his loneliness as he really had no one to talk to “at his level,” which to me sounded rather arrogant at the time. Another talked about daggers coming at him from all directions, as chaotic battles and backstabbing were or could be breaking out at any time. Another talked about how careful he had to be in every statement, every word, every facial

expression for fear of causing someone an offence and starting some sort of buried seething or overt angry confrontation.

Most new arrivals did seem to have similar ideas regarding the ideal guru as Ramana Maharshi, or someone similar; being benevolent, aloof yet loving, undisturbed by anything in life, a constant smile on his face, exuding Shakti power that turned the ashram into a Shangri-La of bliss and ecstasy where everyone felt loved and accepted. Others had no fixed notions, but I remember I did. I had never contemplated a Zen master or guru to be an ordinary mortal being with faults, maybe some insecurities, or having romantic relationships. I figured they had all totally gone beyond, as the “Gone, gone, gone away, gone away to the other shore” of the Heart Sutra predicted.

Then for each newcomer, gradually came the recognition that once again, they were just in a new group of ordinary people with faults and preconceptions; led not by the Son of God, but by a human being with irritating faults, perhaps too aloof, perhaps too personal, perhaps even-handed or not, and perhaps playing favorites. That is, each week that passed, preconceptions were shed, or else the person left in disappointment or disgust.

Very few were entirely happy with the ashram situation. They had expected something different;

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

perhaps an easy road to awakening, held in stasis by the ecstatic presence of a divine guru. Later, that same guru might appear to the newcomer to be a horrible, uncaring, self-centered lout that only cared about himself or the ashram, and not about them as people.

Others thrived in the ashram settings. Personally, I loved them; from the many Zen centers and monasteries I lived in to the three Mukthananda ashrams, to the Hari Krishna temples and compounds I visited. There was something different about ashramites. They were not much involved in the world. Instead they were involved in going into themselves, practicing meditation or ecstatic chanting.

Many of these ashrams were remarkably stable, some not. If there was an ashram where people lived together, the Sangha appeared more stable. The people living there had each made some sort of commitment to the ashram just by leaving their former life and living there. One notable example is Leonard Cohen who left his celebrity life behind for long periods and moved to Mt. Baldy Zen Center and became a monk. Leonard found peace there and a deeper sense of himself.

However, if the Sangha just met for Satsang once or twice a week at someone's house or at a center of some sort, it tended to be unstable with a rapid

turnover. There is something about having made the commitment to live together that stabilizes the Sangha.

I was with Robert for 8 years, about 7 in Los Angeles. Over those 8 years, maybe thousands of people came to sit in Satsang or have lunch with him and thousands more met him on the phone or had contact via letters. Robert never had an ashram; we always met at someone else's house.

Like clockwork, every year the Sangha would be torn apart by some inner conflict and entirely break up. Every year we were forced to meet in a new house of a new student, because of an explosion of rampant jealousies, arguments, perceived slights and humiliations and perceived failures of Robert to be the perfect Ramana-guru; the Sangha would break up and half would leave without ever explaining why and we would start all over again somewhere else.

The central problem in Robert's Sangha was Robert's behaviors contrasted to his words in Satsang, and access and/or control over Robert and the direction of the Sangha.

It seemed everyone wanted more access to Robert than they had, and there were many small cliques that wanted to control every aspect of the Sangha: from who was to transcribe Satsangs, who was to compose

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

and edit Robert's books, who was to tape record, who was to coordinate bringing food and deserts for Satsang and our bi-monthly parties, who was going to be spokesperson, what chants were to be played at Satsang, advertising, writing magazine articles, etc. Everyone wanted to help and everyone had their own ideas of how something should be done. There was not a lot of surrender to the way things were, nor was there much surrender to the totality of the ideal of the greater good of the community or Robert as a person. Everyone just wanted to be closer to Robert; have his Darshan, his remarkable presence of peace, emptiness and utter acceptance; but in the larger sense, they did not want to pay the price of inner work, supporting the guru; and of surrender, which is the crux of the teacher/student relationship---at least for me.

But getting close to Robert was difficult. His time was limited and he had a few close students he met with for lunch every week, which limited access to him except at Satsang. In such situations, cliques almost always form, although his closest students all really got along with him: Mary, Lee, Dana and I.

Unfortunately, many came to Robert, and in their attempt to get close, would try to "poison" Robert's mind against one or another of us; or even set up a clique within the Sangha and approach Robert with some project or another in order to gain more access.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

People would tell Robert that I was doing this or that, which was ruining Satsang and the Sangha; or that there was a new person who was to be carefully watched because they had a bad “vibe” or some other problem. Mary, Lee and I were always targets of being bad-mouthed by each other, or by them telling Robert all about our faults in an attempt to get closer to him; by pointing out how faulty we were compared to how “loyal,” “honest,” or loving they were.

Robert’s Sangha was often like the Vatican under the Borgias, with constant intrigue and behind the back bloodletting. Generally, it ended up with many blaming Robert for being who he was and doing what he did. Students never took responsibility for their own actions and emotions, and projected the whole mess onto Robert, or me, or Mary or someone else.

Over the 8 years I was with him, only four stayed with him to the end: myself, Mary, Lee, and Dana. Out of thousands, only 4 stayed. Robert was always looking for the ones who stayed despite all the turmoil in the Sangha.

The same is true of all gurus. Very few students stay long, and the closer you get to the teacher, the less likely you are to stay because others in the Sangha begin “disinformation” campaigns to advance their own agendas by disempowering someone else.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Strangely, I saw much less of this attitude in any Zen center or monastery. With the Zen masters in the 70s and 80s, we knew who was in charge. The problem arose more with the Robert-led Sanghas of few rules, no shared living quarters and no set responsibilities. Robert was not a disciplinarian, nor did he care much for the direction that the Sangha went. That meant a very loose management style, leaving openings for people to come and go, making suggestions or doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted.

A lot of people become like love-starved little children, looking for recognition, a kind word or approval from the Sangha itself, and more and more access to the teacher.

You see, often a new person comes with infinitely good intent, filled with a strong desire to know his or her self and truth; filled with devotion, and loyal to the entire process, but their own deep and personal needs get activated. Then instead of using this as a perfect opportunity for self-inquiry, they get blown away by the intensity of their own needs as well as by whatever the guru's response is, whether giving or withholding.

This happens to every student at some point, and usually a multiple number of times, as happened to me with regard to Robert. While a few asked themselves these self-investigative questions, most remained

focused on what they did not get from Robert or the Sangha. Few went within themselves and asked what it was about Robert that pushed them to expect or demand this or that from the guru. They did not ask, “What is it IN ME that needs to be stripped from ME, so I can feel open and loving towards my guru?”

This is the sort of personal self-inquiry that every student needs to address at moments of a separation crisis. “What is it in me that makes me feel Robert or Ed are failures as teachers? Why is it I do not trust the spiritual unfolding process? What are/were my expectations and are they realistic, or are they childhood remnants that interfere with all my relations now?”

In many cases these are purely psychological questions pertaining to a perceived failure in a student’s relationship with the teacher, but they need to be resolved so that they can become empty enough to get emotionally close enough to the teacher to experience repeated glimpses of the infinite: of complete emptiness, of the divine being.

This is how the bond with the guru is cultivated and nourished. This is the hard work. It is easy to love the guru while we have an idealized image of him or her. But when we get close to the guru, his clay feet are seen, and our many idealized projections of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

what the guru is, or should be, are shattered, and then the really hard work begins.

This is the crux of the self-inquiry process. The more we strip away our own resistances, the more open and accepting of ourselves and the guru we are. And then the intimacy we so seek with our teacher and ultimately with our own Self is slowly revealed. We can now taste the pure sense of 'I Am'.

On a parallel thread, there are those who by personality are “doers,” and gain recognition and gratification through doing and controlling; while others want to have nothing to do with this aspect of Satsang. These others just want to work on themselves and have nothing to do with organizing Satsang. They just want to come in peace, sit near the teacher, love the teacher, listen to his or her words, internalize them and feel ecstasy with the chanting and in meditation. It is these quiet people, these more shy and introverted people who really “progress” and work their way towards going free.

I am not saying the doers do not progress, for I was a chief doer with Robert and such activities stood me well over time; but the greatest progress happens after you surrender the doing to God, to consciousness. After three years with Robert, I stopped initiating anything on my own and just waited

for Robert to direct me. When Robert left Los Angeles, I stopped doing altogether and just rested in myself.

It is with some of these non-doing people that a teacher tends to spend more time, because he and they feel rapid changes taking place within them, away from the noise of the group. It is also with them that the teacher can be more of him or herself, in his own emptiness, acceptance and love, all held in silence. When some people discover how much time the teacher spends with these people compared with them, they again feel jealous. This is especially the case for the type-A doers who are making Satsang healthy and happening. They feel cheated in a sense; they are doing so much for the teacher and the Sangha and in their minds and judgment their teacher is spending more time, for whatever reason, with someone else who is doing so little in comparison.

You see, it is not a matter of how much time one spends in spiritual activities, but how much time one spends with the guru and within one's own self, and you cannot trade activities to support the Sangha with closeness to the teacher. The openness of true surrender is felt by the teacher and automatically attracts him or her. True surrender lights a fire of devotion both in the student and the guru.

What I learned subsequently, but did not know at the time, I needed to better contain my relationships

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

with students so that less was known generally about my relationship with each student. However, the students themselves were always talking to each other about their own relationships with me and with others, so there was no real containing or isolation.

Relevant to this container concept, we need to be aware that none of us ever functions in isolation. If I feel anxious or depressed, just my bearing and presence causes those states to be communicated to others who are sensitive to me. This then “contaminates” their own state, which again becomes communicated to others in a ripple down effect.

Some spiritual people are very empathic. They become energy workers or Reikian therapists. Some are almost telepathic. They can feel even well-hidden emotional states in others, and feel the incongruity of the hidden emotional state (such as hatred) as opposed to how a person expresses himself. The more meditation one does on one’s own sense of presence, on the ‘I Am’, the more sensitive some people get to these non-expressed emotional states and the energy-presence of others.

I am aggression avoidant. I try to avoid conflict if possible and to smooth over buried conflicts with an attitude of “out of sight, out of mind.” However, in such a situation, it will appear to empaths that their concerns and worries are not being addressed and that

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

myself, the blind teacher, is ignoring their very urgent intuition; while I appear to side with the person hiding hatred or ill-intent towards the others. In these situations, the empathic person feels unsafe and unprotected because the teacher has not even acknowledged the truth of what their intuition of danger tells them. In this capacity of ignoring their true intuitions, I failed many, many times.

Thus “reading” the minds and hearts of the Sangha members, above and beyond what they say and do becomes of utmost importance for a teacher; while learning how to deal with these situations becomes increasingly important in an ashram or Satsang setting.

I must admit I have failed many times in my stumbling approach to running a benevolent Sangha, and often have relied on the advice of those I should have ignored. It has been an intense learning experience.

I have since learned more about empathy as this ability has slowly increased in me during the past year. In fact, this talent can be honed and become a Siddhi, a power to be used for good or ill.

When we are really closely attached and bonded, we can even feel the emotional states and energy states of those we love and are close to; over distances even when direct conversations or any

communications for that matter are not taking place. If a loved one is feeling sad, despairing, or radiantly happy, we can feel it. If he or she is in a raging argument with their husband, wife or child, we can feel it, and sometimes feel these emotions as our own and wonder what brought these states on. It can become really confusing for some—the origin of their mental and emotional states.

One can actually “feel” on a deep, intuitive level (which some call the astral level) the ebbing and flowing of consciousness itself; as well as how that flow is affecting those we are close to, or the Satsang as a whole. Becoming aware of these energies, flows and impacts on those we love is really an incredibly interesting and exciting process taking place on the plane of the manifest.

Robert certainly did not deny these levels existed, but only emphasized they should be ignored as irrelevant to one’s own liberation from the manifest world, and all these empathic events are related to the manifest world.

This increased empathy and awareness makes ashram living both easier and more difficult, because life is more subtle and nuanced, and we are more open and influenced by “invisible and unexpressed” affects and flows within consciousness.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

The more personal the teacher is, the closer to his or her heart that he allows his students to come, the more intense will be the needs, jealousies and angers; as well as the intensity of love that these relationships will ignite and sustain.

When the guru is more distant and not so open, all the infighting goes on in the background, if it goes on at all, and few have any sense it is even happening except for a felt sense that a certain situation is odd.

The spiritual process is one of constant deconstructing of one's ego and belief systems and a progressive surrender to the teacher; once you realize that you and the teacher are not separate from the overall process of consciousness "evolving" in and through you. In fact, spiritual "progress" is surrendering to the process of losing what inhibits your awakening, and this is extremely painful and frightening such as letting go of your concept of the perfect guru or how the spiritual process should look.

Many students want the teacher to create a situation where it is easy to wake up, but in fact, it is up to the student to do the work, to practice self-inquiry on why the feelings of wanting to run away are coming up. "Why do they come to me," one should ask. "Why am I so angry with the teacher? Why do I feel hatred towards X, Y and Z? What is my part in all

this? Why do I believe X but not the teacher, or why do I believe the teacher and not X?”

The source of the need to run away is in you, why do you run? Can you just stay with the feelings and not run or not create stories to justify the urge to run or strike out?

You see, in our Sangha, like with Robert's, or Ramana's, or with Nisargadatta, most people are just passing through. So don't worry about what is wrong with the teacher or with the Sangha, because consciousness is directing everything. You, Robert and I are just small cogs in an unlimited, infinite unfolding of consciousness, and all of our “huge” problems are not even pimples to God.

Yet, because of the apparent hugeness of our problems, we do not trust the unfolding process, and when our problems are not solved, we often fixate on the teacher's failures that have caused us to not progress and go free. It becomes his fault, not ours or that of consciousness itself; it becomes the Sangha's fault, not ours or that of consciousness itself and the role assigned to us by the grand unfolding. We make up stories that block our own self-inquiry and deepening, and then we run away from the cooking we ourselves are creating in association with God and guru.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

The chaos and cooking people experienced at Robert's Sangha had little to do with Robert. He was just the apparent figurehead.

Only four stayed for the entire 8 years with Robert, and Robert was always looking for those who stayed by him, mostly the quiet ones, who spent much time looking into themselves; reading the transcripts, meditating, or wanting to spend time with the teacher and surrendering to the process of the unfolding of consciousness through him or her, which the mind cannot see, but the heart can directly intuit, minute by minute.



Robert and the author, circa 1994.

Continual Seeking

This is what Robert Adams said on the subject of running from one teacher to another, endless reading of spiritual books, discussion in forums such as Facebook and emails, travel to exotic places seeking perfect meditation venues, etc.

“In Advaita Vedanta, the knower is the last to go. What comes after the knower? Silence! There is nothing else.

Just think how much knowledge you have gathered all these years; reading so many books, seeing so many teachers, having so many discussions, debates and arguments. Can you not see now this is what has been holding you back? You have believed that you are the knower and that you have to become a knower to become free.

Yet no one has to know anything for there is absolutely nothing to know. Why is there nothing to know? Because there is only omnipresence, infinity, absolute reality and there is no name for this. (Here Robert is talking about what comes after Self-Realization, knowing Turya, Brahman. He is talking about the final condition.)

In other words, you cannot know absolute reality. You cannot know pure awareness. As long as there is

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

someone who knows about it, it does not exist. It's only when you put an end to knowing that you become the Self. The Self has no shape, no form, and no identity. It is no thing. Yet you are that. What are you going to do about it?

Instead of abiding in it, when most of you walk out this door you will start discussions and arguments. You will start thinking about your outside world. You will start thinking about your body, your material happiness, or your material suffering. And you will be back where you started.

What I am saying to you is that if you could only learn to be quiet, in your mind; if your mind learns to keep quiet, it will become weaker and weaker and you will notice that all the actions you are doing, and all the concepts you are talking about have absolutely nothing to do with you.

Yet you will continue to do things, go places and experience this so-called life; but you are doing absolutely nothing. For there is no one left to do any thing; there is no one left to get sick, there is no one left to be healthy. There is no one left to be poor, there is no one left to be rich. There is no one left to possess anything and there is no one left not to possess anything.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

There is just no one left, and this is what gives you freedom. And the only way you can get to that place is to keep quiet; to be silent.”

(Again, Robert is talking about the final state, going beyond Turiya. According to the quotes from Siddharameshwar that I have been posting, the ‘I Am’, Turiya, Brahman, is the pure knowing state, and eventually even knowledge has to go.

This is even after self-inquiry is finished. But, he even says that his practice of silence: not traveling, not reading, not discussing, can take you all the way. In a sense, by remaining silent, just by looking within, you are emulating the final state. You have to remember that Robert here is not talking to advanced students, but is really just talking like this to have them turn their attention away from books, gurus and travel, and to turn inwardly towards the Self of all.)

I just got an email from a friend and student saying he is going to Nepal for 6 months to spend time in a monastery in order to go “deep.” He plans on doing this even now that his practice at home got better. Part of his desire to travel was a breakup with his fiancée. He wrote:

“I am glad to tell you that my meditation sittings are deepening again. This morning I was clearly aware of a changing in the body awareness. My body felt like

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

a thing, a living subtle vibrating energy. It didn't feel like me. It was subtle, spacey and objective. I was in wonder looking at this phenomena. Thoughts are there but the mind did feel strong and like a rock. And in the background there was a continuum sense of beingness; this all passing by in less than half an hour. I tell you this only to express my joy of feeling connected again with something deeper in myself.”

He wanted me to bless his journey.

Another student wrote from India, writing of an experience of love with a woman that happened there and the sense of ‘I Am’ that arose from it:

“Then she left and I was utterly amazed how devastated I actually felt. It really was painful and I wondered what to do with that. I started to feel the grief and sadness, really sit with it. Then it transformed into this immense beauty and devotion to existence itself. It was like nothing I had ever experienced and I still get chills of bliss right now just writing about it. There was a clearer view, a more FELT view of the ‘I Am’. And instead of grief now came a warm gratitude to her for blessing me with this.”

He does not realize that this ingoing he is experiencing is partially due to his breakup, and the ingoing of the love energy previously directed outwards to another.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Another left for Thailand from his home after being a student devoted to self-inquiry, “In order to experience life and grow.” He has been going in and out of happiness since, but then abruptly left our satsang because of a personal crisis and his desire to find a woman and more experiences before enlightenment.

Another student is teaching English in Vietnam and visiting Buddhist temples.

Another dear student abruptly decided to go the jungles of Peru to take some psychedelic plant with a shaman for a number of complex reasons.

Yet another student just spent a month in India and thinks of going back two more times during the next year.

I just do not get it.

What you all are seeking is YOU. YOU are always there. Being with your Sadguru—the human guru who knows who he or she is—can help YOU to recognize and be YOU; but all the traveling to monasteries, shamans, monks, foreign retreats, jungle visits, etc., all occur on the level of the body and mind; and are experiences of the body and mind.

Much of the seeking above is really seeking the love of another human in a romantic relationship; or

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

the result of a breakup of a romantic relationship with all the loving energy of the 'I Am,' now no longer having an external object, turning inward on its own self. All the while the mind tells the person that it can only be found in some exotic land, in some exotic spiritual institution.

You can explore your inner world of visions, energies, archetypes, emotions, "guided finds" also known as impulses, listening to talks, having new teachers, new experiences, etc., and what will you have found? ONLY MORE OF THE SAME! Anything that happens on the level of the body, or the mind, such as knowledge, experiences such as love, sex, psychedelics, drugs, and meditation experiences, are just on the level of the body and mind.

There is no freedom here. There is only endless, empty exploration which may seem exciting while you are doing it, but after a dozen years of such seeking, what will you do?

It is only by going deep into yourself that you will find what you seek. Go deeper than the body, deeper than the mind and thoughts, books, lectures and the next guru, deeper into the Void and emptiness, and deeper still into the 'I Am' experience. Go deeper into YOU. You can do it alone, but it tends to get boring because everyone wants to go too quickly without

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

exhausting the teachings of each level of the Void and of the 'I Am'.

Being in the presence of someone who knows the Self is the best practice. All of the other seeking is meaningless.



Malibu.

Freedom!

Most of you realize by now that I teach a different sort of path, one of winning a radical freedom from concepts, from social conditioning around politics, family, marriage, sex, ideas of progress, and misconceptions about what spirituality, methods, and gurus are.

For most everyone, life is lived from the head: thinking, judging, measuring, calculating, identifying. We do not even have experiences until we can identify them, categorize them, and award a value of good, bad, or indifferent. All day long we see, judge, chat, and respond to incoming information and sensations.

But the mind creates everything. It creates some sort of stability and order to the incoming, ever-flowing and changing world of inner and outer sensations.

My goal is to get you out of your head and living from the heart without thinking, by directly intuiting.

This means getting rid of all concepts, and living with an empty mind but open heart. These are two separate goals rarely found together: living from an empty mind, and having an open, intuitive, loving and compassionate heart.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

The felt Void, the all containing emptiness of the Jnani, the sage, often snuffs out love, connectedness and compassion. One becomes an Arhat, dead to the world and dead to one's own desires, an impersonal puppet of the movements of consciousness, witnessed from afar by the Absolute and final Witness, Parabrahman. One has died to his or her self, to desires, to a sense of mission or goals. All are gone in order to live in peace and a breath of continuous bliss.

This is Nisargadatta in his last years. All emptiness and a cutting mind who had lost all his desires even for life itself. This is so much the position of many of the neo-Advaitins, living in their crystal bright, clear awareness, with no felt sense of a separate self. Ramana was a lot like this as are most Zen classics, and most Buddhist schools.

On the other hand, we find the various paths of the heart: Christian mysticism, much of the Sufi tradition, and the various paths of Bhakti, as espoused by Ramakrishna and others. This path is far different from the quietism of Zen, Buddhist meditations on emptiness, and self-inquiry as described by Ramana and Robert Adams. This path is full of energy, love, passion, anger, jealousy, sometimes violence, sexuality, attachments, and most especially of ecstasies, bliss and movements of currents inside the body and inside one's sense of presence.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

With the latter path the heart opens from the sheer power of the energies aroused. There is a full involvement of the entirety of one's being at every moment, while emotions and energies constantly rip apart all one's beliefs and former attachments, such as to social gracefulness, etiquette, former attachments, etc., and one just madly pursues their true love, which is one's own Self, but which may first be found in another.

How to get you to transverse both paths? That is my constant question. Like Nisargadatta and Robert, I constantly appear to contradict myself because all verbal communication is in words, and words are fixed, while peoples' minds can be fluid. What I say to one on one day, I will contradict the next day in responding to another. After a while you begin to see the correctness of the answer I gave to one on a specific day, and the opposite answer I gave to another the next day. Each was stuck at a different place and each required a separate, unsticking answer.

U.G. Krishnamurti stated that as part of the awakening process he called "The Calamity," he could no longer think. Words just did not make sense to him. His mind could not wrap around any word or sentence. He saw a reality that was wordless and could not relate the network of thought to that new world. They were two very different things.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

He had been wrapped in the spirituality of the Theosophical Society and Jiddu Krishnamurti for 30 years. He had personally met all the guru/teachers from Ramana, to complete impostures, and had had his mind contaminated by all their contradictory teachings for that entire time. To see who he really was he had to shed all concepts given to him from outside about who he was. He had to see himself directly. In order for that to happen, all the concepts had to be washed out of him. It was like a great enema. All the concepts, ideas and idealization and identities of himself as a man, Indian, scholar, etc., washed out of him, leaving him empty and constantly transforming. Unfortunately, U.G. at the end had very little heart.

A similar process began with me 20 years ago. I could no longer read. The words just did not penetrate. I lost interest in words as I read them because they seemed so far removed from the world I lived in. I saw all others were living in a network of lies, pure bullshit that people accepted as true.

Even when I read Nisargadatta's, I Am That, in order to have something to talk about at Satsang, more than half the time my eyes glaze over and my brain refuses to let the words in, because they too are bullshit. He talks about consciousness in motion, consciousness at rest, awareness without content,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

pure awareness, and that he came into being when Shakti and Prakritka had sort of a sexual union in his imagination. Rarely does he talk about his inner state, how he experiences his own life or the world.

But people are hungry for direction and certainty, battered by millions of inconsistent concepts about spirituality and the nature of humanity and the world. What is real? What is not? Who really knows the “Truth?” Therefore they seek the teachings of those who appear to know.

Ramana is much, much worse. He never says anything about his own inner condition, the way he experiences anything. Instead he talks in generalities, repeating something he read in the Ribbhu Gita about God, consciousness or the Self.

When I read Ramana’s self account of his awakening, I just have to laugh at his naiveté. He stuck his fingers in his ears, held his breath, and pretended he was dead, yet he still felt the full brightness of his awareness, and, since he declared to himself that his body was dead, still feeling consciousness must mean he was beyond death. In other words, he pretended he was dead, but still felt alive, and concluded he was therefore always alive.

The Robert Adams I knew was aware that all concepts were rubbish, but he used them to entertain

people. He often said that. He would say, “I tell you all these things because you like to hear them.” His sangha liked to hear and argue about freedom of choice versus predestination, karma, Turiya, Self, consciousness, the Four Principles, etc.

People are always trying, either with mere curiosity, or with desperation, to make their lives better. Very few actually shut up and take a deep look at their lives, the pain, the suffering, the fleeting nature of all states and experiences. They run from one self help book or teacher to another, or shop for gurus.

For Robert, the final answer was just silence. No concepts, no understanding, and to be good for nothing. But no one could hear that, so he talked about karma, God, consciousness, unadulterated joy, the Four Principles. Without these words, he would have had few or maybe no one to talk to.

So, what about freedom? I am trying to get you to a place where you are no longer asking “spiritual” questions about karma, predestination, consciousness, the Absolute, or how Nisargadatta relates to Ramana who relates to Osho, or why what Edji said differs from what Robert said, or what Rajiv or Deeya say. Are they not from the same tree? Should they not all say exactly the same thing as ultimate truth?

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I want you to stop looking at books, wandering from guru to guru picking up concepts and teachings, and instead just stop. Just stop and look inside and start with what you know without a doubt.

Is there anything you know without a doubt? That you exist? This is what the neo advaitins teach. Without doubt you know that you exist.

Bullshit! Even that you do not know. Any concept or conclusion is a lie of words. What does it mean to say, “I exist?” What is this ‘I’ that I say exists? Is it “beingness” as the neo-advaitins say? What the hell then is beingness? Is it consciousness? What the hell is consciousness and where did it come from? Is it permanent or temporary, flowing or still or both? Nisargadatta and Ramana talk about this kind of stuff all the time. So did Western philosophers for hundreds of years before they gave up in the 20th Century after finding no agreement. In the 1950s, the final solution of Western Philosophers about existence and consciousness was epitomized in one sentence of Ludwig Wittgenstein: Of that which we cannot know, we must remain silent.

On the other hand, we have J. Krishnamurti, who also said all gurus are talking bullshit and not to listen to any of them and thousands of people followed him as their guru. U.G. Krishnamurti went even further and said not only have all your teachers since kindergarten

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

been feeding you bullshit, but also your parents, and even J. Krishnamurti has been talking bullshit. He said J.K. had merely tasted what he, U.G., had fully attained. U.G. never lacked immodesty.

U.G. radically rejected all learning, all teachers, and all concepts. He said his brain would not let them in. His body rejected teachings.

Something like that happened to me. No teachings can penetrate my mind anymore, not Robert's, nor even Nisargadatta's. Every word they said, every word written in the scriptures and the bibles of the world is bullshit. Every principle of morality taught through society and the various Christian denominations and Muslim faiths, is pure, regulatory fantasy, made up over the centuries by the religious leaders and enforced by the politics and laws of the secular society built around it.

It is all a prison designed to keep you and everyone else living in a narrow channel of experience, keeping you dull and suppressed.

This is why I emphasize so much examining and challenging the everyday assumptions you make about yourself, your family, society, the way the world is run, the continued violence to animals in the form of killing billions in just the U.S. every year for food, leather, furs, etc. I want you to question your own and others'

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

acquiescence to the constant wars and violence occurring not only in our own society, but in Africa and the Middle East. Question the easy acceptance of the brutality and corruption of Chinese society where you hardly dare eat any food or medication coming out of that country because it has probably been adulterated. Look at the corruption of our own politicians who are bought by the wealthy in terms of campaign contributions.

So, I tell you, what is it that you know without doubt? If you look outside at the world, you see corruption, violence, graft, lying politicians, slanted newspaper coverage, death and poverty everywhere, and everyone trying to sell you something, whether clothes or a spiritual path.

Then, if you look inside, what do you see? Really, what do you see, hear, feel and know? Can you know anything with certainty? Who is the knower? Do you know that? I mean really look inside beneath the layer of thinking and emotional stories.

I assure you, if you try to verbalize any knowing you might discover, it becomes a lie as soon as it leaves your lips. Words cannot touch the “pure” existence you see, hear, feel and touch. All understanding is added onto that more basic experience.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

If you practice silence, meditation, or you go into psychoanalysis, whole new inner worlds of experience open up, from matchless love, bliss, ecstasy, samadhis, awakening experiences, which are really blows to the dominance of mind, to an endless unfolding of the tapestry of consciousness.

But after a while, even this wonderment loses its excitement and you begin to return to the world of ordinariness, of chopping wood and carrying water, bringing up a family, feeding feral cats, helping wildlife, opening an ashram, promoting vegetarianism.

You see, there is nothing to grasp onto, no knowing that can be expressed. You are the totality of your experience and more than that, but even that you cannot express for it is only an empty concept that helps no one. In the end you just plain stop and remain as you, completely content as you, but with a heart the size of a freight train, and a mind that barely functions, because you live from that very large heart.

It literally feels that way. You do not feel as if you live in your head anymore. It feels as if your center of beingness, the place you live, is closer to your heart, but is not even part of your body. You feel yourself as your presence, and that presence, at times appears to have a location somewhere near where your heart would be if you could feel it. Or, you may even lose

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

that center, and the identification then is with the totality of your experience.

This is where I am trying to take you, away from “spirituality,” away from family, away from society, away from Facebook into your own sense of presence, and there find “truth” that cannot be expressed in words, peace from resting in yourself instead of rushing around outside or inside looking for something, seeking something, because you know deep down that no matter what you do or where you go, it is always only you.

Yet, this will not happen without one more step. You must learn how to love with all your heart, with all your being, with complete passion, otherwise, just living in emptiness will leave you living as a person dead to the world, or absolutely no use to anyone, not even yourself. This is a hard step for a Jnani, for someone who has thrown away all concepts and conditioning, because in their process, they usually have thrown their passion and love away too.

So, as a teacher, this is my task, to help you shed all concepts and at the same time, to love completely, passionately and compassionately.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings



The author and Deeya at the Los Angeles retreat, 2013

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Awakening in Daily Life, Letter from a Student

Dear Ed, thank you so much for responding. I am glad to hear you say that meditation is not essential. In your book “Autobiography of a Jnani” there seemed to be only talk about what was experienced in meditation and not how this nothingness is lived in daily life. None of the levels that you talk about which one can identify in meditation applied with what happened to me. All was just being dissolved, happening in daily life - until nothing remained.

It seems here that awakening is of no real use when it is just a state that is arrived at via meditation. The human programming will still need to be addressed in daily life as there will be many parts of the programming that continue to run even after truth has been seen. Seeing truth is not the end all - that is what I am experiencing anyway. Would you say that is correct?

The main question, which seemed to not have come across in my first email is this: It is a whole other story to live this nothingness in daily life. I am living this nothingness not only as an inner awareness but also am living this in practical, every-day life as I lost all financial and material safety and security;

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

standing truly as nothing and with nothing in life since several years.

The existential terror and fear that is programmed into the cells of the human body, as well as the mental and emotional attachments with it, will have to be faced in order to truly live from and as nothingness in daily life. As long as people remain plugged into their lives with jobs, businesses, retirement funds, homes, etc. where that 'security' part of life is not deconstructed, this very base, existential programming will never be seen, faced nor rubbed out.

Am I getting this correctly?

And if it does not get touched, how truly free is someone then, it maybe a knowing that someone has but not an actual lived experience in all areas of material life. Would you say this is correct?

I am really sincerely asking because am faced with this complete deconstruction on all levels of physical reality. Because of it, I am continually placed in situations since 2006, where I see things that I never would had I remained in a stable Western type environment. I have been around people who say they are awake - but their focus is on money, on their financial and material stability, on how to keep their jobs and their every day life together. Here, there is

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

no such concern. That got completely wiped out in 2006. Wherever this body is moved that is where it goes and there is a complete knowingness that all will always be taken care of. I live with absolutely no money, no security, no stability - and I am 50 years old. How I live would give most people a heart attack. Even those who say they are awake.

So what does awake really mean, when existential fears for one's safety and security are on the top of one's priority in actual lived daily life?

Please help me understand this whole awakening and awake thing as I seem to be seeing something others do not talk about. I came at it from a whole other angle, having had no clue about awakening or enlightenment. Slowly, I am piecing things together on my own, through having read some awake people's writings, through many discussions with Dr. Michael Hall and of course, how life keeps moving through me. But I don't have a handle on it because how things are for me are so completely different from what all other awake people talk about. I keep being moved every three months to a new place. Just the other day, I saved someone from getting murdered. The stuff that I seem to be moved to be present for, witness and see in actual life, no awake person has any clue. It seems that life places this body into these situations, seemingly as a test to find out where programming is

still running and how program-less and free its actions really are. That is the explanation that comes to me but it might be completely wrong.

If you have any comments that would be wonderful!

Ed's Reply:

You are so completely right.

Almost no one who claims to be awake really is. They cling to conventionality and habit and never see that the world they live in is so illusory, totally a mental creation. They know it as an understanding, but they do not breathe it, and their "enlightenment" is confined to "Ahaa!" moments of insight, or recurring, but contained experiences of the Void, sighting the Self, or of bliss. Then they return to making a living in their old way.

Ramana dumped everything. Robert left his family and went to India at age 18. I left my job and home to go to the desert to meditate and then went to many Zen masters before I settled down again.

This is not to say it is a requirement of awaking that you abandon your family. Both Robert and Ramana were boys when they left, and I was living alone.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Nisargadatta left his family for a brief time, maybe a year or two then came back to run his beedie shop.

The Buddhist tradition contains both the ideals of being wandering monks, or establishment or monastic monks, and also of being laypersons carrying out one's duties to family and society, and then when the children are grown, to become a monk, dedicated to seeking or to good works for mankind.

Now, I ask, "Is it you who is seeking to live in emptiness and therefore keep living like a wandering monk, or this is happening to you out of grace? Are you deliberately creating a world that is falling apart, or is consciousness dishing it out to you?"

The other question is, "Is this path you are treading giving you happiness or do you feel a victim or neither?"

I hope soon this pattern will end for you so that you can really help the world in a bigger way.

Robert said if it were not for his wife and daughters, he'd be living somewhere in a cabin in the wilderness or a cave.

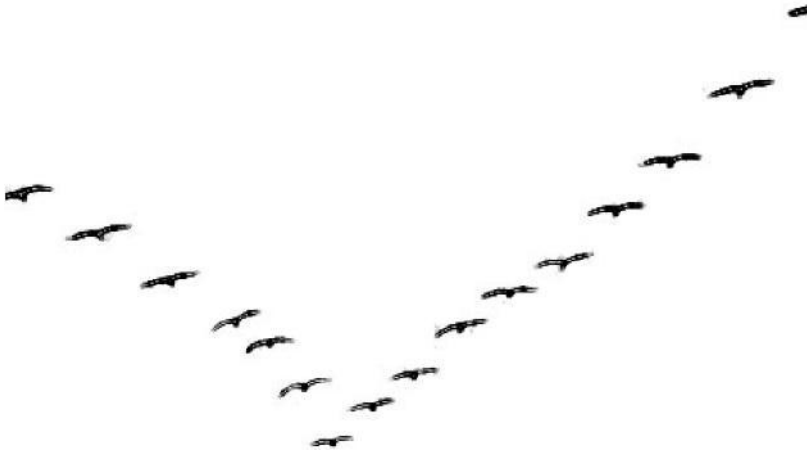
I feel that way also, except I feel bound by a sense of responsibility of taking care of my cats and other homeless cats, for these reasons I remain in the world. Otherwise, I think I would be living in a tent

somewhere in the Monterey Peninsula in Northern California, like an old monk friend of mine did in the 1970's.

Student Comment:

“Somehow your words ring true here. The spiritual ego is so inflated. It always smells when we hear ever so subtly "I am experiencing this or that. I am progressing. I am so special."

I struggle with this. Even wanting to be humble is tainted with a desire. I feel trapped. All is grace. Sigh!”



All is Love, All is Self

Aided, I think, by all the Bhaktas in our Sangha, for three days I have been experiencing constant waves of bliss and "rivers of love" flowing upwards through my body. The love is so sweet, so subtle and yet so vast, filling the Voids of the subtle body, carrying me far away beyond the mundane world.

Today I awoke very ill. The energies that had been with me for two days seemed too much for this body, so I laid down in silence, not talking to anyone.

Something then happened. My body melted into those blissful energies, and the Void itself seemed to flow. Then a love so sweet descended downwards throughout my entire body, and then into my sense of presence. Sweet energies perceived for days now permeated my presence as a divine breath of love. I was ecstatic, unable and unwilling to move.

Then my Beloved, my Self arose once again from within, and nothing else mattered. 'I', the source of the universe, showed forth, and 'I', as the witness, the cognizer even of love and the Self felt touched by her sweetness and her power. All were 'I'. All were love. All were in completion. I love you all.

Faith

I have seen this so many times. It is a watershed in one's spiritual development, when one grows tired of the unending search in various spiritual biographies, differing teachers and traditions. One feels fed up tasting a little Middle Eastern religion, New Age energy work, Zen koans, Tibetan Mudras and mantras, healing affirmations and positive thinking, 'I-am' meditations and meditation on the breath, reading about Ramana Maharshi, then Ramakrishna, then Nietzsche and Kant, transcendental meditation, noumena and phenomena. One feels so polluted by 1000 different judgments and concepts about spirituality, gurus, spiritual teachers, spiritual friends, etc., that one feels utterly poisoned: and one dare not take another bite.

One sees that one has been following a dozen different teachers for five or 10 years, with no real progress. One has been treading the offshore shallows and not gone deep at all into anything, especially into oneself.

You see our path is about Self-Realization, even though the Self is eventually transcended. The Self is the juice of the universe, the potentiating agent that makes the universe appear. Objects change; the Self is always the same in one sense as the subject, the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

knower, even though there is an even higher Knower behind it.

Those whose awakenings have not included Self-knowing, Self-Realization, to my mind lack the richness of love, devotion and surrender, which ultimately is power. When the Self operates consciously through you, each action carries far more weight than actions by a body/mind which is not Self-Realized.

There are many paths where the Self is not a goal; and to me they lack energy, charisma, and true happiness. For example, most forms of Buddhism emphasize No-Self, which usually is interpreted to mean a personal self just letting “impersonal” activities pour through one’s life; while for the Self-realized, all activities are accepted, owned and loved as one’s own.

Therefore spiritual efforts made along some other path than Self-Realization can only make Self-Realization more difficult.

So, at some point, somewhere along the line you recognize that your spirituality is really about Self discovery, and you also realize this is entirely personal; no one can discover yourself for you, you have to do it yourself.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

All the biographies of the great saints, both Self-Realized or not, as well as all the methods they teach are their path, not yours. You may find some sense of commonality reading their biographies, like that of Ramana, but you need to realize you are not Ramana; his way may not suit you at all.

Eventually you need to have faith in yourself, or faith in a guide. All the teachings, concepts about God, surrender, but especially about what the guru is and how he or she functions, all this must go out the door. You need to become simple, not complex: focused on the Self, not distracted in a dozen different directions.

One must become utterly sick of wasting one's time digging shallow holes in other's spiritual real estate. One screws up one's courage and says to ones self, "I have had it. I'm sick of the spiritual marketplace. I know that what I seek is me, the "I am. How do I find that?"

You ask yourself, "Does it matter how Ramana or Nisargadatta found themselves? Does it matter what method they recommend?" You say to yourself, "I have tried dozens of methods and have read hundreds of books. I am more confused than before I started my search for spiritual knowledge and awakening. I have concepts bouncing around my mind and they all seem equally valid. What am I to do?"

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

It is this point of maturity that Krishnamurti talks about; the awakening of intelligence, spiritual discrimination. One really stops listening to others about their path of purification, their path of knowledge, their path of meditation, their methodology, their conclusions, their insights. You see for yourself that you have to reject all spiritual concepts and empty your mind. You have to become self-confident and bold, and you say to yourself, "I am through with all of these ideas, concepts, books, and random teachers. No more! I'm done with all of this. From now on I find out only from myself."

At this point you are still filled with concepts that you have to discard. Whenever an idea comes up, you need to ask yourself, "Why did I ever believe this? What evidence did I have other than someone said this as their truth in some book or lecture?"

This is like Buddha. For seven years Buddha wandered all over northern India following teachers, reading the Scriptures, and practicing different disciplines: Raja yoga, hatha yoga, learning thousands of different spiritual insights learned from others. He became a teacher and had many disciples. Yet he was unhappy. He still was not satisfied. He still did not know which direction to go. He still did not know he was looking for himself.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

So he began a long fast to weaken the body so that his mind and spirit could become stronger. He had this concept that if the body was weakened, the mind and will would be stronger, and he could realize whatever is needed to be realized. He fasted so long and hard that he was very near death. All of his disciples worried about him and beseeched him to eat. Pretty soon he was starving to death. And at one point he realized that his fasting was helping nothing, that his weakened body had also weakened his mind and spirit, and that his life force was leaving his body. So he relented and ate some rice.

After he recovered briefly, he finally came to his senses. He admitted to himself that he had been an utter failure in following everybody else's precepts, methods, understanding, and Scriptures. He realized all this was borrowed knowledge, not his own truth. He realized that only he can discover himself. He could not follow someone else's prescription for finding truth.

So, with great determination he sat underneath the Bodhi tree and vowed to himself, that if he did not discover the meaning of life, "Why am I what I am," while meditating under the tree, "I will kill myself."

For three days and three nights he sat underneath the Bodhi tree meditating. Scriptures do not say what he meditated on. It really is not important. What is

important is there was a maturity of intelligence that blossomed in him. He was no longer gullible following any teacher that came along hoping that he had an answer that would satisfy his hunger; or that the next teacher would have an answer. He saw that all the methods he had practiced, all the thinking and pondering, all the various meditation types, all the scriptures and hatha yoga postures, had resulted only in confusion and not clarity. He recognized that clarity can only come by stopping the looking around in the shallows of spiritual knowledge, and instead to go deep within himself, relying only on himself. No more purification; only now, immediately, here and now. He had to look into his own soul and find his own truth without books, without guides, without method.

And just before dawn of the fourth day he had his great awakening. Fortunately or unfortunately, his experience is not described, leaving it to the reader to have his or her own experience.

You see, it is also not important what his realization was—for you. It was his realization. It was the realization that he needed to come to rest in himself, to find peace, just as Krishnamurti had his own realization, Nisargadatta his, Robert Adams his, and Osho, his. All were different in a sense, because they were the realizations they needed to come to rest.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

In other words, they did not all recognize that the 'I-thought' had no referent; nothing that the word 'I' pointed to, which is the currently accepted criteria of awakening offered by the neo-Advaitins and some other New Age groups.

However, part of his realization was that any communication that passed between people based on words, was unreal, not truth. All the Scriptures only point vaguely in the direction of the Self. You have to dissolve yourself of any connection with anybody else: any teacher, Ramana, Nisargadatta, Robert, Muzika, and find your own truth.

You have to be ready to dive deep into yourself, no longer tread water in the shallows, but sink to the bottom: go away beneath the mind, shut the mind often; go deep inside yourself. Reading does not help you here. Purification does not help you here. Most meditations do not help you here. Just look within at yourself.

YOU MUST HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELF!

On the other hand, there is one other way, and that is to have faith in One Teaching, One guru whose teachings focus on realizing the Self. But this is a different story for a different post. After wandering aimlessly in various disciplines for over 20 years, I found my one and only teacher; Robert Adams, and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

awakened by surrendering to him, following him, being close to him, having constant Darshan with him and his tradition.



Oak Creek above Sedona.

On Being Comfortable

In 1997 or 1998, I went to Korea, sponsored by a Korean Zen Master in Los Angeles, named Do Ahn Kim, abbot at Kwan Um Sah. I was introduced to the inner workings and power structure of Chogye Zen Buddhism in Seoul. I was "shopped" around by Do Ahn's brother, meeting all the high monks of the 6,000 temple order.

I did not have to do a thing. I was treated as royalty, and the propaganda branch of this eventually made me the first American World Teacher of Chogye Buddhism, which authorized me to start a new branch of Chogye Buddhism in the U.S. However, later I found out that this was really a titular post, and that all teachings were to be controlled in the background by Do Ahn Kim. I did not know this when I was in Korea though.

In any event, being treated like a king, a dignitary; never having to carry money, I.D., or anything had a profound effect on my psyche. I felt happy all the time. Wherever I went I was honored and cared for. I felt a profound relaxation as all details of everyday life were taken care of by others, and I just was guided from one venue to another to speak to groups or meet Chogye elders; including the ruling inner circle who wanted to emulate Soen Sahn Soen Sa's success in the U.S., but with someone more under their control.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I was totally at peace, smiling, happy, even when accidents occurred such as getting lost in downtown Seoul.

Here is the issue; when your life is easy, and people all around you idealize you, take care of you and your needs, and you have no real need to plan or take care of anything, except to show up when others take you somewhere, it is really, really easy to be happy, loving and benevolent.

And, when you are a major guru such as Muktananda, Osho, Ramana or many others, where you have a large inner group of "guru-taker-care-ofs" as an entourage, it is really easy to be continuously happy and benevolent.

And, surrounded by that culture which even creates an image for you of who you are, such as disciples did around Muktananda and Ramana (let alone Krishnamurti and the Dalai Lama) an image of affable and transcendent indifference is easy to maintain, and the myth of the transcendent guru is born.

Students coming from the outside are presented with a guru persona created by the guru's handlers and by their largely staged and handled public appearances; backed by their professional PR staffs

and writers of books, bios, lessons, and organizational teachers.

At this point, few can really see who or what the teacher or guru is really like due to having been immersed in a culture of adulation and prepared images; which are sort of like universal archetypes of the guru that even American's have, of a person who has "transcended" life, is all knowing, omniscient, an embodiment of all that is good, truth, and light. Anyone who challenges this image in any way should beware.

The real guru only comes out in dealings with his entourage on a day by day basis, dealings the average person never knows about. The guru image and persona is the only entity the vast majority of followers ever see.

If the guru begins to get unstable as did Osho, or scandals of one sort or another begin to arise, the real guru is taken underground and sort of disappears from public view, or moves out of the country as did Da Free John to Figi, or Osho disappearing by going silent.

The guru archetype is alive and well in most of us; the need for a father or god-like figure who is omniscient, who will love and protect us, and gradually reveal to us, what it is like to be beyond human, all-knowing and divine.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

But you see, this is all projection and image, carefully managed by handlers, whether of Ramana, Muktananda, or as I did with Robert Adams.

It is the guru myth so carefully created and maintained, which is really the universal myth built into all of us of the "God-Man" or superman, that is precisely that which prevents us from becoming real, becoming enlightened and bereft of any illusion of superman-hood.

The true spiritual path consists of losing all of these images and just becoming more and more "unspecial," "unrealized," "unthinking," and "undreaming"; just becoming YOU as the sense of 'I-Am'.

All the images are what make up the false self, the idealized and also the hated and buried images of our selves carefully pushed out of consciousness. Getting rid of these images, ideals, projections, and the attached emotions and thought processes, and really becoming you, IS THE PROCESS OF BECOMING SELF-REALIZED. One becomes more and more ordinary, dissolving all the "wrinkles" in everyday consciousness, such that the core experience of 'I-ness' is recognized and revealed; as well as the secondary recognition that the 'I' is both identical to what I "really" am, but at the same time, 'I' am altogether entirely beyond it.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

So, realize it is really, really easy for a guru (or anyone) to be, or at least appear happy when surrounded by handlers that make his or her day wrinkle-free; and if unhappiness or anger hit, they pass briefly and never escape from his inner circle. Thus the image of the perfect god-man is created and maintained, and separately maintained by the guru culture.

Given that this is universally the case, one can easily see that the only people in the guru environment who can take advantage of the presence of the teacher, are those close enough to see what he or she is really like. This happens only to handlers around supremely popular gurus like Osho or Muktananda, (who themselves are often corrupted by the narcissism that their own culture has created by being part of an inner circle), or by being around a teacher who is relatively unknown, such as Robert during his life.

Even then, most who attended Satsang never saw Robert for who he was; they saw their projections, positive or negative, and when the positive projections were broken, they had two choices: cut and run, as did most, or stay because you loved or respected Robert, as did I. Guess which of these two classes of people makes any "progress" in "lightening" themselves of false images, emotional baggage, and endarkening beliefs?

Have Your Cake and Eat It Too

Some people want to have their cake and eat it too. In other words, they want to hang on to their pride in their accomplishments: their family, their children, their job, and they want to especially hang on to their search for spiritual knowledge, as opposed to just looking into one's own awareness and searching for the 'I-sense'. Some people just refuse to accept no mind, becoming dumb as a rock, becoming good for nothing as a way of life. There is too much pride in them for everything about this worldly life.

Some people feel that the purpose of spirituality is to enhance and make better their everyday worldly life, much like many Christian, street preachers who say that it is God's will that you be happy, healthy, wealthy and wise. There are some spiritualities which are entirely directed to making your everyday life more productive and happy, like various forms of Japanese chanting Buddhism, such as the Soka Gakkai, where one chants for happiness or for things, as well as the Sedona release technique, where you learn to let go of things in order to get things.

Much of Christianity is dedicated to securing the good life through prayer and tithing, sort of asking for a divine quid pro quo.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

In any event, no matter what types of spirituality the average person practices or accepts, very few want their practices to interfere with their everyday family life and career. They want spirituality to enhance their everyday life and happiness and career goals. They want to let go of nothing. That is, they want to have their cake and eat it too without being bothered much by a need to walk the talk of surrender or letting go, and going within.

Therefore I want to read part of a talk by Siddharameshwar called "Give up the Addiction to Mundane Worldly Life," dated August 12, 1934:

“The worst habit is that of mundane worldly life. It is called the "greatest addiction." By force of this addiction to worldly life, Paraatman is made to believe that He is an individual, and is compelled to live the worldly life as a prison. All bad habits can be dropped, but the addiction to mundane life is the most difficult to drop. The mundane worldly life is called the blind dark life. The greatest enticement of Illusion, Maya, is this mundane life. However great maybe ones sorrow, this addiction cannot be dropped. One is greatly lucky if this addiction is dropped. There is only one person who condemns the worldly life, and that is the saint. Nobody else does that. One does not even think of leaving this worldly life, even if one suffers endless difficulties.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

People try to strengthen their ties with others by speaking to them respectfully and congratulating each other over small things. People compete with each other for earning more honors and status. In this way, they feel they are happy in life. They act as if this is a respectable bad habit.

The "God of Death" is happy to give you many kinds of bodies and various troubles. Know that the body is your enemy. Very few are those who have truly understood. Only those who are lucky enough to receive the blessings of the guru, who is the Self, can escape from the illusion by right efforts. All others are bound to the treadmill of life in various incarnations, and they make houses of bodies of various shapes and duration.

Those who consider themselves as being very scholarly only raise many various doubts and lead quite a wrong way of spiritual life. They only end up unhappy and make others unhappy as well. The man who is extraordinarily clever and learned is truly of no use. He puts himself and others at a great loss. He suffers because of his own pride in knowledge and worldly attainments.

The things of this world that are cherished by people always breed fear. When some action is done after listening to the opinions of worldly people, it increases many kinds of fear. We get completely

exhausted trying to maintain those things that appear in the illusion, as those things are ultimately perishable.

In short, people are like donkeys. They never listen because they are heavily conditioned from birth. However, those of you who do listen to the guru will attain Self-Realization.”

The same holds true for those possessed by various ideas, such as spiritual purity, either of themselves or the guru. Siddharameshwar says on page 156 of Master of Self-Realization, the following:

“Once there was a disciple who although he had received instructions from his guru, had not given up his former attitude. He had a peculiar sense of cleanliness and purity. His concept was that in order to avoid the touch of the dirty earth, he climbed up a tree. He lived in a tree, drank only rainwater and continued to believe that the earth was impure.

When his guru came to know of this, he went to see him. The disciple had become very famous. People had built quite a large round platform around the tree that he lived in, and had made a lot of decorations. The disciple did not like to come down, because to him the earth was impure. When the guru came to him, he said, ‘You come down.’ The disciples said, ‘I

will not touch the earth.’ The guru asked him, ‘Where was he sitting,’ and the disciple replied, ‘On a tree.’

With this the guru said, ‘The tree is part of the earth and you remain in the tree. The tree and the earth are not separate. You have separated them by your mind, but in reality, the tree cannot be separated from the earth. The tree is the offspring of the earth and therefore cannot be separated from it. You are smothered by your imaginary distinctions of pure and impure, and in this way you would have become very impure. I gave you a mantra so you would become pure, in unity with the whole world; but you, by your imagination are holding onto ideas of separateness, purity and impurity. Because of that you have become impure. You are now unfit for the realization that there is nothing other than Brahman. This is why you have no self-knowledge and you will not be able to realize everything is only one absolute Brahman.’

As the disciple listen to this, he understood and with fear, he climbed down. The guru said, ‘In order to wipe out your ego you have to live in a pig pen for six months.’”

Is this not the way of many religions: from the devoted Christians flailing themselves to obtain purity, to the strict adherence to the commandments, to the 500 vows of living made by a fully ordained Buddhist monk, and by the million “shoulds and should nots of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

society” and religion we all live by? Siddharameshwar clearly states all the spiritual and religious ideas separate us from the totality of life and the world by setting us apart, making some actions and ideals pure, good, impure, or of far more relevance today, being politically correct and offending no one.

I do it myself. I tell people not to eat meat. But this is my own way. It made me feel better about myself once I knew animals were not dying to keep me alive, and in a sense, I set myself apart by taking this stance. But it is a separation I can live with because I accept the goal of nonviolence.



Radha, a street rescue, 2011.

The Search

Most of us begin our spiritual search early in life. Yet even if we started when we were 10 or 11, we were already well-indoctrinated into conventionality by parents, culture and school. We rapidly learned conventional speech and ways of questioning. We knew what kind of words and ideas were acceptable and which were not. We learned political correctness. We knew what concepts, ideas and thought patterns, as well as behaviors were accepted by our parents, peers, and school, as well as what kinds of friends we should have.

By the age of 18 we are fully indoctrinated with a set of values concerning family, children, career, education, politics, consumer behaviors, and some variant of the "American dream," which we attempt to live out.

A few of us, even at an early age, see through these images, concepts and accepted behaviors, and see them as utterly arbitrary and "unreal." We become rebellious. We question religion, the politics our parents accepted, our political system, our capitalist economy, our ideas of God, Christ, and spiritual teacher in the form of the pastor, and begin exploring alternatives using our mind, because we are taught that the mind is the way to know truth and oneself.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

When Plato talked about knowing one's self, it was through reason and rationality, questioning accepted beliefs through use of thinking and the mind. His was not 'knowing' oneself as Ramana or Robert Adams talked about, as a direct experience of foundational states of consciousness.

Thus the first spiritual breakout for most of us is almost entirely of the mind. We explore Vedanta, Buddhism, mystical Christianity, Taoism, Sufism, depth psychology, psychoanalysis, bioenergetics, hatha yoga, and vegetarianism, in a vain attempt to cut an original path for our own truth.

But if we are smart enough and self-aware enough, after a while we recognize we are still following our mind; seeking freedom from the known by opening doors to new conceptual schemes: new behaviors, new religions, new spiritual teachers, and new politics. We become aware that we are not gaining freedom, but just changing our jail cells' furniture. We recognize that the mind is not the tool by which we can find freedom. The mind can only find novelty and excitement, which gives an appearance of "new," but there is no real living-transformation by adopting new sets of concepts. Indeed, there has only been a move to different rooms in the same conceptual prison, or even just changing the furniture.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Many people do this into their 50s and 60s before they recognize that the mind is not the way to freedom. The mind only engages in concepts; and there are billions, and billions, and billions of concepts bandied about by philosophers, scientists, engineers, politicians, school teachers and spiritual teachers since time immemorial. None of these conceptual structures yield freedom.

Eventually we run into spiritual teachers or teachings that say the mind is not the way, that "the way" lies in dropping the mind, or transcending the mind, living in emptiness, or living in and from the heart.

Yet these are really two very different ways. One implies a search for ultimate truth lying outside of concepts, which involves an exploration of "beingness" with its containers of various types of Void and "states." The other implies a path of love, loving one another, a guru, a spouse, lover, and ultimately loving one's own Self. Each path has its own separate pitfalls and difficulties, as well as milestones and potential progressions.

The search for truth, ultimate truth, within the various types of voids, and states of knowing and unknowing can become very dry and easily stalled due to lack of motivation: a drying out of the will to persevere. The other path, that of love, can and will

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

activate all kinds of emotional states which can be both enthralling, but also frightening and destructive, leading to all kinds of distracting stoppages.

The path of the void, or of seeking truth, generally leads one away from the world; while the path of love maintains that involvement in the world. So much so, that direct observation or realization of the Self may be delayed.

We also have to understand that the ties of the mind are very deep and subtle. We may free ourselves from fundamentalist Christianity, or fundamentalist Buddhism, or Muhammadanism, but we may not free ourselves from family values, or some variant of the American dream: including even becoming an academic or professional such as: a doctor, psychiatrist, psychotherapist, engineer, professor, or a professional questioner such as a scientist.

We deep down recognize that escape from the conventional often means ostracism and rejection by society and crowds of people, leading to a life of living at the fringes of society. It is extremely hard to escape from family values and conventionality of behaviors than to lead a life of luxury or ease. This deters many from really opting for an "authentic" lifestyle of living out of oneself as opposed to conventions.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Those whose behaviors fall outside of the norm are often shunned, as those who are still caught in conventionality find them embarrassing or challenging.

Can you imagine inviting Nisargadatta to dinner with your conventional friends? How many would find his behaviors embarrassing, and thus reflecting poorly on you within your group of friends or family? Conventionality and properness, as well as propriety, become stumbling blocks to freedom.

So, I have constantly taught people how to obtain freedom; either by going within and abiding in the 'I sense,' or to question all of their assumptions concerning conventionality: conventional behaviors, conventional aspirations, the American dream, ideas of marriage, sex, family, material success, as well as all the ideas we have about gurus and spirituality.

Living from the heart, or living without the mind, requires dropping all conventionality, all concepts, and just being open to whatever is presenting itself to you in the moment. Any concept or idea will prevent you from seeing who you are as well as who the 'other' is.

(Note: Beware even of this, because this too is a concept, but one meant as a "pointer," to bring freedom.)

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

As Robert said, "Your mind is not your friend." Yet most people accept spirituality as a progressive exploration of spiritual concepts, as opposed to dropping the mind and seeing oneself directly without the intervention of thinking, the mind or concepts.

I think it is relatively easy to drop the mind when it comes to our spiritual search. That is, through meditation and repetitive hearing that the mind is not the way, that through the mind one cannot find freedom: one gradually really begins to practice meditation and attains an empty mind rather quickly.

However, my experience is that most people encapsulate this empty mind to a small part of their lives; and no-mind, becoming nothing, does not extend outwards to family or their everyday life, because it would cause problems. Becoming unconventional is risky. Even Robert held back some of his teachings about consciousness, saying, "If I told them the entire truth, I would be stoned."

It is if for some, their spiritual life is totally separated and disjointed from their everyday life. We may be very spiritual in our meditation and getting rid of spiritual concepts such as: karma, reincarnation, guru, the void, emptiness, the Self; and yet remain very prosaic and conventional when it comes to pursuing our everyday life with our three children, worn-out marriage, an unexciting career as a doctor,

lawyer, Indian chief, executive, editor, or teacher. There, we swallow our tongue so to speak, and accept this as the bed we made for ourselves and continue to plug away, while finding more freedom through meditation and freedom from spiritual concepts, but carefully avoiding letting this freedom spoil our conventional life style.

When it comes to questions of breakup or divorce, quitting our jobs and starting a new career, dropping out of college, and just leaping into an unknown future, we find this is an entirely different and much larger ball of wax.

The escape from the trap of spiritual teachings is entirely less traumatic than escaping from a dead marriage, a dead-end career that we have spent 20 years in, or even changing our politics from conservative to liberal and actually making a commitment to getting involved in some way such as: in animal rescue, or some other new endeavor entirely, because this involves actually walking the talk, as opposed to merely meditating and thinking about the talk. Actions speak much louder than words, concepts, or meditative peace.

I think all good teachers try to think of ways to get their students to break out of their conventionality as well as to experience one's own sense of Self and to love ones Self. Robert would "cook" us by creating real-

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

life situations where our feelings would be hurt and our concepts about living would be challenged. Many people left him and the sangha rather than face these feelings. Few stayed to participate in their own deconstruction.

Other teachers, such as Siddharameshwar, focused only on meditation, on the ‘I-thought’, or ‘I-feeling’, promoting a progressive penetration through the concepts of the mind; as well as other levels of mind, such that they found the void or they found the Self.

Then What? Unless that discovery was applied to the student’s everyday life, they were still a very conventional person leading a very conventional life, and therefore a very *unfree* life.

Unlike most spiritual teachers, I think it is just as important to escape from the conceptual conventionality of everyday life: family, career, politics, etc., and to go beyond them entirely, as it is to escape from the "spiritual" beliefs that we are human beings based in bodies and minds, as opposed to being something entirely beyond. As long as one has the conventional belief of being a human, in a body, in a career, one cannot possibly do the full escape into the unknown and into the Self.

Those teachers living outside of conventionality are often referred to as “avadhuts.” One very famous and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

recent avadhut was Rajneesh. In a sense, Nisargadatta was also an avadhut who challenged all of the students to shed all of their concepts, but who himself continued to lead a conventional life.

Personally, I feel that sarcasm, humor, especially dark humor or sarcastic humor, direct criticism, as well as courses and expositions that emphasize critical thinking, can be as helpful as long periods of dry meditation in freeing oneself from the conventional, whether of conventional religion, a conventional life, the American dream, political persuasions, or Face book political correctness.

I think comedians like Lewis Black, Bill Maher, George Carlin, Jon Stuart, and many others, provide a bit of effective antidote to those immersed in the American dream, conventional religion, and conventional careers.

These men help deconstruct the conventionality we are immersed in, and help us breakout from imprisoning molds. Lewis Black states that his mother has a black belt in sarcasm, and his routines drip with such sarcasm, which can be utterly unfettering.

This is why I teach as I do, with heavy sarcasm and profanity. I desperately want people to break out of conventional mindsets and behaviors which they do not even see let alone recognize as a trap, a hindrance to

freedom. This kind of freedom is far more important for the future of mankind, than for the isolated individual to gain complete release from the fetters of mind and flesh in a great Satori. When such one gains freedom and great enlightenment, he or she becomes freed, but then what? What about the rest of mankind? Are they not struggling under conventionality imposed by the Catholic Church, by born-again Christianity, by Christian morality, by Buddhist morality, by sharia law, by Jewish folklore in the form of the Old Testament, and all kinds of “political correctness?”

Is not a large portion of the population of the United States gripped by a very conservative mentality, supposedly Christian, heavily subscribing to getting government out of welfare, child support, education, and healthcare; and turning all of these responsibilities over to the family or to "private enterprise," and companies with a profit motive? How do we help these people?

How do we help people who kill others, such as soldiers long indoctrinated by training from their governments into accepting killing for the sake of God and country, escape this mindset? How do we help butchers and slaughterhouse workers, as well as consumers to understand that killing sentient beings for meat, for other byproducts of their dead bodies, is repugnant and an offense to the self?

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Personally, I think all these tools of humor, sarcasm, spiritual "cooking," as well as meditation and self inquiry need to be applied to help as many people as possible escape from the traps of their minds, escape from peer pressure, escape from the American dream into a life of living from the heart; living from love and in love, and thereby finding freedom and happiness.

For this end I can see an integration of many tools of freedom in a sort of New University of Unlearning, where a whole community seeks freedom on every level, and in that freedom, they end up living from the heart and in love, and living daily in the ecstasy, relief, and silence that results from abandoning the mind and finding the heart.



Little Eddie and Big Eddie.

Robert Adams

I get so many comments from folks telling me I totally do not understand Advaita, spirituality in general, awakening, Robert or Ramana, Nisargadatta, or anything else for that matter.

So many people seem to know Robert better than I did and they tell me so.

But very few were with Robert, maybe none that comment here.

Yes, Robert was not of this world. Even his wife Nicole said that even after knowing him for 40 years, she expected a flying saucer to land some day and take him away, back to “his” world.

I can attest to that.

But you have to understand Robert was also human. He feared dentists. He spread rumors which constantly spoiled his sangha. He played tricks on people, and lots of other things.

So many people have concepts about gurus, what they are like, what they should be like, what powers they have, etc. Every one of these images and concepts will prevent you from truly seeing and accepting the teacher for what he or she really is, and

will prevent you, therefore, from seeing who you are, because the one discrimination begets the other.

Robert always denied he gave Shaktipat, but we could always feel the Shakti in his presence. The Shakti element was strong even as his body weakened. He always denied he did anything energetically with his students, but we all felt the energy from him and in us. To this day I still feel it as a presence within me.

Robert was a vessel for Shakti. It had its own will and way, he was not the doer and he knew it.

Some people think he could mind read them, that all gurus had that power. He could not.

Many people in the Ramana Ashram believed that Ramana could teleport, because after everyone left the hall, some might come back and see that he had disappeared, when he had still been there only seconds before.

Ganeshan, Ramana's nephew and Editor of "The Mountain Path," told me that many believed that, but did not know that there was a hidden trap door near the couch where he lay, through which he exited and went to his room.

So strong is the need in many to idealize and worship someone who can "save" them from suffering and even from death, that they do not see the guru

clearly. So frightened are many that they need a savior to take away their human mortality and vulnerability.

Thus you find all the comments that Ed Muzika is all-too-human, versus legends like Ramana or Robert, because many have to believe in a divine or demigod savior.

Even exceptionally brilliant people needed to worship gurus, such as Ken Wilber and his fixation on Da Free John, and oh so many on Osho or Ramana.

Guru worship starts from such an idealization viewpoint. One thinks of the guru as savior and God incarnate because one projects that salvation need into a guru or series of gurus.

Then you gradually get to know what the teacher is really like, and with that a progressive disillusionment of the need to idealize and project. If while seeing the guru ever more clearly as both human and something else, by being with him or her, having projections and idealizations broken; if then you still can accept and love your teacher; you will find you also see yourself ever more clearly, and accept yourself as he or she accepts you, and gradually you will love yourself as much or more than you ever loved the guru.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Truly, he or she is your mirror of how you see yourself, as well as of your Invisible.

Then one day your Self, drawn by your love and acceptance of both yourself and your teacher, will reveal itself totally to you. Not in the small bits and pieces you have grown used to by practicing self-inquiry, or self-abidance, or guru-bhakti, but in a full, complete revelation of tremendous power and magnitude.

This is not to say there is just one awakening. This is just one of many awakenings that await the diligent student of him or herself.

Even Robert had a final awakening just months before he died. I was not there with him in Sedona, but I was told this by Mary Skene, who moved to Sedona from LA, to be with him. The great Zen master Joshu, said he had 17 great awakenings and thousands of small ones. So you can never count your journey in life as completed no matter how finished you feel.

A true guru is an ordinary human being but in a most extraordinary way, and so are you if only you could stop to really investigate and to see yourself without judgment, condemnation, or excessive narcissism.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I see so many gurus in the current marketplace who appear so arrogant, self-centered and intellectual. I can see why prospective students are wary of accepting any of them, and thus continue to worship some dead gurus such as Ramana, Nisargadatta, or Christ. Yet, those who do so remain stuck in relationships where the idealisms and projections never collapse; rather than have a real relationship with a real person, where the deconstructions of your fantasies occur much more rapidly because of that relationship.

The same process holds true between human lovers. There is always a progressive disillusionment, narcissistic injuries, etc., and most such highly charged relationships break up before there is any real transformation. Then the search begins for a new lover, one who is not so imperfect as the last. But the process is the same as with the guru.

Eventually you see the teacher for who he or she really is, and by that time you see yourself for who you really are; a process of becoming both progressively more human and less human at the same time.

A New Way of Teaching

Again, I have been quiet for a while. Now that I have read Shri Sadguru Siddharameshwar's Master of Self-Realization, I am aware both of the strengths and weaknesses of the Advaita approach.

One strength is that it is a model that provides a complete ontology and epistemology about the human condition; focuses on what is important, which is Self-Realization versus other kinds of spiritual knowledge or of attaining siddhas, and provides the method of following or abiding in the 'I-sense', the 'I Am'.

However, one weakness of Advaita (and Zen) is that it misses the human condition that still binds most seekers, and tries to cast it off rather than use it to energize awakening. Traditional Advaita, at best, urges one to love one's family and children, and to concentrate on the 'I-sense' by following it downwards into the depths of consciousness, to the deepest layer of consciousness, Turiya, and then even surpass that to utter silence, the Void of Voids.

The other even stronger weakness is that it is a simple-to-understand model with enormous power to gratify one's thirst to know and to understand. One reads Nisargadatta or Siddharameshwar, and immediately the mind halts and one feels awe. It is so

easy to make the mind rest when it hears these deep truths.

Like Einstein's General Theory, it is so beautiful, eloquent, and complete, one rests in a state of pure knowing.

Yet, this knowing is still of the mind. It does not penetrate deeper into one's consciousness to the deeper levels of Samadhi, or guide you through to the levels of knowing nothing, becoming nothing, wherein all knowledge is shed and you become simple and humble.

You see, the traditional Advaita is so powerful, just reading it generates profound states of understanding in some, with profound "opening" experiences, that one often feels they have gone all the way and have a complete understanding. Very often they become very arrogant, filled with spiritual knowledge, which they begin to announce to every one they know.

Thus is born the Facebook and other Internet gurus and also the guru-bashers, who smell the arrogance of knowledge or the falseness of those who proclaim their utter purity and divine love. One can feel that these teachers lack humility and a certain humanness and loudly proclaim an impersonal state, or of a divine and impersonal love for all. One feels in their presence the lack of the human touch, of mortality, and simple

humility. They are teachers and everyone should listen to their truth, and believe their impersonal love is deep and true.

It is so hard for many to ever escape this trap of understanding and embodying an impersonal, universal love.

There is another way of teaching that I think is more powerful and without the weaknesses of Advaita. I should also include Zen and Tibetan Buddhism because they beget similar problems as Advaita, in that they also miss the transforming power of human love. You will not find love in Zen, believe me.

This other way is by direct transmission of transformative shakti, and also just being in the presence of the guru in Satsang and Darshan, being in the presence of truth and manifest love.

This is why I hung around gurus for many years, looking for truth in them which I felt I lacked. This is why I spent 8 years with Robert, because I could feel it in him. I felt his “beyond this worldliness,” and its draw was infinitely powerful. To be around him and feel knowledge and knowingness drop away into the peaceful holding grace of nothingness brought such peace. One can certainly feel the draw of the Great silence, the stateless state beyond even Turiya, which is the ground state of the Self; feeling that core that

penetrates through and permeates all other states of consciousness: like the waking, dream and sleep states, as well as the mind with all its knowing, and impulses, as well as the physical body, and even the awakening Shakti itself.

Yet, one always feels there is something lacking following this path: a feeling of love and the terrible power of love to twist and turn you into a thriving, flowering plant; or by its lack, into a shriveled leaf. I am talking about human love, the love for another, which in its deepest form is really love of the Self, for itself, both in oneself: where the love arises and is felt, but also love for the Self that is felt and experienced in the “Other.”

I saw it in Robert. Robert was always seeking personal love because he said it grounded him and kept him in the world. What he meant was that love of the Self turned inward resulted in a Ramana, benevolent and impersonal: but love of the Self turned outwards, brought a transformative power both to the guru and to those who loved him or her.

Yes, Robert loved me. I could feel it all the time. But he also sought the love of a woman to ground himself, to excite and energize that Self-layer of his, as well as energize the Self-knowing quality in the woman. We men students were largely left out of the masculine/feminine transformation around Robert, and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

most felt the Void and beyond, which can become very, very dry.

I truly believe that one is OFTEN best served by having a guru of the opposite sex, for it can use human love as a transformative energy, a sort of conscious or unconscious Tantra.

I do not want to digress too much in this area, it is only an example of what I saw over 40 years of being around countless gurus: human love in all its forms is an essential part of the best sorts of transformation. It always will destroy the arrogance of knowledge that Advaita and Tibetan Buddhism can bring, as well as the Zen arrogance of knowing nothing. Love, human love as between lovers, or the guru/chela, is humbling and transformative.

Therefore, I think there is a more powerful way of teaching than teaching Advaita or Zen or other forms of Buddhism, and that is direct transmission, outside of the teachings, through respect and love, mostly in silence, while being in the presence of the teacher—someone who has realized the Self.

I admit I totally pooh-poohed such a way of teaching in the past, because it lacked knowingness, understanding, and a method. The only method was to be in the presence of the guru, and lacking that, of a highly evolved lover.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

This is the model of Muktananda and currently, Amma, the hugging guru.

I saw Amma several times before I met Robert and felt nothing from her, but I saw the profound impact she had on many. I dismissed her and her approach then as not for me. Also, for me, Muktananda was the same: a silly old man with no particular teachings, or anything else going for him, but who also had an enormous impact on thousands of students through his shakti.

But I see the trap of knowledge and knowingness so easily sprung on Advaita and Buddhist students, which I have seen at work in our own Sangha. Thus from now on, I will emphasize “Truth” less, and the need for love, both personal and impersonal, and for physical presence, more, much more.



Huntington Gardens.

The ‘True’ Teacher

Why are so many of you out there convinced that a “true” teacher always looks and acts like Ramana? Please tell me, what is it that you get out of a teacher that has a quietist presentation like Ramana, rather than having a rich, dynamic, and energetic delivery with a full range of affect? Is it that you too have a “rich and overly energetic” presentation which you find painful and you seek respite from yourself in creating an illusion of peace?

I do not get it. For many of you, a “true” teacher never gets angry or agitated. He does not participate in life. He lives in a different world, a world of peace, gentleness, no anger, no reaction to the world, desireless, sexless, and not a hint of judgment. Are you that needy of escape from your own humanity? Robert himself was not the way he came across in Satsang.

Even in Satsang his sarcasm came across, but when you were with him, his sarcasm, which is a judging, became sharper, and behind people’s backs, he would be judgmental. Never in public mind you, but personally he would express his judgments about people, including who to trust or not trust, who was advanced and who was not.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Look, I am 70 years old. Maybe I have another ten years of teaching. I am in a hurry too. I hate watching people cling to their ideas of what a “perfect” teacher is like, or how they should express themselves, or what their inner state is like.

These concepts prevent you from realistically seeing yourself as you are and becoming yourself, because these concepts are filters by which you judge, and thus accept or reject the teaching being offered, and also accept or reject the energetic impact of the teacher on you.

It is really, really difficult to come to a teacher empty of concepts and judgments. And, this is precisely what a teacher is trying to teach, how to become empty of concepts, completely open. This is why I attack your concepts about spirituality and gurus.

Move past your rejections and your limiting concepts, and behold, Nisargadatta the Terrible!

Please listen clearly. I am not bashing gurus or their methods. I am bashing the words they use. It is words read 100 or 1000 years later by someone in Buffalo N.Y. that can trap that person into an idealization of both Ramana, the picture painted of him by many disciples, and his teachings about consciousness. This poor guy or girl may have nothing

else to go on for years but being trapped in these concepts and projections flowing out of a need for security and a projected onto this idol.

Then later, he or she discovers the spiritual marketplace and finds it overcrowded with competing visions, teachers, workshops, paid skype sessions; and more than anything else, the concepts gurus teach: concepts about everything from love, to awakening, to “full-realization,” the need to be in Nirvakalpa Samadhi for 12 years with a guru until you awaken, Turiya, awareness, and a trillion other concepts and methods.

I knew Robert really, really well.

He used concepts to entertain and keep people coming back to Satsang to be in his presence. It was not his words that changed me or anyone else; it was his presence. In his presence I was transformed. It was his stillness, his *lack* of teaching that transformed me. He was not of this world and I felt an intuition of that world when I was with him.

Therefore my teaching has nothing to do with any concepts, even those from my beloved Nisargadatta, and even less so from Robert or Ramana. I worship Nisargadatta, and I have taken Robert into my heart and he is I. I feel their grace constantly, and do not feel they would have felt betrayed because I say they

often spoke non sense. I think they would smile to hear me say that.

If they were alive, I would tell people, “Go to Nisargadatta and Robert. Just sit in their presence and listen. Do not judge or form concepts. Just listen and try to feel them with your beingness, with your heart.”

I do not bash them, I bash their concepts. I do not bash their methods; I embrace them and expand on the process of meditation on the ‘I Am’, and even use the concepts of the four bodies as a heuristic tool.

But what I see in almost all of my students is them being stuck in their everyday, personal life, trying desperately to get unstuck by following gurus, doing practices, and mostly reading books, which just crowd their minds with additional concepts which even more hide the truth of emptiness.

So my message is: Do not get even more stuck by becoming captured by a tradition or set of concepts that are not relevant to that which you know for certain. What is it that you know without doubt? Is there anything you know without doubt?” This will take them immediately to the conclusion, ‘I know nothing for certain.’ What does this get you: Fear, insecurity, a sense of loss? What does this give you?

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

It allows you to be open to your own truth. What do you know with complete certainty? Don't you see, this has plowed the field of your mind to be free of all conceptual weeds and allows space for your own truth, verbal or non-verbal to sprout and grow.

At the deepest level you need to trust the guru—if you are to follow that path—with your life. You turn everything over to him or her. You see he only wants your freedom and exalts in your success every time you break a little freer; whether from a sickened family situation, to freedom from some guru or guru-teachings which are not helping you.

The guru/chela relationship is extremely close, personal, and painful for both the teacher and the student.

One of my students; her way started in Christianity and about three years ago she discovered Robert. She listened to him, every talk, many, many times over a period of about a year. She listened to all 245 talks many times, and even listened to them through the night on her Ipod Nano. She practiced self-inquiry incessantly.

The result; she became suicidal. Her whole world had lost its juice and she saw the emotional poverty of her life locked in a loveless marriage. This made her even more depressed. At that point we became closer

and I helped her see through the concepts that trapped her in that dead marriage as well as the truth behind Robert's words, which were really meant just for public dissemination, and surely are not the words a living guru would give to you if he or she were guiding you in everyday life, real time.

AND she began to flower! She began to take control of her life and not stay a doormat to an overly controlling husband in a loveless marriage. She began to experience intense love and intense emotions for the FIRST TIME IN HER MEMORY.

This allowed her to break even freer and see the life-freeing value of love. With this, like with many women, she began to experience intense energies, intense emotions, intensely flowing kundalini-like energies raging through her body, burning away attachments and concepts because her intensity and focus made all the conceptual traps in her life, all the assumptions, etc., clearly seen as walls of a prison. The traps, the beliefs in the nuclear family, HER nuclear family, the belief in Robert's words, her Christian morality of always being the good girl, the pristine feminine factor, enforced meekness, were all blown away by the energies and freed emotions coursing through her body and through her sense of presence, until she was clearly able to see she was not

her body, and the mind was seen to be like a clear bubble filled with junk.

You see, it is this kind of student I look for, someone hell bent for freedom.

Another student was different when he came to me. He had 12 years of intense meditation practice before we first talked. He was almost at awakening. It took just a little push. And his awakening process continues as does my own. It never stops. There is no end, no final state. His way had less drama, because basically he was a Jnani. He is continuing to unfold now on a Bhakti path. The first student is a good mixture of Jnani, as a teacher, but even more so as a Bhakti.

Thus her way is more painful, disruptive, filled with drama, intense feelings, devotion, and increasingly, ecstasies.

There is another student who is almost totally a Bhakti. Her awakening is filled with events of strife, mental trauma, fears, but also is a path of deep love and devotion. How many are willing to traverse her path of continuous fear and emotional pain to get where she is? Not many.

So, really I speak to the rare ones ready to go over the cliff. For others I say, “Just don’t get caught by

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

concepts, whether those of society, or Ramana. Develop a clear mind.” But this message is usually lost on beginners who need to cleave to some set of beliefs, concepts, or first to a guru who appeals to them. I am not really speaking to them.



Malibu.

Ramana, Siddharameshwar and Nisargadatta

Siddharameshwar, Nisargadatta's teacher had a somewhat different ontology and a somewhat different method.

He said essentially there were two 'I's: the 'I' of the mind and identification, which was resident in the subtle body as a concept, and the much deeper feeling of 'I Amness,' which was the Fourth Body, or Turiya. This is exactly the same view as Ramana Maharshi.

Nisargadatta, at the end of his life, had the opinion you only had to listen to his words, ponder their meaning, and abide in the 'I Am', in order to become liberated. Siddharameshwar said the path was all about meditative introspection, hunting through the layers of consciousness to find the 'I Am'.

For Siddharameshwar there were four bodies to be conceived of and found through progressive, guided meditation with the teacher, always hunting for the 'I'.

There was the physical body and the world, the world of the mind (Subtle Body) with its thinking, feeling, discrimination, concepts, and the inner experience of space or the Void. Then there was the body of forgetfulness (Causal Body), which takes away

the knowledge of the body and the mind, leaving one empty and sensitive to more subtle layers.

Next is what he called the Supracausal body, which Ramana and he both also called Turiya, or the fourth state. This is the 'I Am', the deepest level of embodied consciousness.

All three, Ramana, Siddharameshwar, and Nisargadatta said this part of one's Self is found in meditative introspection on the sense of 'I', or 'I Amness', or of just 'Amness'. Through meditation the successive bodies or layers are revealed as one gets progressively more discriminatively subtle. Ramana and Siddharameshwar placed far more emphasis on introspection and abiding in the 'I', or the 'I Am' sensation, while Maharaj placed more emphasis later in his life on the presence of the guru, and listening to his words. Earlier, he was far more devotional.

Now, Siddharameshwar said that with the guidance of the guru, the student finally penetrates through to the 'I Am' level and needs to abide there. The 'I Am' level is all about love. The 'I Am' level, Turiya, in a sense is love itself.

This too is my discovery. You can best find the 'I Am' level inside yourself through love, first by loving that sense of 'I Am' you find through introspection, and then also by borrowing the love you feel for

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

another within oneself, and realizing you are love itself. The Self, which is Turiya, is perfect love, devotion and surrender. Way before Self-Realization, you will increasingly have experiences of bliss, awe, love, energies and ecstasies that both race through your sense of presence, and also fill it with ecstatic states. Your body will seem torn asunder by unimaginable love flowing, bliss and even more. It really cannot be described very well.

Then one day, after you have loved long enough and hard enough, the Self rises from within and exposes itself to you; and you, the small self, will fall to your knees in absolute awe and devotion. You will feel the grace of God even if you do not believe in God. You will feel the divine rising within you, just as Krishna revealed himself to Arjuna and you will fall to your knees in complete love, surrender and devotion.

All three agree on the next step. At some point during your devotion to the Self, to the 'I Am', while abiding in Turiya, Samadhi, the 'I Am', that sense of blissful, ecstatic presence will abruptly leave and you will recognize yourself as that which has supported all; the principle that knows and supports the universe, and also supports the 'I Am'. The amazing thing you will also learn, is this feels like you are returning to be an ordinary you, except for the realization that all this too is you. Everything is you and not you at the same

time. You become ordinary, watching or participating in life; it becomes your “choice.”

Siddharameshwar is both Jnani and Bhakti as is Ramana. Nisargadatta is no longer a Bhakta at the end of his life. He says that even after the ‘I Am’ falls away, even after you have penetrated through Turiya and have rested in what you are, you must continue to find and worship the ‘I Am’, the Self within, the Self of All. This continued worship is what adds sweetness and wetness to non-phenomenal existence, because otherwise, so many Jnanis burn out and dry up, as happened to me, until someone blew life into me again.

Nisargadatta in a Nutshell:

You as a body/mind were born. You lived totally involved with the world and your own instincts and desires, 100% involved, but not aware of yourself as an identity, a human.

Then one day, out of nowhere, sometime between the age of 1-1/2 and 4, it dawned on you that you were alive and existed. The ‘I Am’ was born! You then began an existence of self-awareness, self-consciousness, aware not only of your wants and needs, but the realities imposed by the world.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Thus was born the beginnings of getting your wants and needs fulfilled through various adaptive strategies, including using your intelligence to create situations or items to fulfill your needs. You flaunt your intelligence to gain recognition or love. Later you may flaunt your sexuality, maleness or femaleness to get what you want.

At school you learn reading, writing, social skills, debating, and how to be an obedient and good consumer. You learn all kinds of things that you integrate into your self-image, which is opposed to a non-self image also developing, namely the external world. Now you have contracted from being the world down to living in a mental creation. Everything, all external data, all internal feelings and energies are mediated by mind. You no longer live in the real world but a mediated world.

All this is knowledge.

The first knowledge was 'I Am.' Before that, though you existed, 'I', as an entity was not born. Before that you existed, functioning perfectly, instinctually, then the 'I Am' was born and everything changed.

After that you were just knowledge, and in deep sleep, the knowledge was lost. But still you existed, just as you did before the 'I' was born.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

First you have unknowing, not knowing. Then knowingness came and then it went, back and forth. But you always existed. You really are that principle that knows. You are the one who contains both knowing and not knowing.

This principle is the same in all sentient beings. Everyone has the knowing potential. There is only one kind of knowing principle and it is embodied in all sentient beings. We all share that as the base.

When your body mind dies, that sentience dies in you and with it, your 'I Am'. But the sentience, the knowingness principle continues on throughout the universe in others.

Maharaj says it is this 'I Am' that causes all the world's problems and is your master. How to end it and find total freedom from the needs and drives of the 'I Am?'

He says to find the 'I Am' in us, abide in it, love it, and one day, with endless loving, it will go. It will release you from its clutches once the original you, the principle behind knowingness, recognizes you still exist even when the 'I Am' has disappeared.

The 'I Amness' has two qualities, love and the generator of all activity. The 'I Am' rules all. It is the beginning and end of everything that is visible and in

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

experience, but YOU, as the ultimate which holds even the 'I Am', and God, and the world in existence are beyond all that.

The trick I am adding to Nisargadatta's method is to add the love you find for another, recognize that it is a love for another that arises in you, focus on it, and become love itself. Once you can identify with love itself, the Self, the universal holder of the 'I Am', the pure 'I Am' of all, will reveal itself to you as the most awe inspiring entity. The grace of God will flow into you, and you will be completely happy, completely ecstatic.

But you must understand; you, as you take yourself to be, are only an idea. You are a story, not an entity, not your body. You don't exist as any entity. But what you really are is the power of knowing or not knowing. Still you are not an entity; you are the principle that sustains the universe and that which understands these words.



Sex and the Guru

In the early 1970s I studied Zen with several Zen masters, including Maezumi Roshi and Sasaki Roshi.

During a talk one frozen winter morning at Mt. Baldy, Sasaki said, “You all want enlightenment, but you have to realize after awhile enlightenment can be boring.” He then went on to say how you have to bring enlightenment back into everyday life.

As I had not awakened at the time, his talk had no impact on me. I wanted to awaken; whatever that was, I had no clue.

Eight years later I was teaching a course at UCLA’s Extension in Zen and psychology, and Maezumi Roshi spoke as a guest speaker. Someone asked him, “What is Zen?” Maezumi paused 5 or 6 seconds, then threw his arms out wide and proclaimed loudly, “Zen is breath! Zen is being present here and now in everyday life!”

As I had not awakened at the time, I dismissed this as the testimony of someone who had not awakened. I judged him as defective because I thought enlightenment was everything, and everyday life was something I wanted to leave behind.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

To me, at the time, awakening was something extraordinary that happened to you which totally transformed you into something superhuman, having acquired some transcendental state of nonattached wisdom and bliss, such that any intrusion from everyday life would simply be a contamination.

In the early 1990s when I was with my greatest teacher, Robert Adams, often people would ask him how he saw the world, what was his subjective experience? They would ask, “Is it all Oneness, do you only see the Void, are you in ecstasy all the time, etc.?”

Robert replied, “I see the world much as you do. If I did not, I could not function in the world. The only difference is that I know that everything is consciousness. I am consciousness, you are consciousness, the trees and sky are consciousness.” He went on to explain he that knew the objects in consciousness were not real, because they came and went and did not stay, only consciousness stayed, only consciousness was real.

I was not awake at the time, and therefore this talk was also lost on me. As long as you identify yourself with your body, the concept of Universal Consciousness just does not make sense; you have not experienced one-consciousness yet.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

During the 1970s, Zen was most popular. There were at least a dozen famous Zen masters in the US, and most of them became embroiled in scandals about them having sex with their students. I never saw the point of these scandals and never had the viewpoint that the poor female or male students were vulnerable and confused; for really, who is not vulnerable to love which can come from any direction unexpectedly? Why should love or sex be controlled? I just did not see it.

But the big argument back then was that a spiritual teacher had the same sort of moral and ethical obligations of a psychotherapist or a lawyer with all sorts of exclusions, preclusions, and confidentiality. I really never bought that idea back then even when I was a newby, figuring what did sex have to do with awakening? It was like eating, a natural function of the body, and of love.

We don't think of restrictions on love and sex in everyday life except for whether you are in an exclusive relationship or not, but if not, why all the concepts that sex between teacher and student was wrong? I saw students and teachers as equals, as consenting adults, not as God and mortal, or therapist and analysand.

Yes, Maezumi got into trouble regarding sex with his students, and I think was divorced twice in very public circumstances.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Yet, he was very open all the time, talking publically about his failures as perceived by others, and also by himself. He felt shame for drinking too much, being caught too many times in sexual relations with students, etc. But he was extremely open about his problems, to everyone.

To me he once confided, even when I was a student of his, “Why me? Why do I get all the criticism (about his sexual affairs)? Look at Sasaki! He is ten times worse than me, and no one criticizes him.” It is true, everyone knew about Sasaki’s affairs, but his impish personality allowed him to get away with it without criticism.

As a little known footnote, Robert was frequently asked about sex and vegetarianism. Robert was a lifelong Vegan since the age of 11, and this is one of the few rules of living Robert suggested we live by.

Yet when asked about sex, Robert said there was absolutely nothing wrong with it. In fact, problems often arose in our sangha about Robert’s relations with some of his female students for one reason or another, and we were often forced to change the venue of our satsang meetings because someone or another got upset about his actions. Robert did not care who came and went to his satsangs; he was only interested in who stayed with him no matter what he did.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

This area exposes the issue of trust and surrender, which I will not discuss here, but will at a different time. This is still an area filled with opinions and judgmentalism, but once you find your teacher, even if he/she is not your final teacher, learning to trust and surrender is incredibly important and necessary. Those who never learn to trust or surrender to a teacher, have a very difficult time making any progress, as their minds are always judging, judging, judging and remaining in control.

You see, sex was only one issue around which every teacher was criticized and found wanting in some way or another back in the 1970s, and I suppose even now because the concept of therapist/analysand was used by westerners as the proper boundaries and judgmental framework for the teacher/student, guru/chela relationships.

At that time little was understood about the nature of Eastern spirituality and the inevitable opening of the heart to long buried emotions, including love, jealousy, anger, and the more refined states of bliss and ecstasy that develop out of love, yet the western mind needed to have a framework imposed in order for the busy mind to judge everything. They imposed old rules on a new type of relationship.

Other issues arose such as money, donations, volunteering time and energy for the sake of the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

sangha, teacher and teachings. Everywhere apparent abuses were found, because the western model of charging for everything was not used, but instead the eastern concept of the teacher taking care of the student's spiritual development, and the student's duty was taking care of the teacher's worldly needs. Many opined that teachers were taking advantage of the students.

Again, to me these were consenting adults, and often the giving by the students had so many strings attached; it was more like a conditional loan based on a 40 page contract.

Then, in 1995 I had my first awakening experiences and everything changed. I withdrew from life. I didn't care about the world anymore. I just kept looking inside myself finding a stillness and quietness everywhere—the peaceful void, as well as the great void, which I ultimately was, but which could not be perceived or experienced, because it was 'I'.

For years I withdrew and abided in emptiness. I was happy, peaceful, and I began teaching others that the world was illusion, go within to find your true nature.

But after 16 years, consciousness threw me a hardball. Consciousness sent me someone to love.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I was opened like a tin can and flooded by emotions. I was flooded by love, love long buried and unfelt manifested all the time. Other feelings arose, jealousy, anger, fear, etc., and overwhelming positive energies that permeated my entire being. I was filled with joy all the time.

Even when depression or a sense of desolation broke through into awareness, there was still an underlying happiness and contentment. Energies coursed both through my body and through my larger sense of presence.

In the words of Muktananda, “I had come alive.”

Yes, emotions were there, huge, positive and negative, but they were tame and mild things compared to my experiences of 20 years before when emotions could tear me apart.

Emptiness, the Void, and an energized sense of presence contained everything. Emotions just arose and passed away without blockage---not an instantaneous transformation, but one that occurred over six or eight months or so.

This is when I began to make everything personal again. It is as if my personality had become reborn, re-energized. Rather than just watching emotions pass through me, joy pass through me, jealousy pass

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

through me, love pass through me, they became mine and I owned them.

Everything became personal. Everything became more real, more immediate, and more alive. But more than that, every idea I had ever had about the nature of the spiritual adventure and path dropped away. I no longer had any ideas or judgments about it.

I was completely open to what was happening in the moment, to everything arising within myself and between me and my beloved, including the experience that there was no difference between us. There is no difference between me and all of you out there. No difference whatsoever. I love you all as myself.

I am free to be ordinary and not locked into the notion of always being in an ecstatic Samadhi, or focused just on the Void, either the Void I experience, or the Void that I am, which can't be experienced in the conventional way.

I am now also free to die, to let the body drop away without regret, for every moment I live my life with no set of rules other than to follow my heart and intuition at every moment.

This is what I try to teach all of you. Drop all of your ideas about what awakening is like, what the teacher/student relation is supposed to be, what

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

duties you still have post-awakening, post awakening paths and problems, etc.

All these things will happen to you, awakening, bliss, love, etc., the more quickly you drop your wondering what it is and just focus seeing and enjoying yourselves and others to whom you relate. Mind, opinions, theories, judgments, and self checking are the way the mind prevents your freedom.

The post awakening path really is to become you, just the way you were before awakening, but enjoying yourself fully and completely. There are no faults, no mistakes. You are fine the way you are with all the emotions that might arise, including guilt, anger, jealousy and even hatred, because the emotions that arise are now tame and calm affairs compared to your experience 20 years before. The feelings are welcomed as signs of life. Love is welcomed and readily expressed.

You have now found the path for the rest of your life: becoming the most incredible you possible, not someone else's idea of enlightenment or proper relationships. You have become liberated to be become yourself fully, to be equally comfortable and identified with the void, love, sadness, depression, bliss, ecstasy or even desolation.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

You fear nothing, not love nor loss of love, not emotions nor loss of emotions, not life nor the loss of life. All phenomena come and go and you welcome them with joy and see them pass with joy. You are free, but not like Ramana in a peaceful withdrawal, but free even while fully embracing ordinary life, just as Maezumi told my class by throwing his arms open and exposing his heart, just breathing is joy, is Zen; is life!



Zendo, Mt. Baldy Zen Center.

The Ecstasies of Women

I just watched the whole process of what is going on in me and put some notes down.

A wave comes over me. It's a heat wave and my first thought is - that's Edji, he is with me. Great joy arises, thrill spreads throughout my body. I start witnessing the wave getting stronger and stronger. It is first felt in the navel area or solar plexus but it moves upward and stops in my heart area. I start feeling an increasing love and gratitude for your presence. That quickly grows into an ecstatic feeling, almost climaxing. There is great pressure in my heart and a push for an opening. The energy remains there and my heart is full and throbbing; like an incomplete orgasm just waiting to be awakened again to fulfill itself.

Then a second wave comes, a stronger one. My whole body now participates. It is flooded with ecstatic sensations. I become hot; again, and again. It becomes almost unbearable. Involuntary my breath stops in an attempt to sustain the height of the Orgasm, to make it continuous. It is a miracle, the most amazing thing I have ever experienced.

Occasionally, there would be a complete orgasm; great relief which spreads all over my body. Peace then envelops me. I am now in meditation. My

thoughts slow down. The focus is now on my third eye area. My whole head feels very tight, as if I have a helmet on it. I then start sinking, down, down into stillness (although I do have random thoughts). At this point it is mostly watching or feeling of my body tingling in a pleasurable way. I am at rest.

Ed's Response

Ah, you had Shaktipat even without any touching. Just look; the rarest of the rare.

Advaita does not recognize the guru as a doer, even though remarkable things happen everywhere as with you. It is consciousness itself that appears to be reaching through and expressing through our entire Sangha and our lineage.

I have found this to be a common happening amongst the women in our international Sangha, and it is much more rare among our men. The way of Bhakti is quite spectacular in a few who experience waves of ecstasy, bliss, and increasing full body orgasms arising spontaneously, unsought, almost as a reward for their love.

As ones awareness gets ever closer to the bliss level of Self, Turiya, there develops extremely unusual states of ever flowing love that feels like a river arising from within, starting a few inches below the heart,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

then upwards through the heart into the neck, mouth and upwards through the crown Chakra.

This love is experienced in many different ways as love seems to have many flavors or tastes: sometimes it is ecstatic, sometimes felt like a cool breeze; sometimes it is experienced as a fragrance, sometimes the flowing love goes into the heart and fills you up until you feel you are going to explode in the bliss of a whole body orgasm.

Sexual feelings begin flowing too, filling the bodies of both men and women with almost unimaginable pleasure and love.

It happened with me and continues. The divine bliss of the Beloved, the Self, flows into the body, revitalizing it; filling you with waves of ecstasy which can last for days. Sometimes the pleasure is so great that a few among us may lose their minds so to speak for weeks at a time.

These waves of pleasure and rivers of love become increasingly extended experiences and foreshadow the arising of the Self in an explosive Self-Realization experience that literally renders the remaining personality as divine, for everything is permeated by bliss and love.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Unfortunately, these waves of love and bliss accompanied by almost endless whole body orgasms are always followed by periods of a return to the ordinary world, followed by periods of intense negative emotions, hostility, fears and jealousy.

But this has to happen you see. This movement towards self is cyclic; the good and bad are intertwined.

Eventually though, one awakens to the fact that even underneath the most paranoid delusion, underneath the psychotic core being relived, is the Self, is bliss and ecstasy, and orgasms. The Self is rewarding the body, so to speak, and encouraging the subject ever onwards to deeper levels of devotion and surrender, and with it comes a full acceptance of one's psychotic parts and one's wild sexuality which makes you feel like a tiger.

All conventions are blown away. All concepts are vaporized in one's bliss being, and you become utterly self-assured and free from anyone else's concepts, including eventually even those of your guru, for you yourself have come into yourself, as the Self of all.

This Bhaktic path combined with Tantric elements is wild and the faint hearted need not apply.

The Difficulty of Awakening

I will be honest with you. It is almost impossible to awaken. The way can be so difficult, so filled with distractions, and our minds are designed to fight freedom.

Our identities are mostly complete by the age of seven. The time between birth and seven creates the structure of our knowledge, our identities, and is made up of all the stories and fairy tales told to us at school and in our families. Culture forms our desires; we live in these stories; they become us and our world.

We feel something is wrong with the world. It is too ugly, there is too much pain, too many wars, too much killing; ten billion animals killed each year just to feed Americans. We see increasingly corrupted politicians and businesses. We see everyone operates from a position of greed and poisonous reactivity. And, we want out. We don't want to live in this world.

This was Robert Adams struggle. He did not fit; the world was too awful.

He struggled with this realization for over a year. Then one day he had a great realization, a precursor to his awakening experience three years later. He came to the realization that neither his body nor the world was real. They were stories created by the mind that

overlaid deeper layers of consciousness. I really do not know what Robert did in those three years, whether he explored those layers or not. But I do know he was a troubled boy. He was hard to handle. The conflicts he saw tore him apart, and then he awakened at age 14. You can read his transcripts to find his expression of his awakening.

Most of us are also this way. We feel something wrong. Nothing seems right. We start looking and searching for the truth of reality. Mostly we read, then we learn about meditation, yoga, pranayama, karma yoga, chanting and gurus, and a few start a spiritual practice, and a very few become obsessed with finding truth. They are both the lucky ones and the cursed.

What is awakening?

You have to see that the definition varies from teacher to teacher based on their own experiences. There are endless awakenings. Some find union with God by becoming empty; some find union by giving themselves away in love. Some become empty, some become full. Some become humble and accepting, others become filled with driving energy to make the world better. The Zen master, Joshu, said he had thousands of small awakenings and 17 mind-busting ones.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

So what is awakening for me? It is a gradual process of losing our minds and identities as humans, as small frail, mortal bodies, and becoming aware of deeper identities found in nothingness and love. At what point can we consider ourselves awakened? This is for each to determine for him or herself, and maybe as in the Great Tradition, search out masters for confirmation as did Robert for over 17 years. His constant sadhana was to travel from teacher to teacher to see, as he said, “If I had missed anything.” Robert even had an awakening experience at age 68, the year before he died. Notice, Robert did not start guru shopping until after he awakened, not before.

But what does it take to awaken?

First, it takes a burning desire to be free, immense energy, unstoppable energy; an energy that appears to tear the body apart, leaves it burning and sometimes leaves one desperate for relief from the energies.

It takes an immense will to escape from the illusion and to see the truth.

It takes an awakened intelligence so as to not be trapped by false teachings and false gurus, including our own delusions and preconceptions.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

It takes a single-minded practice, such as some form of meditation or self-inquiry, or abiding in the ‘I Am’ and learning to love the ‘I Am’, which is my way.

It really, really helps to be with a teacher who has had many awakening experiences, even if he or she is not the mythical, “Totally Enlightened” being. To this I bring in the concept from self-psychology, which states that you don’t have to have had perfect parents or a perfect early environment in order to be a well-functioning human being. You only have had to have a “good enough” mother and father, and a “good enough” environment.

The same with your teacher, if you are lucky enough to be open to one. He or she only needs to be “good enough” for your place on your path and your needs.

You know, there are so many people steeped in positive thinking patterns which they accept as the way to truth, that they think everything is unfolding perfectly, and all teachers are equally good for whatever student they are with. As some say, the entire universe is conspiring to wake each individual up. This is such Pollyanic nonsense. This is the way they wish it to be, because then everything is ok, from mass murders, wars, meat eating, plague and spiritual frauds. It just is not so. You have to be as careful in the spiritual marketplace as anywhere else, because

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

frauds and deluded gurus are everywhere. You have to be intelligent and sensitive to escape these traps.

Michael Langford wrote a book titled, The Most Rapid and Direct Means to Eternal Bliss. It is really a great book for those who are ready to drop everything and begin a life of endless meditation on Self. But you have to trust him and his method; otherwise doubts will finally end this path for you. But so very, very few will follow this path. Most will burn out before reaching the goal, or they will read another book that will change their mind, and they will begin a new practice.

Robert's final advice to me was, "Persistence is everything." By that he means to gain awakening, and to build a sangha. Persistence is everything. Do not despair if you have not awakened after 20 years. Just keep trying. For those who persist, they tend, as the baseball player who practices eight hours a day, to get luckier and luckier so far as spiritual awakenings are concerned.

Student's Response:

Thank you for your words of encouragement. I find it heartening to hear from your lips that it is almost impossible to awaken. Thanks for saying it as it is, because it is so damn hard sometimes. It's like riding a raindrop and hoping it reaches the ocean. I often

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

daydream that people who have awakened are stunned that they never saw what was in front of their noses their whole life, that the truth is so glaringly obvious in giant neon lights all round them, all the time, but they missed it completely. I imagine that the truth is within and without me all the time but I am not tuned to that frequency and simply cannot see or feel it. It is everything, but "I" is a very deep and dark filter that will not let any of the light of truth through. I get glimpses; then the filter closes up quickly. 'I' is protecting 'I'. I can only understand what 'I' creates. I know there is a place and time where the 'I' exists before it had had time to create anything. I have to make friends with, understand and deeply love that 'I Am'. I learn that 'I Am' doesn't exist either, yet I have to discover that for myself...you couldn't make it up. If it was a movie plot no one would believe it was credible. A salmon has locked away deep somewhere the faint traces of the taste of the fresh water from where it was born and it journeys thousands of miles without a map back to that first home. It gets you thinking, it's nearly impossible but not completely.

Hunting the I and the Witness

Correct practice of self-inquiry is so important that I feel a need to articulate its myriad ways, because successful methods are subtle indeed. One can practice unsuccessful self-inquiry for a long time because you have no idea of what you are looking for. Therefore, I will explain the various methods hoping that one way or another will connect with those truly interested in practice.

Some people are able to feel a sense of ‘I Am’ almost immediately upon introspection and others not. One is by nature, naturally introspective or not. To do self-inquiry, one either has the talent or learns it by practice. The same holds true for psychotherapy. Those who are able to look within and "see" internal, imaginal objects and emotions will do well in talk therapy, while those who lack this skill, will not. However, one can learn this skill through repeated efforts to "look within" the imaginal spaces of the body and mind.

The problem is, a lot of people do not experience an ‘I Am’ feeling or sensation and therefore have nothing to work with. They look “inside themselves” and find only darkness, or they find a myriad of phenomena, such as inner light displays, thoughts, images, memories, body sensations, arising energies,

etc., and don't have a clue as to which is the 'I Am' phenomena to be concentrated on. They are lost in a forest of sensations and perceptions and have no sense of 'I' or 'I Am'. [1]

If you look at the diagram representing consciousness earlier in this book, you see consciousness represented as having four levels. This is only a metaphor because they are not levels in a spatial sense, but are levels in terms of what can be experienced in the totality of one's inner spiritual mansion. It is not even a matter of increasing subtlety, so much as you will find that towards which your attention is directed. If you want to find the 'I Am,' you will. The same holds true for finding the Witness, the looker or the Absolute. And, if you have made up your mind after reading Neo-Advaitin books, you will not find either an 'I Am' or the Absolute; you will only find the top level of consciousness, the body/world level and will not go deeper.

The Neo-Advaitins urge you to look within and tell you that no matter how much you search inside you will not find a 'me,' or an I-entity. Once you realize what they say, you will understand a myriad of things such as: the totality of existence is oneness, there is no inner and outer division of consciousness, and the body and other objects in consciousness are of the same character as consciousness itself; dreamstuff.

On the other hand, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, Siddharameshwar, and I direct you to look within for the 'I-feeling,' the 'I-sense,' and when found, just rest in it and love the sensation, and this will take you inevitably to the Self.

Why the vast difference in experience and understanding of these two "schools" of thought: the Neo-Advaitins and the more classical Advaitins, such as Nisargadatta and Ramana Maharshi?

There are three differences: The Neo-Advaitins do not "believe" in deeper or more subtle levels of consciousness as do the classical Advaitins, and Western Depth psychology. They appear less capable of introspection or inner work, being more on the surface of consciousness. Their "inner" work appears restricted to a sense of inner-seeing as their seeking is essentially visual as opposed to tactile, kinesthetic, or feeling.

On the other hand, Nisargadatta, and those who find the 'I Am' sense or feeling easily, are far more kinesthetic. These people have an ability to feel emotions and inner energies, Kundalini, Chi and Prana, which are entirely invisible to the Neo-Advaitins. These people are on fire so to speak, easily moved by emotions, love, devotion, empathy for another, and they have easy access to a world of phenomena that are forever invisible to the Neo-Advaitins unless grace

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

descends on them and they have an opening to the 'I Am' and Self, or if they tire of the emptiness of their superficial realization and decide to renew their efforts to explore the inner world.

Let us assume you are not a Neo-Advaitin, or are a reformed one and you decide to go deeper. The Neos have discovered that there is no inner object we can call an 'I' or a 'me' when looking within, and take this discovery as the end of the search. There is just consciousness with no distinctions of inner or outer, objective or subjective. Everything is a flat "suchness" or "knowingness." They will not be convinced otherwise, because that is both their understanding and their experience.

Assuming you are better able to introspect than the Neos, means you have a better access to emotions, inner images, internal body sensations, and the inner energies such as Kundalini. This is the level Siddharameshwar calls the Subtle Body; it is an antechamber to the Self. The deepest level of consciousness, Turiya, or the Self, can be experienced in this Subtle Body level as the "feeling" or sensation of 'I Am', usually first felt as an energy field near the physical heart. That energy, when found and abided in, develops into a sense of presence, a kind of energy field that surrounds the body and reaches out into the environment.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Following the 'I Am' feeling will take you inevitably to the Self, just by resting your attention in that sensation, abiding there, and deliberately lavishing affection on the 'I Am'. Love the 'I Am', for it is your own true Self leaking through to this less subtle, or more physical level of your existence. Abiding in the 'I Am' is the direct road to Self-Realization which will culminate in an explosive realization of the Self within you as the Other, but also your own self as a phenomenon, as opposed to your own Self as witness, or the Absolute.

This is a most important distinction: there is a difference between the 'I Am' feeling and Self, and the looker, the final Witness, the Absolute which is entirely beyond consciousness. It is entirely beyond existence. It is entirely beyond the 'I Am'. It is "like" an invisible, intangible, unmanifest entity looking from outside of consciousness to the inner play of consciousness, interested in the play, but basically not touched by it.

On the other hand, the Self is the deepest or most subtle level of consciousness whose character is the ability to know. Its other characteristic is pure love. This love/knowingness, combined with the void nature of the causal body provides the container for all experience at the Subtle Body and physical body levels. When the Self emerges and presents itself to

itself, through you, who is also the Self, and the mind, and the physical body, and the Absolute, it is experienced as divine energy, divine love, explosive Shakti and Kundalini energies, and a sense of overwhelming grace, of being held by a divine presence which appears as “Other,” God, but is also oneself.

At this point, after one has first experienced or realized the Self, one is ready to pursue the final step: finding the looker or Witness, or Absolute.

Nisargadatta is quite clear in his direction: follow the ‘I Am’ sense; abide there; love the ‘I Am’ sense and it will release you, meaning you have left the identification with consciousness behind, and now identify with the looker, the Absolute.

Now this is the order I recommend: find and abide in the ‘I Am’ to most quickly get to an initial Self-Realization experience; then sink back into the looker: become the looker watching consciousness and feel that the consciousness is not you. I do not mean to try to generate that feeling of separateness, but you will feel there is something alien in the experience of consciousness which makes it not you. Taking this position, recognizing your Self as the unperturbable Absolute, is the classical enlightenment experience of the Jnani (master of the wisdom traditions).

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

The path to the Absolute through the looker, or subject, is the way of the Jnani. The path to Self-Realization through the 'I Am', is the way of the Bhakti, the devotional. In the latter path, awareness of the 'I Am' creates the sense of presence, the sense of ownership, of me, throughout the experiential world of body, mind, and emotions.

This is a state of feeling like you are utterly yourself with nothing to do, nowhere to go; utterly complete and at rest. You are now a watcher, everything comes to you and you either welcome it or are indifferent to it. Nisargadatta compares it to always being underneath a shade tree on a hot day. There is no impetus to move or do anything except rest in yourself as Witness

The Absolute is also called the noumenal (of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant), or the Unmanifest 'You,' or the Unborn 'You'. Untouched by consciousness, it cannot be killed, cut, burned, or bound by anything in the world or sentience. Sentience, knowingness, is entirely of the Nature of consciousness. The Absolute, the Witness, is the principle that knows both knowingness and unknowing, or the final Void of nothingness.

However, at some point you realize that this consciousness, which appears as a guest to you as the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Absolute, is as much ‘You’ as ‘You’ are the witness. You have the luxury of identify with all of “it,” from your position as the Absolute, and also the Self, and also the various voids, to the most superficial level of your human existence. It is all you! You are everything and nothing. You are free to identify with everything in or out of existence, or a small part of existence, like a jealous rage. You are both beyond everything, but also totally human, feeling the full range of human emotions, desires, and understandings, but also an entity that is now capable of exploring levels of your humanhood that you were not strong enough or subtle enough to explore before.

You can now explore all the parts of you that were denied and repressed from infancy to becoming an adult. Now you can own everything in you that was buried or repressed by family and society. Your spiritual freedom of identification now becomes a power to free yourself and others from the conventions and restrictions of society, which are really repressions of your irrepressible human spirit.

At this point you can become an “Avadhut,” a wild man or woman that to the unawakened, appear to be madmen or women, out of control, unconventional, unpredictable, a virtual tiger shredding the bounds of family and society. At this point you pass beyond the need for the respect and love that drive most people

and become totally your irrepressible self, acting from the heart, not the mind or from convention, and this 'heart' is not a Lilly; it is a terror!

It acts only to free others in ways others do not understand. You begin to incur the wrath of society and the conventional. You become an outcast, deemed dangerous by those who cannot see deeply who you are or what you are doing.

In a future book I will explore all the inner phenomena that one may experience by going within, including the looker, the Self, and all sorts of buried treasures as well as repressed ugliness, hurt, rage and humiliation, that once seen and owned, become pure power. You will find all the energies and bliss that you could ever want to experience, that will enliven and entertain you. You will find joy and completion beyond anything you have ever dreamed of, but likewise, you will find unimaginable levels of pain, loss, loathing, humiliation and brokenness that has been repressed but now has to be own and integrated.

Emotional Truth

Thirty years ago I was engaged in dialogue with the leading transpersonal researchers of that time, Ken Wilber and Dan Brown among others. The debate was whether there were developmental phases that an individual passes through before they could “transcend” the ‘ego’.

For decades Freud and the self and object relations theorists, like Winnocott, Guntrip, Kohut, Klein et al, had postulated that the infant and child passed through phases or developmental “crises” on the way to developing a cohesive sense of self.

The transpersonal psychologists opined that those who have successfully developed a “healthy” sense of self can later evolve to a point of self-transcendence, oneness, etc., as manifest in persons like Ramana Maharshi. Later, Wilber latched onto Adi Da, who talked about different stages of transcendence.

All the transpersonal theorists were of the opinion that the developmental sequence, the crises and resolutions were sequential, and you could not “skip” a step. That is, you had to have developed a strong ego, or secure sense of self (they are different in concept), before you could transcend the ego and successfully and permanently become enlightened.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I disagreed, believing, based on my own experience, that there was no ego, no I-entity, so how could it evolve? What I felt evolved, was not the ego, but various sub processes that were supposed to comprise the ego, such as the ability to learn a language or mathematics, the abilities to cope with stress, as well as the development of various ego defenses, which were actually processes that directed attention, awareness of the developing person's consciousness. That is, consciousness itself was evolving and creating the individual, not the other way around.

I held at that time that much of spirituality in terms of beliefs and practices were actually defenses against uncontrolled emotions and fears, conscious ways of avoiding the human condition. In this way, I agreed with that portion of the 'transpersonalists' viewpoints. That is, spirituality, self-investigations, meditation, japa, prayer, belief in God, etc., all really could be defenses against feeling unwanted, frightening, disabling emotions and fears, and such practices, without a secure Self would never result in awakening.

I do believe that identification with either the "witness" or with the various states of emptiness and Voids is so easily turned into defenses against being human.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Among our Sangha there are at least five people who, because of their dysfunctional upbringing, did not find sufficient love in their lives, and thus turned to God for their source of love. Some often talked to God as a person, or Jesus, and began to feel the love of this inner entity they regarded as more real and permanent than any parent or any human could ever be, and often this attitude and belief persists until the end of one's life. The entity takes on an inner existence and one loves oneself through this inner, divine object, that is "permanent" and transcendent, and thus absolutely safe and secure, that is, until the inevitable Dark Night of the soul where one loses one's faith in that inner, permanent object.

It is so much more difficult to love a real, living being, because nothing is guaranteed with such a love, or such a dependency and neediness. God is so much more reliable, and Jesus too, because so many people share belief in both, or Buddha, or someone who lives on after death. That is, God and Jesus, Buddha, etc., are accepted, institutionalized existences that gain credibility through their wide acceptance.

People and animals die. People can betray you by either dying physically, or their love for you will die and someone else, more beautiful, smarter, richer, "better" will come along and that love is taken away and given to another.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Some people want absolute security before they will love deeply, but there is no such security anywhere.

When my cat, Satchitananda (Satchi), died of kidney disease after a 6 month battle in 1997, I became lost in an endless depression that lasted 4 years or so. Robert died that same year which exacerbated my depression, and only an experimental medication for depression brought me out of it in just a few weeks in 2001. After 6 weeks I was free of depression, but also over the subsequent years I discovered I was “free” of ANY strong affect. The antidepressant acted as a mood “modulator” that not only prevented depression, but also prevented joy or even strong love. It was only after getting off that medication that it was possible to come alive, for I was also lost in the Void and witness, in peace, rest, but with no excitement.

So, what I have learned is that nothing in the human condition is secure, safe, or permanent. Those who I love the most, whether animal or human, can leave at any time, through death or change of mind.

To really “benefit” from the gift of having a human body, heart and consciousness, we must not fear to love another totally, completely, 100% even though they may leave tomorrow. To fail to love because that love is risky means our love will always

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

be truncated. We must be willing to love and lose rather than to not love, or only love in secure situations, otherwise there is so much held back, and though we may feel open, we have only opened 80% or so, and then we close down so quickly at the slightest sign of potential abandonment.

My life until maybe 1980 was one love affair after another, but only a rare one stayed. There would be great love, but then the lover would go away. Part of it was who I chose to love. It was so easy for me to fall in love with a woman or an animal, but I found such mutual openness very rare in humans. I also heard from my therapist of seven years, a great genius of the mind and emotions, Eric Reitz that when there is such wide emotional openness, the relationships usually explode and dissipate in an excess of emotional intensity. The more usual relationship is where one lover loves the other more completely and intensely, and the successful relationships are where the roles of most loved change every so often and a balance is achieved.

I have been really lucky in the last few years to have found people who are capable of going deeper into love and openness without so much running, and I invite all of you to try to do the same within our Sangha and among yourselves with the loved ones in your life.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Because, unless you are fully capable of tolerating intolerable emotional pain, intolerably intense love, intolerably intense feelings of risk and insecurity, intolerable fears of loss, intolerable distrust, intolerable jealousy, intolerable sadness, and intolerable fear of death, stoically, from a security within oneself, you will never, ever be free.

To this end, meditation helps to “grow” one’s inner sense of emptiness that acts as a huge container for the fearful dragons of death and dissolution, of intense feelings, and as a conduit to allow them to pass through your existence, easily, without sticking and hurting so much.

I will speak to this truth increasingly from this day forwards.



La Jolla.

We Are Also Human Beings

We had an interesting Satsang yesterday. We moved in an entirely new direction. Rather than talking about the Void, spiritual bodies, levels of consciousness, meditation, etc., or how nothing you do will ever result in awakening, we explored love, loneliness, and fear directly in several participants in our group.

We are so many things. We are consciousness, the abstract awareness within consciousness, the pristine, bright clarity state, the witness, the Self. But we are also human beings with our wants, needs, and most buried and unconscious pasts and vulnerabilities that determine who we are and how we act even today.

Most often, flight to the "Absolute," to the "witness," or to "pure love," are escapes from the real, the underlying human existence in each of us that may feel unseen, lost, confused, hurt and unloved.

I received an email to this effect yesterday. It reads: "Is the point to remain in that farthest back place of non-judging, non-thinking space as frequently as possible?"

I have been going back and forth between the monastery and living within society during the past 3 years.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

At the monastery, while doing zazen for 4 hours a day, I find remaining in that alert space happens naturally and often, but in a certain emotional way I feel dead.

In society I do not generally have motivation for zazen, and being in that alert space is sporadic, but in a certain emotional way I again feel alive.

I guess if my goal is to be (no) self-conscious 100% of the time while also becoming a human being within society, does it work better to:

A. Separate from society and pursue the ultimate unceasingly until it is fully established, and then re-enter society or,

B. Live within society and make much slower progress towards the ultimate, but perhaps get a head start on the process of becoming more human?

In addition, my current situation as a human is of being in college, studying science, dance, outdoor recreation, psychology, and having a lot of fun with club sports and interacting with people my age for a change. It seems impossible both to remain watching from emptiness and involve myself fully in conversations and activities. The attention towards humanness and absoluteness seem to pendulum back and forth. I just do not see how I could swing all the

way over to absoluteness without having to live in a cave by myself. Nor does it seem particularly desirable or altruistic to extinguish one's humanness in pursuit of the absolute

If a response is merited, do you have any advice for me?"

Ed's Response:

IS THIS NOT THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE; THE OSCILLATION BETWEEN WANTING FULL INVOLVEMENT IN LIFE, VERSUS THE DESIRE TO RUN FROM IT AND REST IN THE ABSOLUTE?

Freud characterized this as the struggle between Eros, or love and life, and Thanatos, the desire to die. Is this not what we struggle for when we try to awaken, to get away from the human condition to a place of transcendence and not being touched by life?

Is this not what my teacher, Robert Adams, was always talking about, not being touched by the world, that the world was not real, it is an illusion, do not involve yourself?

On the other hand, modern clinical psychology takes an entirely different tact, moving us to an open embrace of everything, becoming totally human, feeling a full range of affect as well as our strengths and vulnerability within the context of having a body

and a very fleeting existence before the “Big Rest” of death.

My personal belief is that we need to embrace both: accepting our limitations, our humanity, including our vulnerabilities and neediness, but within the context of the Emptiness and Void from which we came and to which we will return.

Since I have been talking about the void for many years, I decided now to move the group to explore our human roots, the lost elements of our humanness, and SO VERY WELL DID OUR GROUP MOVE! It was like magic.

Three people moved into long repressed and lost neediness, fear, loneliness and loss.

This is what one of the participants said about the experience:

Student:

Last night's satsang was one of the most emotionally purifying and profound events I have ever been a part of. No jargon, no lofty spiritual concepts, no running from the world; just raw feeling, empathy, involvement and a deeper understanding of love and what it means to be fully human. Some may see what you are guiding us into as a departure, but I see it as a

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

continuation and deepening of the process whereby we become ourselves.



Hindu temple in Malibu.

On Guru Concepts and Self-Inquiry

Student:

My question is about jnani behaviors along Indian history. We heard about men who supposedly were in this state and had different behaviors and life styles; some of them were hermits, others warriors like Krishna or kings like Janaka. Even Ramana Maharshi said that self realization had nothing to do with samskaras. He also said this:

"For a realized person, the one who remains ever in the Self, the loss of one or several or all lives in the world or in all the three worlds makes no difference. Even if he happens to destroy them all, no sin can touch such a pure soul. Then Maharshi quoted the Gita, Chapter 18, Verse 17; 'He who is free from the notion of ego, whose intellect is unattached, though he annihilates all the worlds, he slayeth not, nor is he bound by the results of his actions.'

The sage who knows the truth that the Self is indestructible will remain unaffected even if five million people are killed in his presence. Remember the advice of Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield when disheartened by the thought of the impending slaughter of relatives on the opposing side."

Chadwick also made some criticisms of Ramana. He says that Ramana used to chew snuff (A pinch of smokeless tobacco inhaled at a single time), and that when Chadwick knew him he still chewed betel nut (Chadwick, 35).

A more serious ethical shortcoming is that caste was observed in the ashram dining room. On one side the Brahmins were seated, on the other side the rest. Ramana insisted on it (Chadwick, 34).

And Ramana seemed unconcerned regarding World War II. He is reported to have once remarked, “Who knows but that Hitler is a Jnani, a divine instrument.” (Chadwick, 35).

Ramana seemed to believe that a realized person was above ethical obligations of right and wrong. For the jnani there is no good or evil, only spontaneous activity or actionless activity of Tao:

What is right and wrong? There is no standard by which to judge something to be right and another to be wrong. Opinions differ according to the nature of the individual and according to the surroundings. They are again ideas and nothing more. Do not worry about them. But get rid of thoughts. If you always remain in the right, then right will prevail in the world.” (Talks, 428; Feb. 8, 1938)

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I have mentioned all this because this question of behaviors sometimes give me some disturbance, because I think that I should be more good, more loving and etc.. I always had the desire for the Absolute but I cannot see my self as a “saint” who will offer the other “cheek”. I am sure Self Realization has nothing to do with sainthood. I would like to hear your opinion on this subject.

Ps: Even Ug Krishnamurti had said that the personality does not change.

My Response:

Some interesting points you raise.

First, believe nothing you read in books or hear about. The answers you find there are from long dead gurus responding to specific questions of long dead students, answering specifically for them, not for you and your almost unformed question.

Do not read too much about how to inquire into you, for are you not the one closest to you, where you are and what you mean when you ask a question? Ramana lived in a different world completely, 70 years ago. He was not of your time; his experiences were different from yours.

Trust only your own Self. This is where trust should be.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

The point is for you yourself to become Self-Realized, with whatever "faults" you may think you should not have.

Just be yourself; not how you think you should be. This means getting rid of so many ideas of morality and proper behavior.

You will become more kind and compassionate, not less, but others may criticize whatever behaviors manifest in you, but you will not care.



Satsang with Ed.

More on Being Human

I have a dear friend with whom I was speaking today about neediness. She is facing divorce and being independent, not having a man around to provide security, take care of household maintenance, etc. In addition, she was feeling neediness for someone she loves very much, feeling it as an emptiness inside her chest, a kind of sucking void that left her feeling weak, AND fearful of losing him given the intensity of her neediness state which triggered fears of loss and abandonment. To prevent feelings of impending annihilation, she conjured up feelings of guardedness, to attenuate the needy feelings.

However, she did not run from those neediness feelings, which I told her were the key to remaining emotionally open, and accepting of those feelings as necessary for her full integration as a complete human being. “Stay with the neediness”, I told her. Just do nothing and hang around in that feeling until it is just another feeling, not something to guard against or run from.

Personally, I love the neediness feeling, the feeling of a sucking void in the chest, feeling small, vulnerable, and also needing protection from the world’s threats, real but especially imagined.

Then she said something very profound. She said:

“I really understand the dynamic of running from that feeling of neediness, and interpreting it as a neediness for God, because God is a feeling, an idea we create in ourselves as something huge that can protect us from any danger, like in the 23rd psalm:

‘Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.’

This God story is our feeling, interpreting a presence I feel within me as ‘Him’ who protects me. This God feeling and story is my creation, therefore totally under my control. I wear this story as a protection from feeling the vulnerability of merely loving and depending on another human. I need an omnipotent lover and protector.

Needing a real human person is not a situation I can control. That person may go away. That person may die. That person may be driven away purely by my neediness of him, and I cannot risk that. It is easier and safer to imagine an all-powerful God who I need, to protect myself, and who, being under my control, cannot leave me.”

I told her this neediness scenario is something she really needs to feel completely and let the full panoply

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

of associated feelings and stories wash through her over a few hours. Just relax, lie on your back and feel everything, for feeling the entirety of neediness will allow for a permanence of humility, an understanding you were never in control, that each moment is instantaneous and then lost, and each moment then becomes a movement of grace.

Of course there is an obvious corollary to this insight.

What happens when an idealized other, a guru, an omnipotent mother or father figure, a husband or wife who always has supported us, suddenly “falters,” and says, “Honey, I need you! I feel so small and vulnerable and I need you.”

What happens then? The father figure, the God figure, the omnipotent mother says to you, “I need you!”

You see; that idealization, that idea you had of the all supplying, omnipotent protector is shattered, he or she is seen to be just like you, small, vulnerable, and needy.

“Whoa is me, my father has betrayed me. What am I to do? I cannot take care of both my father and me.”

What happens? Either you withdraw from that disappointing object, or you go into the feelings of

extreme danger, vulnerability, with no protection, no security anywhere.

The other thing that might happen is that when he or she whom you depend on expresses very deep neediness; it brings out your own neediness in glaring visibility. It ignites your buried neediness, and the deeper the neediness expressed by the other, the deeper your own neediness is felt, evoking a fear that you will feel needier, and thus less secure than you have ever before felt in your life, except maybe as an infant, and that is too frightening a situation to contemplate.

There is the fear you might be stuck in that neediness forever, forever bound to another needy child, forever insecure, lost, unprotected.

But you see, that is a story you have created based on past abandonment experiences as an infant and child, and everyone has had dozens if not hundreds of abandonment experiences as a child. It is part of growing up and growing separate. Yet so few want to relive this dependency, even though it is key to leveling the grandiosity and narcissism of one's own need to feel self-contained and self-healing, grown up.

The real “healing” that most all of us need, is to feel the neediness, the smallness, the impotence thoroughly and completely for a long, long time, and

to come away from it, to grow out of it naturally, organically, within the confines of real, human relationships, and not the artificial therapist/patient or guru/chela relationships.

But how many are willing to do this, to chance a mere human relationship? How many are willing to rely on themselves to feel these feelings deeply and grow up with them as opposed to fleeing from the fear and insecurity into an artificial adult image of ourselves?

Email 2, from same Student:

As a result of sitting with the deep feelings of neediness today I noticed that what I found most difficult is not the 'neediness' per se, but the fear that arises around allowing myself to need someone, a human so deeply. Fear that says, don't get too needy with that person, what if they reject you...Ah, fear and rejection.

I also noticed something sort of twisted about myself. When I was feeling really needy for someone this morning, along with the fear of being rejected by this person I also wanted others that I was close to feel this same way.

So, as they reached out to me like they normally do, I purposely ignored their attempts to contact me.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I wanted them to feel their (my) neediness. I wanted them to suffer the way I was suffering. I wanted them to fear being rejected by me. Basically, I had identified with certain feelings within myself and I projected these feelings onto two of my closest friends and behaved in such a way that they would almost be forced to feel what I was feeling.

It was almost sadistic the way I felt. I really wanted them to suffer, to totally identify with me in my suffering and I didn't care how much it hurt them.

I was shocked at how twisted all of this felt and even more shocked that I liked how powerful, how omnipotent it made me feel.

It felt good to confess it, to be open about it; this helped me to just accept it as another feeling, another movement within my sense of presence.

My Response:

This is called projective identification. We hurt in some way and the only way we feel free to open to another in communication, is if we are sure they share our own pain. We create that pain in them, so that we feel close to them. Our hurt is conveyed to them by our behaviors. When we see they share our pain, we feel close and there is a shared love.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

This is an extremely primitive and basic form of nonverbal communication and love. But there is also the sense of omnipotence that we can make the other hurt.

As the person matures this type of "communication" and primitive pre-psychotic processes fall away.

You see, you are not dead anymore. Spirituality and a very conventional "marriage" had buried you into a conventional deadness.

Now you are alive but do not know whether you want that either. It feels like life really sucks now does it not? You know of course you can let go of that love you had for this man after a while and return to a living death, or accept that he awakened you to a vital, if painful new life.

You see, the pain you feel now is the reason most people escape into spirituality, they want to be attached only to some permanent part of themselves, like the 'I Am' / 'beingness,' or to God, or something else that will not leave them; that will not hurt them.

Or they become like Buddha, searching for seven years to get to a place where there is no suffering, no death, no attachment, just the peace of emptiness and the Void.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

However, I think you really like the passion you feel now versus the deadness of five years ago. You know the peace and deadness of non-attachment, and eventually you can have the same peace and acceptance even while being totally passionate, for you will find that the peace of emptiness, of the Void, can contain all the pain and passion you feel now. You think they are separate and incompatible.

But, once you know emptiness, once you know the peace of having seen oneness, once you can hold steady in meditation, you learn how to relax in it and let all the passions blow through you, sustaining and energizing your life, and yet holding steady during all the emotional storms.

It is all a matter of identification. What part of your experience, what part of your Self do you identify with; the personal drama, the impersonal witness or emptiness, or both? Or neither? You can learn to accept all and identify with all or part.

Eventually, the passions will begin to lessen as you age, and by the time you are 80 you will be talking like Nisargadatta, where he feels his personhood, passion, and aliveness is all gone. He was preparing for the great emptiness of death.

In the meantime, you have much passionate life to live.

Role of the Teacher

So many people are on a purported spiritual path of “self-discovery” without ever having spent any face to face time with a teacher in the flesh.

This is almost exactly like having a Facebook romance with someone you never met in the flesh. It is all imagination and concept. You are having a dialogue with your image of the teacher; in other words, a dialogue with yourself.

You cannot “know” a teacher, or a teacher a student, through emails, phone calls, or Skype. You have to spend time together, face to face, otherwise the idealizations that made you want a guru in the first place, will always poison the instructions he or she is giving.

A huge number of “spiritual virgins” form their concept of what a guru is or should be like from reading about Ramana Maharshi. Forty years ago the most common guru models were either: Ramakrishna, Yogananda and his Babaji lineage, or a Zen master such as Yashatani.

But all of us have ideal-guru concepts which no teacher ever fits because it is an image personalized by us within our own minds by our felt need for a certain type of mirroring. That is, we project onto the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

guru the quality in us we most cherish to become and own. Some want a nurturing mother or father, all accepting, all caring, all loving.

Others may want a stern, warrior-like, strong guru who can contain us, protect us, lead us, or show us the way to greatness or whatever.

Others want a wise man, like Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan.

You see, we seek the guru that we think will show us that part of ourselves we most desire to become, and if they appear to be failing at that, we have several choices: leave for another guru that will fill that need, or allow the current guru to show us parts of ourselves that may be as valuable or more valuable than that which we seek.

I was fortunate enough to study directly under six Zen Masters, Muktananda, and Robert Adams. However, during the years of study with these eight, I got to meet and know well many, many other teachers, famous and not, such as: Ram Dass, the Dalai Lama, Trungpa, Hsun Hua, Ananda, Song Ryong Hearn, Ed Worts, Krishnamurti, U.G. Krishnamurti, and many others.

What I discovered is that all were first, human. They were ordinary men with some extraordinary

qualities, such as love or compassion, intellect, or energy gurus, yet they were all men or woman first, ordinary men and women, with faults, problems, desires, loves, favoritism, and with endless opinions.

U.G., for example, kept talking about how his body purged itself of all thinking, all concepts, and underwent enormous transformations. Yet, the U.G. I met was an extremely garrulous old man who chatted constantly and voiced opinions about every topic under the sun. He had opinions about everything and was as tainted as any man I ever met by concepts and ideas.

Every master I knew had had at least one affair that got them into trouble with their own sangha, and what I learned here is that “Masters,” “teachers,” “gurus,” are among the mostly harshly judged people because they do not live up to the personal and idealized images students have of them.

They are judged on the basis of having favorite students; they should treat everyone the same, spend the same amount of time with each. They are judged based on what they do with donation money, such as giving some to support their families. They are judged based on who they put in charge of the sangha or satsang. They are judged on the basis of their diets, whether they are vegetarians, vegans or meat eaters. But especially they are judged based on their attitudes towards sex and relationships. It is as if in this area,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

the teacher has nothing to teach, and has everything to be taught; i.e., anytime a teacher looks at a student of the opposite sex, it is some form of abuse.

You see, teachers are on earth to pull you out of your concepts and comfort zone to show you a whole new reality, while you are judging them based on your concepts of what a teacher should be like or how they should teach.

Unless you directly study with a teacher on a daily basis, you are no more than conducting a dialogue with yourself.



Zendo, International Buddhist Meditation Center, Los Angeles.

Coming Alive to the Whole Self

We live in a mad, mad world. I felt it from the time I was seven. I knew this could not possibly be my world. There was too much violence, too much indifference, too much uncaring, too much depression and too much anger. Every one of my readers knows this.

Why is this?

First and foremost, we live in a consensus world, a partially stable world of consensual agreement as to what is real and what is not real. This is the world of commonly perceived objects, social acceptance or non-acceptance, such as with racism, tribalism, family realities, political parties and ideologies, dress codes, education, TV game shows, the nightly news, etc.

This whole bowl of wax is interpenetrated by a network of accepted ideas and interpretations, and to live in peace, we need to shape and contract our incredibly intuitive and powerful self to fit within a common pattern of social acceptance. And this pattern shifts and changes from country to country, and century to century, and in none of this is there real happiness, for we are never ourselves; we are always caricatures, little robots or puppets, that once we discover this, and begin to lead authentic lives in a

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

different reality, we are quickly shuttled away to the sidelines: not accepted, not allowed into the fold of family and society.

Now, as you know, there are tens of thousands of people now claiming to be enlightened. I get emails every week from people who claim to be awakened, and indeed they are if you accept the definition of awakening offered by Neo-Advaitins, or other Face book-style gurus. The common thought now is that the whole world is awakening on an unprecedented basis.

This is absolute nonsense. What has happened is that the bar measuring awakening has been lowered so far that even the most minor of “spiritual” experiences are accepted as awakenings, and then those awakened ones join groups where they congratulate each other.

Yet, essentially they remain the same, but now feel special, enlightened, above humanness in some cases.

You see, they are still blind; in fact even more blind than when they were simple seekers, wondering what was real, wondering what the ‘true’ way was.

Seventeen years ago I had my first “awakening” experience after 27 years of thousands of different no-mind, oneness, and Kundalini experiences. But looking

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

back, I would not now accept that initial no-I, no-self experience as an awakening. The single experiences, no matter how world shattering are not what constitute “awakening.”

To me, the terms “awakening” and “enlightenment” mean absolutely nothing. The big, shattering experiences MEAN ABSOLUTELY NOTHING UNLESS THEY LEAD TO TRUE SELF-REALIZATION AND HUMILITY!

One needs to go beyond any single or multiple awakening experience, no matter how deep or how persevering, through a long, long period of “training” whereby one loses dependence and primary identification with the conditioned false self, leading to a discovery AND integration of one’s true self, with all of its subtlety and sensitivity.

You see, the process of growing up and surviving in the mad, mad world is one of progressively dying to our deep sensitivities in order to fit and be sane within the confines of our assigned roles and accepted beingness in society.

Self-Realization is progressively letting go of the conventional, and becoming open to repressed parts of ourselves. By ‘true self’, I mean all of the powers and percepts we had to reject in order to stay sane, but at the same time, to recognize the need for the sanity

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

“box” we were forced to contract into in order to fit. It is all me, it is all the Self.

The totality of this true self is incredibly powerful, incredibly sensitive, incredibly loving, compassionate, but also incredibly vulnerable.

Self-realization is not the result of any single transcendental experience, or even a hundred experiences. It involves a progressive reowning of all of our sensitivities, including love, compassion, and awareness of all levels of the subtle body, including the surface awareness of beingness of the neo-advaitins, but also awareness of unconscious states, and the weird and somewhat disturbing energies and entities found in the so-called astral states, and then the conscious transition across the Causal body of unknowing, and then merger into the Turiya state and beyond. Only then can we say we are Self-Realized, that we know who we are. Mere energetic or emotional integrations really do not go so deep.

Today we have so many instant gurus, who have an experience one day, and are teaching the next.

They ignore the fact that the great gurus, Ramana, Nisargadatta, Robert Adams, Zen Master Joshu, etc., may have had great awakening experiences, but did not open their mouths about it for at least 20 years. Ramana did not teach for more than 20 years after his

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

awakening; the same with Nisargadatta, and even more so with Robert. Joshu supposedly struggled 40 years before his first awakening, and then had 60 years of 16 great enlightenments after that. Did suddenly something happen so that now adays there are thousands of Ramanas, Nisargdattas and Roberts around, or only those who think they are?

The descent into all the energies and qualities of the Self we had to kill off to gain functional “sanity” in the “real world” of convention is a developmental process in its own right, just like the progressive stages of development of the psyches of the infant, toddler, adolescent, and adult, but now in a transcendental direction of returning to the totality of our true selves. This is done by shedding all the conventions and regaining those parts we buried, yet still retaining the defensive structures that allowed us to cope and function in this artificial world in the first place.

The struggle always remains how to go deeper into ourselves yet retain an ability to function in the common world of insanity and insensitivity that we call modern life.

You see, true Self-Realization means one becomes ever more sensitive to the world that we buried in order to stay sane, and that world is not the one presented to the average, non-spiritual person. We live

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

in a different world and have to be careful how we present ourselves within “their world” otherwise we are branded as immature, narcissistic, crazy, wacko, or as a “diamond in the rough.”

Only when the whole world becomes incredibly sensitive to every aspect of every embodied, individual self within the universal Self of All, will the world not appear to be insane. This is not a short-term project. We are talking millennia maybe.

In the meantime, we need to learn how to remain sane, exploring an ever deepening inner world of energies, compassion, love and acceptance, while living within a world that is not real. Good luck to all of us.

Email from a Student:

I've had some recent experiences that I'd like to share with you. I don't know what any of them mean nor am I sure that I need to know.

For the past couple of weeks I have noticed more of a sense of presence which to me feels more like something True and stable. I have felt an unshakeable peace or courage or strength most of the time, even when I am deeply hurting or sad or jealous or afraid...

Most of the energy I have felt, such as vibrations, burning, tingling, currents going through my muscles,

feeling like my head is being swept clean...has been more associated with the gross body.

I have also felt huge movements of energy within what seems to be a sort of an infinite type space, which I only became aware of due to the energy moving through it. These movements of energy sometime feel like gentle waves moving through this space and at other times I have heard a rumble deep within me followed by what would feel like a gigantic earthquake within this space. These movements of energy seem to happen inside and outside of the body; requiring the body to experience them. So to say, "I am not my body" does not seem altogether true to me. It seems more true to say that "I am more than just my body.

I have also been experiencing a sort of hum in my head off and on, sort of like the sound a tuning fork would make... a vibratory type hum that changes in intensity. The first time I heard it, it sounded more like there was a gathering of humming birds in my head. Sometimes there is the sound of beautiful angelic music.

And just today, I was sitting in the kitchen wasting time on Facebook and I began to feel a surge of energy begin to arise from deep within me. As it arose, the power and strength of it gradually increased until it felt like a volcano had erupted from deep within me. I

felt the most amazing bliss, along with a sense of awe and wonder at this power.

My inquiring mind wants to know: What is feeling this energy? What experienced and felt this volcanic eruption of power from within me? I can't make it come back, but I feel the residue of it as a stronger sense of presence so to speak.”

Ed Responds:

This latter experience of the inner arising of bliss/energy and love that comes as an inner explosion, an inner volcano, is that of the Self revealing itself to you as a human personality. You have "seen" the Self-of-All as a separate entity, an awesome "other," which at this point still seems separate from you as you still identify with (student's name) as opposed to Turiya, a gate to which has been opened to you.

But congratulations!! This is a very important step towards knowing who you are.

You have glimpsed the Ox, so to speak, using the Zen analogy.

You have begun to disidentify with your primary identity of being the body, and are now identifying more with subtle body phenomena, such as sounds, the nadi, energies as manifestations of impersonal shakti,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

and other subtle body phenomena. You are going beyond the human world towards the universal and transpersonal.

Gradually you will integrate all of these energies and experiences within yourself and continue to grow into a new personality, one free of fear because you will know yourself as the Self of All, and the owner of everything as a constant presence.



Malibu.

The Void is Not the Absolute; Silence is not the Absolute

Many people who practice meditation begin to identify with the emptiness they see and feel as their "real self," misunderstanding that to be the Absolute, the witness because everything flows from this emptiness and emptiness, or space, pervades all experiences.

But the Void, the inner and outer spaces, are not the witness, are not the Absolute, because the Void itself is experienced and is an object of awareness.

The Absolute is entirely beyond experience as the subject, including the experience of the Void. It cannot be experienced itself. You can only be the witness as a position of sentience, but you can know nothing about it. You cannot feel yourself as a witness, for then it would be an experience of the witness. Anything, any knowledge is within phenomenality.

Now, some say phenomenality springs from noumenality, that it is a reflection of the Unborn aspect of your being. Some call the world the "created," meaning it popped out of the uncreated, noumenal, unmanifest, which they call the "real self."

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

But why would anyone want to call something unknown and unknowable as their real self? This Absolute, this unmanifest is entirely beyond knowing and experience, including the Void, so why label it and infer qualities and characteristics to it? It is merely the mind trying to grasp something entirely beyond its ken. Leave this philosophizing alone. It does not help in any way to talk about the relationship between the Absolute and phenomenality.

And remember, the Void, the spaciousness, is part of consciousness and is not beyond it.

The only "reality" is what is presented in experience, including the world, your body, your senses, emotions, thoughts, etc. Even though it flows and changes continuously, it is the only thing we will ever know. We cannot know the Absolute.

Some say look at your experience and find out that which does not change, for that is your real nature. Of course that is the Void, the emptiness that pervades all inner and outer experience. Yet, it is still an aspect of experience, and is not beyond experience. Even this silence is not beyond experience.

Yet, you also are the Absolute. You begin to know this by intuition, then by a kind of inferential knowledge I call apprehension, and then it becomes a

certainly once you realize that the Void is not the Absolute.

However, never forget that the 'You' who really counts, is the manifest you, the human living in a world of form and actions. Do not deny this as being you in an attempt to run away from inner conflict, emotions, or the hurt and hate of the world. Embrace that human self even while knowing that an essential aspect of you is entirely beyond the world and your humanity.

Student: I like a lot of how you spoke of this in the start, and agree that the void, as a known object, cannot be the Self. I also see that it is not real, for it is no longer 'void' when an object takes its place in awareness [You].

The only "reality" is what is presented in experience, including the world, your body, your senses, emotions, thoughts, etc.

This statement I am in disagreement with. This "reality" of experience you reference - is the 'relative dream' and has no permanent status. I like Vedanta's definition of 'real.' Any real thing must be available at all times in its unchaining 'form' for it to be real. If I call upon a thing and it has moved or altered - was it real? Is anything in the world fitting of such a description as real?

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Only the Absolute is changeless and eternal, and thus real. We can also come to see that what we are [beyond the appearance of the apparent person] is changeless and unmoving. We are what is real. We are that Absolute, changeless awareness - called Self - for it is exactly here, as close as close can be.

Ed: Do you experience the Absolute? If not, it is just an idea or inference, or a place to be. When you are it, is it an experience; No? When you are it you experience the world as oneness. The Absolute has no qualities, it is not eternal, unchanging, unmoving; those are characteristics of experience, the background, emptiness, the Void. You are confusing the quality of the Void, unchanging emptiness, as the Absolute.

Student: The awareness of the void is not the void. The void appeared to [in] me, and I am clearly not that, nor the creation that projected in/from 'it'.

An 'experience' of the Absolute alone is without a localized experiencer or objects of experience. In a way, such an event is of far less use than a samadhi 'with' thought. [Savikalpa vs nirvikalpa].

Ed: Can you experience the Absolute alone? Can it be experienced, whether by a localized core, or objects, or without core of objects? Do you experience yourself as a subject? How does one

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

experience oneself as a subject: As stillness? As unmoving? As eternal? These are all quality words, characteristic words.

Student: I am that which does not change or move, which can not be negated. All experience, including of a void, or of the spark of awareness at the heart center departure from me appear in this awareness of them.

Ed: It sounds so abstract, like a definition as opposed to something coming from your heart.

Student: I can describe one of the experiences to you [or more if you wish]. It is hard to summarize them. The spark experience I just referenced was as follows.

Upon walking on a beach path, the body was suddenly absent from me. What was then observed, was a 'speck' [spark] of 'awareness' [Somehow this is the received interpretation] moving down the beach. Its location was in the 'area' where the heart 'was' and the images of the scenery were still 'moving' as though the body was moving.

This 'speck' then also vanished from me and all that remained in my knowing [nothing else whatsoever] was an image of the sky. Oddly, this image 'tipped' and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I jumped back into an embodied awareness, with the thought "I should turn back and complete my walk."

I was struck by what had occurred, and realized that the 'tipping sky' was actually the 'tipping' of the body. Basically, this was a death of the body experience seeing both the body and the 'heart's spark' leave this awareness.

Ed: This is still an experience and on it you have added an interpretation of the death of the body. This was a temporary experience.

The "experience" of the Absolute is one where "YOU" are completely absent of self-awareness, and suddenly consciousness comes to you as an awareness of the waking world, dream, or deep sleep. You feel or see consciousness flowing towards you, but you are untouched by it. You do not experience yourself as anything; you experience consciousness moving, and also experience that all of this consciousness is not 'You', 'You' are apart from it.

However revelatory this is, however miraculous to discover your essential 'You-ness' is beyond existence, it is in the Play of consciousness, the so-called dream, where the action is. As such, an imaginary real or not, this is where we play out our lives and loves, and it is this aspect of me that I choose to embrace, not the Absolute.

Who Says the I-Thought is the Ego or Self?

Robert Adams and Ramana both said follow the ‘I’ thought. Nisargadatta said focus on and love the ‘I Am’ sensation, the sense of existence.

“Part” of what is revealed to us through such an inner searching is that there is no inner “entity,” no inner object, no apparent phenomenal nucleus towards which the ‘I-thought’ points.

(Much later we will find there is still “something” there which is not a thing, it is the knowing subject which is conducting the self-inquiry, which cannot be objectified as an observed entity, or known by the mind. At first it is only known by inference, then as an intuition, and then as an utter certainty, a deep conviction after long pondering about the relationship between the perceived and the perceiver.)

I think in most of us there is a feeling, and the unquestioned understanding, that there is some nucleus, the personal self, an ego to which the ‘I-thought’ points, such that when we practice self inquiry, looking at or for the ‘I-thought,’ we finally understand there is no entity anywhere to which the ‘I- thought’ points, thus the entire conceptual system collapses.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

That is, there is an unstated assumption that there is an inner ‘I,’ and opposing that on the other side of the skin is an ‘outer’ world. When it is seen that the word ‘I’ does not point to anything, the old dichotomy between inner and outer collapses, and we see that the objects we think exist are actually the result of concepts applied to the external world, such as the word ‘chair’ which is superimposed by the mind on raw experience.

With this discovery we understand that the external world in its entirety, is constructed from a mental map of tens of thousands of concepts, some strictly personal, and many which are commonly held by society and culture.

I really do not want to get into the depths of discussion about how this occurs, as it is explained in depth in my awakening experiences in the beginning of the book.

It is commonly held now by Advaita advocates that the experience reveals that the mind/ego is no more than a collection of thoughts that come and go rather arbitrarily. But in fact this is not true. Each individual is rather unique, and the way they arrange concepts and behaviors, and the way they see the world is fairly unique to that individual despite many shared commonalities.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Everyone in our culture knows what a chair or an automobile is, while an Australian Bushmen of two centuries ago may not have had that concept at all. But let us take a closer look at the whole notion of ego, mind, and I.

Why do the Neo-Advaitins assume that just because the word 'I' does not point to anything, that the ego does not exist? Who said that the ego or self would have some form or an objective nucleus such that by looking into one's subjectivity, it could be found as some sort of 'object?'

What if the ego is not a single entity, but a "collection" of learned responses, learned patterns of perception, interpretation and adaptational psychic processes by which we function in the world, combined through developmental patterns into a functioning human being?

Or, what if that sense of 'I' and the 'I-thought' really point towards a non-entity, a non-object, namely the subject of everything? In that sense too, no object of inquiry could be found, yet certainly we cannot doubt that we exist and experiencing is taking place.

When we use the word 'ego,' are we not talking about complex behaviors: thinking and interpreting of external events, the ability to focus on external and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

internal phenomena, the ability to relate to another person, the ability to relate to others in a group and to persist in adaptive efforts to accomplish some goal, as well as the process by which languages and subjects such as physics and economics are learned?

Does not the word ‘ego’ really point to a huge collection of behaviors, talents, mental functions and ways of perceiving the world? This is like the word ‘Chicago’ may point to a colored area on a million maps, but when we come to the real world, what does ‘Chicago’ point to?

Does it point to five million separate people spread out over 300 square miles, with maybe two million structures, a million separate businesses, 15,000 miles of streets and highways, a unique form of city government, its library system, its newspapers and television stations, its police, its universities, etc.? What is it that the word ‘Chicago’ points to? We use the word all the time, and it can mean all of the above entities and functions associated with that city. BUT CHICAGO IS A CONCEPT. IT DOES NOT POINT TO ANY THING.

The word ego is the English translation of Freud’s phrase, “Das Ich,” meaning the ‘I’, or the ‘I-sense’. However, for him ego was the reality principal, only part of which was the ‘I-sense.’ It arbitrated between the primitive demands of the unconscious, the Id, and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

the reality of the world. For Freud, most everything in our lives was unconscious or preconscious, meaning we could access it if we tried for a moment, and not conscious, "In the now."

The ego free floated depending on the circumstance, from conscious to preconscious, to the unconscious, trying to please the Id's impulses by satisfying them as much as possible given the realities of the world, and also the ego used "defenses" to hide impulses or to deny, repress or transmute conflicts and pain. We refer to these defenses all the time, saying someone is "projecting" onto others, or denying or repressing emotions by refusing to see what is clearly a fact in an effort to "save" our point of view, or prevent pain from entering our awareness.

On top of this we have the personality, the complex of beliefs, weaknesses, strengths, and habitual responses and inclinations that we present to others in day to day interactions, which we really are mostly unconscious of, because the personality is us.

We really don't reflect on our interaction style or deeply ingrained "truths" unless challenged by a wife or lover, boss at a job, or work demands. Under stress, or in psychoanalysis or insight psychotherapy, we may begin to look at our personality traits if they are causing failure (such as always falling in love with

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

the same type persons that always lead to relationship failure), or other kinds of pain.

On top of this developed the superego, or morality, which at first is quite rigid, and then becomes more flexible as we become adults.

That is, Freud of 100 years ago conceived of a far more complex sense of ‘I’, or ego, than Buddhists or mystics of the East. Freud’s ego encompassed vast amounts of behaviors, and complexities of personality not dreamt of by Eastern mystics.

We can go even further as did the ego and developmental psychologists, and assert that the word ego also refers to one’s abilities, talents, behaviors, patterns of interactions with others, educational attainment, ability with language and mathematics, and even all of one’s beliefs and opinions. Really, do we not use the word ‘ego’ in this way, to refer to all of these processes and attainments? So what is it that the word ‘ego’ points to?

Now let us assume there is reality in Freud’s model of the personality and ego. If the ego is really a collection of “processes” rather than a single entity, either an ‘I-thought’, or an inner psychic form which we can view by looking into our subjectivity, then of course self inquiry or the recent “Direct Pointing” method will always find nothing.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Does anyone in their right mind think that we could look within our subjectivity and find our personality? Can we find our personality as an entity? Is not our personality much of what we call the ‘ego’?

Can we look within ourselves and find our ability to do mathematics; or rather do we just do mathematics by “becoming” a certain part of the complex structures of our self as a human being? That is, I don’t look inside and find a mathematics nodule or mathematics entity in my subjectivity. I just get into a certain frame of mind in which I can see math symbols and transformations, I become it, and then I can do mathematics. But there certainly is no entity like a mathematics learning center, or physics learning core entity, or an observable ego sub-core entity that controls all of our human interaction skills.

Is not all of this part of what we call the ego? Does not the word ‘ego’ really refer to dozens of invisible processes, patterns and skills, and all of our personality as it relates to the rest of the world? Or does ego just point to that sense of ‘I’?

How can we possibly believe we can look inside of ourselves and find a pattern of how we relate to other people? Instead, in a real-life situation with another person, don't we try to intuitively feel our own emotions in response to the interaction and cues in the

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

other person's behavior and body language that reveal to us what he or she is thinking and feeling?

Is it not obvious that most of this "stuff" is invisible to introspection, watching our thoughts and emotions arise and pass away?

If we consider Freud's model and the psychoanalytic models that have flowed from his concepts, staying in the now really only accesses the conscious mind and preconscious. But mechanisms of the ego, constructed by the ego, prevent that same ego, the 'I,' the investigator, from ever discovering the deeply buried stuff, the earliest pains, frustrations, injuries, and vasanas, which are only brought to light when they slip through the ego defenses, such as in dream or free association.

In other words, the ego spends an enormous amount of energy and time hiding stuff working in the unconscious and preconscious areas. How then can we expect the ego, which directs all search and seeking efforts, to uncover that which it wants to conceal from the light of awareness?

Therefore staying in the now, the present, in awareness, can really not take us that far as a method of liberation. The ego is not going to find that which it deliberately conceals from consciousness. External forces are usually needed, such as a guru,

psychotherapist, or challenging external circumstances, such as a life crisis, death of someone close, divorce, etc.

Yes, seeing that there is no 'I-Center' certainly can begin an astounding transformation as the conceptual system begins to collapse and we begin to see the world differently, without concepts, and as Seung Shan might say, with a mind as stupid as a rock, without its constant chatter and interpretations.

The world seems fresh, brilliant and vivid, our responses immediate and not mediated by thought. Then we become One, 'I' versus the world disappears, and there is just one experience, unity consciousness, with no time lapse between something that happens 'outside' and our (inside) responses.

But the lack of an 'I-entity' certainly does not mean that we do not have behaviors, abilities, a personality, skills, and a body available to us, as well as seeing ourselves as in relationship to a world and to another.

When we say the sentence, "I had rice for dinner yesterday," we are not talking about some nonexistent 'I-entity' that we can see through introspection; we are stating that in our memory we know that yesterday 'I' ate a certain meal, this body-mind had rice and other food to eat. We are not saying there was an 'I'

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

entity in us, like a soul that ate rice. We are saying the collective of our body: all its processes, our mind, the personality that is us, our behaviors, all our abilities, for a moment yesterday, sat down and ate food.

As Ramesh Balsekar stated, we are a body/mind mechanism, or entity, not just an 'I-thought' or 'I-sense' although they are part of it. It is this totality that falls in love, marries and has children, gets up at 7:00 am and goes to work, and struggles all day to meet deadlines, then comes home to pay bills and watch television. It is not an 'I-thought' or 'I-object' that does all of this.

Now we can say that the world is an illusion because we found no entity to which the 'I-thought' pointed to; therefore there was no dichotomy between the inner and the outer, and we realize that all of us impose patterns of order, of thought and concepts onto the external world that we have learned to survive. This does not remove our experience of an ever-changing presence or substance, which may no longer have an interpretive map of thought, but certainly exists in the sense that there is always some appearance or another in front of us.

Robert Adams referred to this appearance as illusion because none of it was permanent and is dependent upon us, our sentience and our ability to

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

experience the world in its existence. The world does not exist apart from our experiencing the world.

So what is the difference between an awakened man, a totally liberated man, and an ordinary man?

I am saying this issue is so complex, so varied, that merely seeing that the 'I-thought' itself is not permanent, or that it points to nothing, really is the barest of beginnings of awakening. There is so much more to do.

All the hidden wrinkles, the angers, hurts, humiliations, fears, and hatreds remain. There is no King 'I' to be killed. Instead we are afloat in a river of inner and outer happenings always impermanent and changing, where "shit" is always floating to the top.

The real meaning of the 'no-I' experience is to introduce us to space, emptiness, the ground state of consciousness, and by living in that, to better deal with the flotsam that surfaces in life.

Another issue that often arises for the neo advaitins, is that they learned from Sailor Bob or someone else that there is no separate 'I', or separate self.

What they mean by this is unclear. Do they mean there is only One experience and no world/me separation of any sort?

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

What does this mean experientially? What is their experience? Does it mean that their intelligence or perceiving is spread equally throughout their experienced world? There is no inner versus outer, no me versus you, no world versus Ed, John, or Ann? Is this what they really mean?

If this is the case, how do they manage to escape being killed by an imaginary car at an intersection, or escape a gun wielding psychopath? If they are not separate from me, and there is only one, what am I protecting when I run, or look both ways for oncoming traffic? If there is no one but me, how do I function in the world? In fact, do not all of the neo advaitins proclaim 'no' separate sense of self? If nothing is separate, why do they act as if a car speeding towards them is a danger and jump out of the way? If there is no separate entity, why would there be any fear of death or injury?

It is, of course, because we know we are a separate mind/body entity that needs to hold onto that belief to survive.

The human being is really a collection of many psychological and behavioral functionings and "internal" and invisible psychic structures, which Freud called the Ich, which was translated into English as ego.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Later psychoanalysts developed models of the ego further and investigated various mechanisms by which that ego interacts with the world. Those psychoanalysts would call the ego the self, and talk about how that self relates to the world and to others.

We can easily see that it was not even necessary to bother with the 'I' thought or an 'I-object' in order to allow functioning in the world. Most functioning in the world occurs on an unconscious or preconscious level hardly involving our consciousness itself. For example: driving a car, riding a bicycle, interacting with others in private or in a group, washing dishes, and performing the many functions in everyday life and work. The existence of an 'I' is never required.

However, when a person "really" discovers that there is no separate 'I' internally, huge psychological changes can take place. At least it was with me. For many others, it is just an intellectual discovery as they read texts written by others as to what this no-self, or no-I discovery means.

For me it was not so much the disappearance of a separate sense of self, or loss of the sense of being a doer that mattered. These are rather minor things in comparison to what happened to me.

For me, when I discovered that there was no internal "object" to which the 'I' word referred, I

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

realized I had been living my life in a fantasy where I was somewhat like a soul inside of the body, separate from the world.

When I saw that the ‘I-thought’ pointed to nothing, pointed to an empty set, I also saw that all other thoughts based on this imagined dichotomy of inner and outer, of self and no self, actually pointed to nothing.

I saw directly that language and learning superimposed a network of thoughts upon our perceptions, and these thoughts mediated between the activities of my imagined ‘I’ object, and the imagined objects of the external world. I saw that all thoughts are merely the map by which we think about reality, and were not the reality itself, which we barely saw.

Almost always, always, I saw the world through a network of thought. This network assumed a distinction between me and the outer world. I was a ghost in the machine of the body, operating in the world.

All words and concepts are “lies,” superimposing an order on a reality that had no shape or stability, and which always conflicted with someone else’s understanding and “lies.”

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

In fact, what I discovered is that there is only an impersonal consciousness operating in the world, and 'I,' the real 'I' of the Absolute, was merely along for the ride.

When I saw that there was no inner object related to the word 'I,' I saw that there also were no external objects related to the nouns and adjectives we use every day. The word chair, for example, is a generic word, and we impose this functioning and recognition on hundreds of objects every day in our life without ever seeing the chair for what it is. We see it in functional terms, or aesthetic terms, but hardly ever just look at a chair to see what is there.

Our intent, predispositions and education impose a story to cover everything in the world. But all of this disappeared for me. There was no longer an inner versus an outer. There was no internal direction versus an external direction. There was no inside the skin versus outside the skin. There was only one experience, and it was the mind created distinctions and separations.

The entire intellectual system collapsed. The network of thought disappeared. I could see without thinking. I could see thoughts floating through space like tiny clouds that swirled around my mind. This began to affect all other aspects of my life because I began to see that all concepts were up for questioning.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

All concepts, including: physics, mathematics, economics, politics, morality, conventional daily life, the place of work, faith, trust, and the meaning of life; all were up for questioning in the sense that they disappeared, and I began to operate in freedom.

Yet, 'I' still existed. I was able to talk to people, go to Starbucks, right psychological reports, take care of my cats, deal with my significant other on a daily basis, and read about philosophy with a new and deeper understanding from the 'no mind' point of view. This entity called, Edward, this body/mind complex, continued to function in the world with barely a problem. It seemed as if all functioning was automatic. But this is to be expected, since in our daily life most functioning is automatic anyway.

It is just that the mind was no longer involved in terms of daydreaming or thinking about the world or what was going on. Thoughts did not interfere, and the world was seen to be illusory, in the sense that the world I had lived in was an artifact of the network of thought, and once belief in that network disappeared, my belief in the permanence of separateness of the world also disappeared. There was just functioning without self-reference.

I do not mean that the mind disappeared; rather its importance was diminished. It was not the predominant element that ran my life, but my life

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

seemed to flow from emptiness, and the mind played a subservient role.

Now the question is, when the mind drops, what do I become? I became me, a fully functioning body/mind functioning in a new world with far less thinking and thought. The illusory world of the network of thought disappeared, and I began functioning out of emptiness, automatically.

There was still a sense of 'I', or being the subject, but it was not confined to any location in space-time.

Then one day I had a second awakening experience. I saw that consciousness itself was illusory and not me. By that I mean that I felt I was outside of consciousness, and the states of consciousness came to me without touching or affecting me. Waking consciousness came and went. The dream state came and went. The sleep state came and went, but I was untouched. I had moved to a deeper level inside of "me" that was "deeper" than consciousness. I might say it was really experienced as "other" than consciousness.

I was that which was beyond consciousness. consciousness itself was an illusion. The oneness state itself was illusory. All thoughts were illusory.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

By illusory, I meant that the experience was that 'I' had a sense of permanence. Consciousness came and went through time, but I was separate and not affected by the passage of the states or the objects within consciousness, or the totality of manifest consciousness itself. The experience was, I am permanent, all else is fluid, temporary, insubstantial, and thus not real. I was that state that supported all the illusion.

That is, I acquired the knowledge that I existed beyond the universe of manifestation. I had never been born into that universe as a human entity. I was not really a human being. I was something else entirely, what Nisargadatta called the witness, or the Absolute, or Para-Brahman.

I was the unborn, as we all are. Yet 'I' was constantly associated with this body/mind entity named, Edward that was perfectly able to function all by itself without thinking, self-reference, or a separate sense of self in the world.

So what is functioning in the world if I am beyond that? This was my discovery: consciousness was functioning all by itself as an apparent body/mind. Everything that existed in the manifest world was consciousness, from the body, to the functioning of the body, to all the objects in the world. All was consciousness operating in an impersonal way in the

sense that it did not involve the ‘I’ that I felt myself to be, which was apart from creation, the manifest world.

‘I’, the witness, the Absolute, was just along for the ride as the cognizer, the subject, the witness, and I could choose to identify with, Edward Muzika, as a human being in relationship to the world, or as the witness, utterly removed from the world, or I could identify with the void which contained all phenomena and from which phenomena flowed, or I could identify with my activities of the moment as a human being.

Then a year ago something happened. Love came to me. A woman came into my life and everything changed. A new life was breathed into me. A new energy permeated my body and being. And this was strictly personal. That is, this love happened to ‘me’ at the deepest level of identification. I had become alive as love. The other also was alive as a ‘real’ object, opposed to an imaginary object within my sentience, my conscious world. The world and I were becoming personal.

As Muktanda said, “I have become alive.” That is, ‘I’ as the Absolute had been born into the world as the personal. I was no longer an impersonal functioning of consciousness, I became love itself, and everything, everything gradually became personal again. I had made a long journey from the personal, Edward, who

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

began his spiritual journey in the 1960s, culminating in awakening in 1995, then 15 years of lying fallow in this impersonal consciousness, functioning in an impersonal way.

Then I awakened yet again. I returned to the world of humanity, even while constantly aware of the great void which contains all of manifestations, and the coming and going of various states of consciousness and objects within consciousness.

But now I was a lover, and the world began to take on a new reality, a reality of spiritual energy and GRACE, with a love for others and a desire to show them how to break free of their own imprisoning networks of thought and daily living situations.

I saw that there were other concepts, conditions, and predispositions in each of us that are far more powerful as a prison, than merely the 'I thought'.

There are so many concepts and conditionings caused by society, our educational system, our jobs, and our relationships, that create in each of us a private prison that robs us of love and life.

These concepts are deeper into the unconscious, because we were born and raised in these conceptual structures of family and society, as opposed to learning from teachers and books about karma, rebirth, no self,

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

or Self, consciousness and the Absolute, and all the different techniques that are accepted routes for achieving peace and happiness.

These were "local" prisons, trapping individuals into lifeless marriages or relationships, boring jobs, depression, feelings of desolation and hopelessness, and endless repetition of relatively meaningless activities.

There was no 'life' in many people's lives, especially those seeking spirituality. They know something is missing in the world and in their lives, as well as everyone else's life, but they do not know what that "missing" is.

They then began searching, knowing not what they look for. This is THE major confusion in the spiritual world. What do we want when we seek?

Some seek knowledge. Some seek love. Some seek to disappear, to transcend everything in an ultimate peace as they imagine Ramana Maharshi to have lived in. Some seek to re-experience life with a new intensity and with feeling. Others seek an ultimate security, a knowing of Truth.

But I think what I found is the whole package. First one discovers that the entity they thought they were is not real, and there is just an impersonal

functioning of consciousness that is always screwed up by a hyperactive mind. They discover they are altogether separate from consciousness, a mere witness of the manifestation of consciousness, something outside of this manifest universe altogether.

Abiding there, they find peace and relative happiness. But after time, there arises a feeling of boredom and lifelessness. Also, despite the peace, happiness and even bliss on occasion, there is a hatred for the world that keeps pulling us out of that peace. Our peace is always disturbed. Even when we are chanting and feeling bliss, somebody comes along and makes a lot of noise and our peace is lost, bliss is lost, and anger arises.

Also, in this world of the Absolute, there is no love, there is only witnessing of the activities of consciousness, both of ourselves and the apparent external world, and love is absent. Without love, life becomes lifeless and boring.

Then comes the new movement of love for someone or something, where love is the predominating element operating within consciousness, within the Void itself, which once again makes everything personal. As the Zen master Seung Sahn stated, we have gone full circle, from 0° as an ordinary human being so to speak, to 180° of complete emptiness, the void, and then a return to 360° of

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

ordinary human consciousness once again, but this time transformed and full of life.

This journey of love is so amazing; the experiences are so amazing and dramatic. One feels like a river of love flows through their sense of presence. Others feel constant blissful energies flowing upwards from the heart, gut or sexual organs, through the heart and into the world and to the other.

For long periods one may feel bliss which becomes ecstasy. All kinds of states and experiences arise and pass away as our awareness expands in new dimensions.

But the most astounding thing we experience is the descent of grace and humility. We feel like we are touched by God's sacred breath itself, often in the presence of the other, he or she who exists before us as our beloved: lover, friend, companion, guru, or chela.

Grace permeates everything. We fall to our knees in utter awe of the grace and acceptance we feel. We are humbled, laid low, in a new kind of ecstatic embrace by the Infinite. We are then complete, finished in this divine embrace that has arisen from and by one's love for another human, lover, guru, chela, child, or animal.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

The whole world is experienced through the heart and the mind plays just a secondary, yet integrated role, a supporting role for the heart-sense. I am empty, bereft of self-care or self concern. I have only concern for the other.

Now that 'I' and the world have once again become personal, a great desire for justice arises and a caring for all. I want to function as a support for all of sentience, for all life from that of a butterfly or worm, to all animals and all humans.



La Jolla.

Creating a New World, One Life at a Time

A long time ago I studied under Zen Master Seung Sahn Soen Sa when he lived in the states. I also stayed as a guest at his temple in Seoul when I visited Korea in the late 90s.

Seung Sahn had a pet peeve, it was students who attained Nothingness and saw the void nature of all things, even that time was empty, and then they stopped there. They became “rogues” and did just as they wanted without consideration for others, because they saw themselves and others as non existent, so whatever actions came from them was considered alright, even while not resolving the illogical inconsistency of no longer feeling like a person, yet continuing to act in the same old ways as before. (For I might ask the question, "Just because you no longer feel personal, or that you exist, does that mean the personal or ego is not still there?")

He would say, “You now know Empty; is that all?” He was implying that there was something to discover beyond Nothingness and the Void and oneness, which was a return to living as a human in that world lived in by all others, the apparent world of life and death, and to do so with a sense of compassion and integrity.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

He gave students many koans relating to life "after" the initial awakening to nothingness, which he considered half way, or 180 degree awakening, versus a 360 degree return to the marketplace.

Robert too spoke of those who only understood that nothing ever existed, and they did not exist, yet who continued to live in the apparent world, either not caring, or deliberately exploiting it without caring how ones actions affected others. He called them "cold fish."

I am afraid several famous Jnanis fit into this category, but I am not going to name names because I will get comments from a dozen defenders.

I have mentioned that there are two stages to awakening. The first was to see that you do not exist and never have existed. Seeing that, you see the world too has never existed, and you are free. It is all a matter of mind and the mind is only a collection of thoughts, which aren't really your thoughts anyway, and which one might call a collective or cultural network of thoughts. I write about this as my first awakening experience.

The second awakening is when you see that all of consciousness and the states of consciousness are not you and have nothing to do with you. You are that which notes the coming and going of consciousness and

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

the forms of consciousness. This I have thoroughly explored on the blue site of <http://itisnotreal.com> as well as on the link called my second awakening experience. This knowledge or awareness has no attributes and really no existence as an entity of any sort in this world. It is utterly beyond phenomenology.

However, there is a third awakening; it is finding one's core of "humanhood" which is love and bliss. This third awakening is an ever increasing love for all sentient beings, wanting them to be safe and prosper, and also of wanting to create a better world. This can come instantly, or over a period of time, knowing that the world is unreal, a creation of mind, but beginning to see the suffering and pain of others as real after all. This causes a rise in you of a need to end that suffering. This is the Mahayana ideal of the Bodhisatva, versus the Hinayana ideal of the Arhat. The second Bodhisatva vow: Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them all. The Bodhisatva relinquishes the peace of Arhat "blowing out" until all beings are saved from suffering.

This awakening can be instantaneous as a sudden arising of Self from within in an overwhelming display of majesty, of witnessing the Self as God, and also oneself at the same time in an explosive moment of Self-Realization.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Those who have only mastered the first one or two awakenings laugh and scoff at this, saying it is dualistic, saying who is there to do anything? But they can only say this as long as their hearts have not opened. They still exist only in Jnana, they remain Jnanis rather than returning to the world as Bodhisatvas with love and compassion.

This marriage of both is the final goal, and it is far more fulfilling than just Jnana or Bhakta. When your heart opens, dualism and non-dual are reconciled in the same person and you live from the heart. That is how it feels. You feel as if you witness and react to the world from your sense of presence around your physical heart, and an expanded presence that extends everywhere as a mystical communion with the entirety of all sentient beings and the world.

I prefer to transcend this limitation of non-dual and find the powerful thread of love everywhere, holding and permeating the universe. You see, every teacher has a different message. Robert used to say his was closer to Ramana's than Nisargadatta's, but each realized being has his or her own message. So, if you like this message, you feed feral cats and the homeless and prompt politician's not to cut Social Security or Medicare. You adopt a homeless cat off the street or go into a shelter and adopt a dog.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Draw a circle of compassionate action around yourself, as big or small as you care to make it, and within that circle, create a kinder world.

Consciousness is like an unimaginably huge symphony orchestra, playing all the notes, all the time, all at once. Mind is like a composer/conductor who comes along and chooses various notes and puts them together in a linear fashion so they can be experienced and appreciated as a song or melody. Is that song going to be harmonious or discordant? Will it be a happy or melancholy tune? Bach or ZZ Top?

It's entirely up to you. I don't think the whole of consciousness knows or cares what's being done with all the vibrations at all the frequencies it is radiating. But that doesn't mean that we as apparently separate minds should not care. In fact, maybe the truth is that we are the way consciousness can care, and thereby we make something meaningful out of that apparently meaningless radiation.

I hope that if and when the time comes for each of us, we will be willing and brave and selfless enough to make that Bodhisattva vow. In the meantime you can keep feeding the cats, because it makes you and them happy. You can give the five bucks to the homeless woman on the corner, because this is how a more peaceful and happy world is built.

Little Red



I think little Red is dying. He is the 2 year old male cat that keeps Lakshmi, company in the office with me.

The blood test results are weird according to his oncologist, who thinks it is iron deficiency anemia, not cancer, yet iron supplements have not helped.

Red responded for a time when we gave him Progen by injection, which builds red cells to counter his anemia, but this only treats the symptoms not the underlying disease.

So, he appears to be decompensating despite treatment. The only recourse is to take him to yet another specialist, for a go around on other tests and maybe hospitalization.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

But of course we are talking about an additional \$1,000 for tests and overnight hospitalization, and he really appears too weak to respond favorably. My experience has been that cats are hard to keep alive once they develop a severe malady. Lakshmi, is an exception, with nearly four years of survival after being diagnosed with cancer.

I am feeling an almost crushing depression this morning because of little Red's illness. I will take him to a new vet this afternoon, but there is little hope. The two vets, including an oncologist, that have seen him, have no idea. We have just been treating symptoms.

My feeling is once again I have failed someone. I did not act soon enough or aggressively enough, etc. This is much how I felt about my favorite cat, Satchi, when she died 15 years ago. My love, my care failed her.

So many times have I failed to provide animals or people with what they needed, yet it is only with the approach of death that the failure's effects truly reach home.

Well, we just got back from the vet; bad news. Red has a systemic cancer and needs to be put to sleep. His right kidney is very small, but the left kidney is

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

four times its normal size, misshapen, and lumpy. That is, it is riddled with cancer.

The vet, the Amazing Dr. Reimer at Adler's VCA in the Valley, got a second opinion by Craig Adler, DVM who shares the practice.

It appears my instincts were right five weeks ago to begin treating Little Red for cancer assuming it was the same kind that Lakshmi had. But unlike Lakshmi's G.I. lymphoma, Red's cancer is systemic and certainly has metastasized already, and is causing multiple organ failure to begin. He is in pain, but not exceptional pain at this point.

There is really nothing that can be done. Reimer said we bought Red an extra five weeks by beginning the chemotherapy on August 4, but systemic cancers usually get around chemotherapy in short order.

The options were to do a bone marrow aspiration, followed by an ultrasound of the kidney, then an aspiration of the kidney to stage and type the cancer, and choose alternative chemotherapies. But he said he doubted that would even buy Red an extra two months.

So, he gave Red a big (4mg) shot of Dexamethasone, a steroid used to fight cancer, and to give him a little time before we have him put to sleep.

I did not do it today, because Red is one of Kerima's favorite cats and she was at work. She would want to be present at his death as we both have been with all of our cats. Wish him well dear friends.

My Evolving "Depression"

Now it is a vast inner emptiness, self-illuminated, entirely merged with the outer emptiness of the world, through which the depression passes. It flows through the viscera and muscles of my body, and through the larger sense of presence like a vast ship slowly moving through an empty sea. No bliss, no ecstasy, just the energy field of depression, moving slowly, embracing the entirety of my presence; an amazing experience, unobscured by any other phenomena. The whole universe is pervaded by sadness.

Everything still, calm, unmoving, except the loss of Little Red, scouring my soul.

Even the personhood of Ed is a ghostly presence in the emptiness, like a cloud, no longer self-aware, just another object.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

I am the Void, deep calm, I am Ed, I am depression. I am the container and the contained, and it is all me, yet strangely, it does not touch me much. It just is.

I could choose to identify with Ed, with the Void, with the depression, or everything at once, the oneness. But I am letting the identification choose itself. Yesterday it was with my body and the sense of presence; today it is with the totality embraced by the Void. From this identification viewpoint, Ed and the body do not really exist. They are like phantoms suspended in emptiness.

Fortunately, all my medical reports are done and I do not have anything to do except write this and feed my cats.

COMMENT TO ME:

Edji, is it really not sticking to some degree? And how can you say the depression does not touch you much when it goes on for days and days?

It may be coming and going, or flowing through you, but you have been depressed a lot since you realized Little Red was dying. There has been [what seems to be] a kind of emotional self-indulgence, definitely beyond any description written by a jnani that I have ever read.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Not making a judgment or even saying 'self-indulgence' in any emotion is wrong; but you have said repeatedly that you are not all that touched, and your demeanor would indicate otherwise.

I'm not talking about concepts, but a direct feeling of you as it emanates from your posts.

Would you clarify this?

Ed's Response:

Yes, the state today is much like the intensity of my original awakening state in 1995 now. Just a vast emptiness, inner and outer merged; no Ed anymore, no personal. The identification is with everything today, unlike yesterday.

Actually things and states are changing quite rapidly. Even the quality of "depression" changes daily, for "depression" is just a word, the actual experience is ineffable, but I am trying to convey the "fragrance" of that experience in words some might understand.

There are no other affects. Love, anger, fear, all are gone, just a sense of a dense energy moving through the totality of me.

What I am indulging in is that I have the free time to explore melancholia, bereavement, more closely and deeply than ever before.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Why on earth would I want to rush through this experience? It is new; it is deep and totally involving and allows me to see how everything is put together. Why rush? Red died just five days ago, how much time are you allowing? One day? Three? Five? A year? It does not matter; it is unfolding at its own pace.

As a matter of fact, you will find few teachers anywhere describing their inner states this way. They want you to project what it is you want into them, such as: peacefulness, vitality, love, and anything they might state about what they really think or feel could lead to the busting of your projections.

Also, many teachers believe that students do not want them to be seen as anything like their students, for what is there to learn then? But really, everyone is about the same.

What I am trying to show you is how to stay with feelings no matter how "apparently" painful they may appear to persons not used to feeling deeply. You need to have patience for as long as the process lasts, no matter how deep or "painful" the feeling may initially feel. This means you need to trust yourself.

If you cannot feel deeply, you cannot stay still long enough to feel and enjoy the voids, or create the space for bliss and ecstasies either. You can watch all this stuff pass through 'YOU', who is unmoving. You

are the patient, accepting host; everything experienced is a guest.

(Actually, the more advanced teaching is: Sometimes you are the host, sometimes the guest, sometimes both. But in the description above, I was trying to describe the host position clearly.)

Well, the Deed is Done. Little Red is Dead.

The vet said the tumor has not shrunk any, and his gums were even whiter, meaning more anemic. He was more active now because the massive amounts of steroids were cannibalizing his muscle tissue, but giving him more energy to live. He lost a half pound of weight in three days, which was 10% of his body weight in just three days.

Reimer said he would probably crash, as so often happens when people delay euthanasia, to the middle of night. Red was in pain with a very sensitive abdomen.

So both Kerima and I felt the time was right. It felt right. Red was dying feeling a little better than two days ago, rather than going off being rushed to an emergency vet in the middle of the night.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

He was killed by injecting a 5X overdose of an anesthetic, and was dead within 15 seconds after an injection into a vein in his thigh. Red did not fight at any time, and was very passive.

Both Kerima and I cried. I had to drive, she could not. We went to a coffee house and had coffee in silence. Then we went to dinner, and again ate in silence.

We both felt so angry that this little cat had died two days after his second birthday of a very aggressive cancer.

I am home in my office where Little Red lived. Lakshmi seems confused because Little Red is not here. She keeps looking for him.

Little Red will be cremated and join our family on the fireplace mantle.

My depression regarding Little Red's death is deepening.

I fully feel the tragedy that Robert called this earth the lowest of hells. The story of how PETA, ASFPCTA, the Madison County Sheriff and the courts destroyed Caboodles just reinforces it. I have seen that legalized crime used against so many rescuers, accused of animal neglect or cruelty, having all the animals impounded, the owner sent to jail, and half the

animals killed in the shelters for minor diseases, or being too old, and they call it a rescue. Then they charge the former owner hundreds of thousands of dollars for providing "care" for the animals they abducted.

My depression has changed. I cannot function. I can barely move. But my mind and body feel clear. My consciousness is empty and light. The heaviness of three days ago is gone, but that heaviness, in a way, was so comforting, like a gentle blanket comforting a broken heart.

Now that heart is exposed to the light of finality of Red's non-being, of all the Caboodles cats dying and the desperate loneliness, and anger Craig must feel about his loss.

Yes, I also feel a gentle anger, both at "What Is" for taking that most gentle soul, Red, from me and taking him away into the dissolution of the Void. He was such a gentle soul, and Lakshmi's constant attendant.

What I feel is like a a dry gentle wind blowing through my heart, causing it to shrivel a little before its dryness, but also filling my larger sense of presence with a restiness, a need to stop and lie still, thinking not of what to do today, dropping all chores to be done, and just settle into the grief.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

How is it felt? Like a great aloneness spread throughout my body and the surrounding presence you might say of my soul. A waiting for a permeating deadness to move off or up in one way or another; a waiting for Little Red's death to pass through me, and to let go of him and his presence.

Here I sit in my office today and Little Red has been gone 22 hours. Lakshmi is on my lap. I am still surrounded by Red's water bowl and food dishes, and about 4 feet from where he used to lay most often.

At first this morning I felt strange. I felt the emptiness inside that I always felt, but mostly I felt the absence of emotions, the absence of sadness or loss. Gradually though a weight settled on my chest making it a little difficult to breathe, then I felt a wave of tension in my back, like a stiff blanket covering my upper back and shoulders.

Then I began feeling a pain in my heart, both sharp and dull at the same time, and a deepening sadness spread throughout my presence. Finally, I was feeling depressed. Yesterday it was just shock and disbelief. Today, I feel a raw depression: Heaviness, loss, sadness, and welling up of tears remembering Little Red's dead body on the blanket, and how, after the vet left the room, I closed Red's eyes so he appeared to be asleep.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Yes, it is so hard to feel this loss, and I miss his presence. But then I think, “Why would anyone want to run from this feeling?” Buddha encountered sickness and death, felt his own confusion of why this was, felt the suffering of those who felt the losses, and determined to understand what this was all about, this suffering, death, and depression.

Finally after seven years of austerities, studying with teachers, fasting and meditation he reached enlightenment and became an arhat, a Mukti, one in whom the Self had dried up and blown away, one who no longer was attached to anything, one who felt a slow-burning benevolence for all, but ultimately was not touched by anything because he was not attached to anything or any outcome. He no longer loved as a parent or a lover, but as Robert said regarding the Jnani, someone no longer touched by the world and its “vissitudes,” and thereby the “sting” was gone.

But is this it? Is this why we practice meditation, self-inquiry and spirituality, to escape the “sting” of death, either by feeling estranged from everyone, no longer attached to anything or anyone? If this is the only reason our spirituality is purely a sophisticated form of ego defense against feeling emotional pain, insecurity, loss and fear of death.

Is there anything else in spirituality beside escape?

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Yes, Robert only spoke of escape, of gradually sees the whole picture of life, and one learns detachment by witnessing and deliberately not reacting.

But for what? What was the reward for dying to our human attachments?

Well, in going within we find the bliss of self, which gradually gives way to ecstasy. But eventually these phases pass and one just encounters a deeper peace, and the clear, self-illuminated void, and a kind of ever present, mild happiness.

Also, we go to a place where love and idealism is safe. In this area our love is perfect and we can hang onto the belief of the omnipotence of love, that “true love” conquers death and any other obstacles. We are cocooned in a self-contained Self-awareness with no duality, just me.

I saw we can have both our humanity and the Infinite. Once finding the rock bottom levels of consciousness, the so called Absolute beyond consciousness, as well as knowing the ‘I Am’ and the love of the ‘I Am,’ as well as the state of not knowing and ignorance, can we not return to being a regular human again, totally feeling the pangs of loss, desperation, love, and all the other emotions associated with being human. Do we really want to

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

run from them anymore, or do we want to embrace our limitations and vulnerability?

Basically, my answer is: yes we do want to embrace it all. We return to the marketplace, the normal world of humanity and its frailty, but we come bearing gifts we can offer others, of true humility, true compassion, and the deepest loves anyone has ever felt, letting everyone know it is alright to feel deeply everything that arises, and to care deeply and to love deeply with great attachment and commitment.



Ed at Satsang.

Strong Emotions, Negative and Positive--a Path to God

Back in 1986 I wrote a Master's Thesis entitled, "Enlightenment as a Defense Against Psychological Pain." I proposed that many spiritual practices, such as mantra and many forms of meditation were conscious techniques used to escape pain or mood disorders, such as anxiety or depression.

Freud and other early ego psychologists spoke about conscious and unconscious ego defenses such as repression, denial, projection, splitting, projective identification, sublimation, dissociation and displacement, etc., to avoid the anxiety or internal conflict arising from conscious awareness of libidinal impulses of the Id, or the crushing guilt and criticisms of the superego.

Through defense mechanisms, the conscious awareness was more peaceful as the ego moderated and modulated both the urges to love, or to destroy obstacles or people that got in the way of fulfillment, as well as those of the internalized controller and punisher (the superego), the internalized representative of societal repression and convention.

Besides moderating the battle between the Id and the Superego, the ego weighed the consequences of

the person's acts, the reality principle. The ego had a very difficult job.

Back then I spoke of many forms of spirituality as being conscious mechanisms of finding rest from these internal wars by consciously creating no thought, no emotion states which were a parody of a "true spirituality" where a person sought their own core Self, Self-Realization, of which the personal self was a part.

Through this faux spirituality, people found rest from neurotic anxiety in teachings of peace, love, acceptance, or ideas that humanity was turning the corner into an enlightened world of no war, no poverty, no disease or death. Or else they got into various healing modalities, and New Age philosophies, dominated by positive thinking.

Meditators could find peace by staying in meditation on the various voids or states of emptiness. People lived by examples of lofty teachings, glad tidings, concepts of being a good person, etc. Or they used mantra and japa to crowd out all thinking and emotions.

Eventually, either the methods failed and the person abandoned them, or perhaps they died to their emotional selves and became emotionally deadened. They lost their humanity and became permanent

pollyanish, glad-sayers who found everything in their lives and the world OK. Their conscious minds gave everything a positive bent: Everyone had the perfect teacher or practice for them. Everyone was getting out of life exactly what they needed or deserved. There were no good and bad teachers, it was all relative. The world and life was unfolding as they should. All was preordained, no need to think or worry about anything. Thus, they died to their humanity, and the reality of living in an imperfect and sometimes harsh and ugly world.

THIS IS TOTAL BULLSHIT!

When one practices “real” spirituality long enough, has wrestled with all of his or her demons, felt deeply and dealt with death, loss of loved ones, deep jealousy, deep frustration, rage, hatred, as well as love so deep that one becomes lost in ecstatic bliss, then one finds that ALL INTENSE EMOTIONS, once they are no longer feared or resisted, convert into moving bliss, and when sustained, into ecstasy. At this point emotions and problems are eagerly sought, and this acceptance attitude invigorates one’s entire being, bringing an extraordinary aliveness.

All those negative emotions when faced, accepted, and even loved, turn into aliveness, love, and ecstasy!

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

But to know this, to feel this, to own this truth you need to be able to experience everything, from the deepest humiliation and exposure, to the most intense, ecstatic love of someone you must not love, of forbidden sexual impulses, such as the son for the mother, or daughter for the father, or someone else's spouse. This does not mean you have to act out every impulse, but you do have to reown the lost parts of your long lost personal self and bring them into awareness.

One of the most powerful keys in this Bhaktic path is awakening one's sexuality. This allows you to blossom as a human, to love and lust whether consummated or not. There is a rawness in deep romantic love and lust that causes the shakti to flow most powerfully, and which can awaken the Self from her imposed coma of mundane life, conventions and concepts.

Intense love in a sensitive person aware of their deepest impulses and fears causes a quickening of Kundalini and Chi energies which prepare one for the arising of the Self in consciousness, experienced as an explosion of light, energy, love and ecstasy. The experience of Self arising from within is totally beyond anything going before. This one Self-of-all is so powerful, so pure, and so complete, that it feels like

“Other,” like God; yet we know intuitively that it is really us. We are divine beings ultimately.

To do these things, to awaken to the totality of yourself, requires complete openness, complete fearlessness of exposure before God or man. Your life and actions are as an open book with no fear of humiliation, retribution, condemnation, or loss of loved ones.

You become as strong as a mountain, more fearless than Achilles, more loving than Krishna or Christ, more blessed than Mary, more honored than Buddha, for you cannot be cut by words, hurt by exposure, tempted by money or the concept of peace.

When you have reached this state you no longer run from pain as does everyone else, but you run towards it, for those strong negative and positive emotions are the suppressed and feared you. When you regain these lost elements of your buried, personal self, that integration explodes in you the power to access the True Self, the ‘I Am,’ the Godhead!

No matter how easily or often you can access samadhis, or dip into Turiya via abiding in the ‘I Am,’ until you have brought your unwashed, unclean, dishonest, rageful, jealous and extremely needy and buried parts of your self into the open, and then, going further, show them to the world; you will not be able

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

to stay there. As long as you have any fear of God or any man or woman seeing you other than your idea of how you think you should be seen, your tasting of the Self will be brief.

This does not deny that repeated tasting of the Self, the immense source of the 'I Am', aids immeasurably in giving you the courage and strength to own, appreciate and love everything that arises within you, and to equally prize, love and appreciate those who cause intense emotions in you, both negative and positive, because they are giving you the opportunity to experience God in the form of Shakti.

All emotions lead to bliss, to ecstasy, to God if you let them. Therefore run towards emotional pain, not from it!



Robert Adams II

Robert Adams, who taught a small group of students quietly and unobtrusively for 20 years in Los Angeles, was one of the best-kept spiritual secrets of our time. He founded no ashrams, centers, or institutes, never lectured in public or taught workshops, was rarely interviewed or photographed, and published no books. Even toward the end of his life, when word about him had begun to spread, his weekly meetings or satsangs never exceeded 50 participants. And yet he was perhaps the only American to embody and transmit the nondual experience and teachings directly from Ramana Maharshi, considered by many to be one of the greatest of all modern spiritual masters of India.

Ramana Maharshi, had a spontaneous awakening at the age of 16. Gripped by the fear of death, he stretched out like a corpse, stiffened his body, and said to him self, "Well, my body is dead. I see it. It will soon be cremated. But who is it that dies?" His intense inquiry into this question resulted in the realization that the body dies, but Self-Awareness never decays. This Self-Awareness, he later said, "is unrelated to anything; it is also self-luminous. Even if this body is burned, it will not be affected. Hence I realized, that very day, that I was that Awareness."

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

This realization never left him. Soon after his awakening, the young boy left home and made his way to the holy mountain Arunachala. He spent many years there, meditating in a cave, never speaking. Eventually Ramana Maharshi became celebrated as a Self-Realized jnana (wisdom) yogi, a great master of the spiritual tradition known as Advaita ("not-two") Vedanta.

Though many can discuss this tradition in great length and with great learning, Ramana was one of the very few who had a direct experience of realization of non-duality.

Eventually an ashram grew up around him, and his presence drew spiritual seekers from all over the world. For the most part he taught through silence, and his first two books, Self Inquiry and Who Am I?, were composed of written answers to questions posed by devotees. When he did begin to speak, he typically came back again and again to the same point: "Everyone says 'I' without understanding the significance of that pronoun. The seeker of truth should first asked a question "Who am I?" As often as an idea or thought rises, then and there, the seeker should ask himself, "To whom has this idea occurred?" This process, he taught, would lead to liberation.

A Dwarf and a Siddhi

Like Ramana, Robert Adams had a spontaneous experience of awakening as a young boy. Born in 1928 in the Bronx, Robert's earliest memory was of a 2 foot high dwarf with white hair and a white beard who would stand at the foot of his bed and jabber at him in a language he could not understand. This little man finally disappeared when Robert was seven.

After the little man stopped coming, Robert developed a Siddhi, a power. By this time, he said, he felt the world belonged to him. Whenever he wanted something, he just repeated God's name three times, and within minutes or hours it would be given to him. Once he thought he would like to take violin lessons and so he cited God's name; his uncle showed up with the violin, saying he thought Robert might enjoy learning the instrument.

By the time Robert was 14, he hardly studied at all. Whenever a test came up, he would again just say, "God, God, God!" and the correct answers would come. One day, just before taking an algebra test, he repeated God's name three times. Then rather than the algebra answers, something else came to him, a great awakening. About the experience itself Robert always remains reticent, saying it was inexpressible.

"But," he said, "It changed my life completely." In fact, Robert began to change so much his mother thought he was going mad. He was no longer interested in food, school, books, friends, or hobbies. He had no idea what had happened to him, and began exploring Eastern religious books. One day he happened on the book Who am I? by Ramana Maharshi. Upon seeing Ramana's photograph, he said, "I was shocked. The hair on my head and neck stood up. The little man who had lectured me all those years was Ramana."

Robert attended meetings and had long conversations with spiritual teacher Joel Goldsmith. Eventually he discovered the Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramhansa Yogananda, and made up his mind to study with him. So at age 16 he left home for Encinitas, California.

Taken in by Yogananda, the boy asked to become a monk at the Self Realization Fellowship monastery. But Yogananda refused the request. "He couldn't wait to get rid of me," Robert remembered. "I kept asking him why he taught all the practices, Mantras, affirmations, and healing techniques, when all of this missed the point of Self Realization? Yogananda's attitude was, "I've done very well, thank you, doing things this way!" Because of the nature of Robert's spontaneous awakening and his connection to the little white-

haired dwarf, Yogananda told Robert that Romana was his true teacher.

Meeting Ramana

During the fall of 1946, Robert traveled to India, arriving by train in the town of Tiruvannamalai, a few miles from Arunachala Mountain, the site of Ramana Maharshi's ashram. Early the next day, while walking towards the ashram, he spotted Ramana coming down the path towards them. An electrifying energy coursed through his body. He felt completely open. As Ramana got closer, Robert stripped off all his clothes and dropped at his feet. Ramana reached down, grabbed Robert by his shoulders, looked into his eyes and said, "I have been waiting for you. Get up! Get up!"

Robert stayed at Ramana ashram for almost 3 years, during which time he bought a jeep for the ashram to bring in supplies from town and helped build a large hospital using money from an inheritance.

During the late 1940s Ramana was almost constantly ill with severe arthritis and other ailments, including the cancer that eventually killed him. Few visitors were allowed to stay for more than a few weeks at the ashram, so Robert lived mostly in the

caves above. He later said, "It was with Ramana that my eyes were opened to the meaning of my experience."

After Ramana died, Robert wanted to visit several other saints in India, but had no money left. The famed Ramana biographer Arthur Osborne, hearing about Robert's situation, gave him \$7,000 to continue his travels and spiritual education. Robert wandered across India and roamed the world off and on during the next 30 years. He said he wanted to make sure he had not missed anything. No matter where Robert traveled, he was discovered, and a group of disciples grew up around him. But he always resisted being tied down to an ashram or community and soon moved on. Eventually, however, he decided it was time to stop and take on a small group of students, to whom he would pass out his understanding. Without publicity or fanfare of any kind he calmly began holding satsang in Los Angeles.

Into the Silence

I first met Robert Adams in June of 1989. I had been a Zen monk for many years and still had not found what I was seeking. I received a doctorate in

psychology and started my own psychotherapy practice. But examining my emotions just seemed to make me more aware of my unhappiness.

Over the next few years I would hear Robert say the most perplexing things: "Nothing is as it appears to be. The world is not real. You are not your body, you are not a human being, you are God, the Absolute, omniscient, immortal, all loving-perfection." But a day later he would say, "Nothing exists, not the world, not your body, mind, not the Absolute or God. These are all just words." One day he would say, "Don't get excited; whatever you see, touch, hear, or feel is not real. Look within and find 'Who' you really are." Another day he would say, "What is the worst thing that can happen to you? You can die, and what is so bad about that?" I never knew how to take his comments. They flew in the face of the evidence of my senses, which constantly showed me the external world as solid and real.

Still I trusted him and his teachings, because of his utter peacefulness. He always maintained the same bearing of deep equanimity whether in satsang, riding in a car, sitting in the park, or at lunch. He spoke with a quiet confidence, as if he were talking from a living and absolute constant experience, not mouthing philosophical knowledge learned from books or from Ramana. Because I trusted him and his teachings, I

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

changed. Everyone recognized that I was less arrogant, less confrontational, less angry, less stingy, less frightened of the world; I was softer, gentler, and kinder.

Many people, especially those coming from other traditions emphasizing the transmission of teachings or of shakti (spiritual power), found our satsang meetings boring. Robert did not present techniques to find bliss or God, or make life work better. There was little chanting and few external signs of devotion among his disciples. Lastly, Roberts Parkinson's disease slurred his speech, hampering easy understanding of his words. (I always accused him of getting the disease just to make people listen harder.) He also spoke slowly, and with long gaps between sentences. He emphasized silence rather than content. Some newcomers found the whole experience lacking in energy, understanding, devotion, or even basic comprehensibility. But because so much was lacking externally, those who stayed were drawn deep within the silence. In fact, silence is the best description of Robert. Silence was his home, his source, his being, his teaching.

Just being in his presence had a profound effect on many people. Some were overcome by happiness, others by peace. Some felt deep relaxation that lapsed into a barely conscious "sleep." Some experienced sinking into light; others a dissolving into emptiness as

the world dissolved into them; others a deep bliss and nothing else. For each it was different.

Mostly Robert was imperturbable. He never complained, never lacked a ready smile or humorous comeback, and I never saw him angry. He took a disarming lite, even wry, approach to the spiritual search. "Some of the group asked me to speak about suffering," he announced one evening. "I don't know if they want me to tell them how to suffer, or how to get rid of suffering," he laughed. "When you are suffering, you look for someone to relieve you of your suffering. But if you take this approach, when the one misery is taken away, another ensues. There is no end to it."

"So what do we do? We leave the world alone. We inquire within. To whom has this come?" That is what you must do with every problem, with every tummy ache, with every happiness, and with everything you see in the world. Who is this 'I'? Who gave it birth? Who is its source?"

Another evening someone complained that self-inquiry seemed "like a very intense activity."

"No," Robert replied. "Do it in a comical way. Make a game out of it. Don't take it too seriously."

"Is inquiry, a form of seeking, indicative of ego?" another student asked.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

"You have to use your ego to destroy your ego," said Robert. "You use your mind to destroy your mind."

"Then there is no seeking after certain point?"

"All seeking stops."

"Why can't we do that at the beginning?" The student persisted.

"You can. Why don't you?" Robert laughed.

Robert's playful, mischievous style of teaching continued outside of satsang. In a very low-key way, he would say one thing to one person and a different thing to someone else. Sometimes he would appear not to remember promises, though his memory was excellent, or he would equivocate in such a way that everyone thought he had agreed to their separate and contradictory wishes. He denied being a guru, but acted like one and constantly extolled the virtues of the "realized being" or sage. He even appeared to set people up so they would clash with each other.

For example, after I first met Robert, I began transcribing all of his talks, with the idea of selling them at satsang, giving a percentage to Robert, and keeping apart for myself to start a publishing company for satsang. It all made sense. Robert did the talking; I recorded the talks, transcribed them, edited them, and wrote an introduction to cap things off. Thus a

50/50 split was fair, wasn't it? Things went along fine for a while, until one day I arrived at satsang to find new transcripts on the table which had been done by another student, Mary. She asked only for a donation. Then the next week, more transcripts appeared by yet another transcriber. I lost my cozy post of being Robert's voice, my new business had gone down the tubes, and Mary and I were at loggerheads for time. It was painful, but effective. I realized that Robert was always adjusting the fire, "stirring the pot" to make egos bump into each other, creating a scenario in which the grosser aspects of the personality: jealousy, greed, the need for recognition or control was brought into the open. Robber was a steel chisel, knocking off the ego's flinty edges.

Exodus

From my first meeting with Robert, he had expressed interest in setting up an ashram in some other city. One month it would be a city in Chile or Argentina, and a year later it would be Calcutta or Nova Scotia. Offers were always coming in from around the world, asking Robert to visit or live there, and he usually ran these offers by me and a few others. I called this the "City de jour" game.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

But the game turned more serious during March of 1995; he seemed more determined to move. One fateful August day while driving Robert to satsang, I asked Robert, "Robert, isn't it about time we checked out Sedona?" The people there had offered him everything he needed, including a residence and a satsang house. How could he refuse such generosity and declarations of love? Robert decided to move by the end of September, just four weeks away.

During this time Roberts Parkinson's disease was growing worse, but he only joked about his illness. Attendance at satsang was increasing, for no apparent reason. One evening Robert called me up to the chair where he was sitting, cupped his hand by his mouth, and spoken to my ear: "They're coming to see the dying guru. The day I die, we'll have a full house." Another time a devotee suggested that rather than have Robert give a talk, someone (mean himself) could read one of Robert's earlier talks from a transcript. Robert's response was, "there are many teachers who talk; there are many teachers who are silent; but there is only one teacher who mumbles!"

Everything changed now at satsang in Los Angeles. Robert talked much as he always had, but yet he had a radiance and presence that he never revealed before. Rather than sitting back in his chair and disappearing into himself for half an hour before he talked, as was

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

customary, he sat forward on the edge of his chair, grasping the microphone, looking at everyone intently. This was a very different Robert, one who knew that profound changes were the air. The power he was radiating was palpable. Robert still joked, but mostly he was silent. Sometimes he just looked deep into our eyes. Robert was pouring his all into us, giving us his last best shot.

In Sedona, Robert lived with his wife in a spacious two-bedroom townhouse. The entire end of his living room was glass and faced Capital Butte, a mountain that looks remarkably like Arunachala. Robert often sat in a large easy chair facing the mountain as the Sun rose. Twice a day he took his small dog, Dmitri, on walks. He slept very little, perhaps three hours a night, then he sat in silence from three a.m. until six a.m., joined by devotees all over the world who knew his schedule.

Robert spent his last days talking with students. He gave two people explicit instructions to begin satsang in Sedona and Santa Monica. To a few others he handed on the responsibility for taking care of his family.

During his last days, Robert requested complete silence. Devotees said he could hear the slightest whisper, no matter where they were in the house, and he would call out for silence.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

A stroke took his vision in late February, but his mood never changed. Robert faced his passing with an attitude of happiness and excitement, as if he were embarking on a great journey. Robert's dog had died just a few months before, and he had said many times, "Dmitri keeps me grounded; when he passes so will I." And so it was. Two nights before he passed, devotees and family took him outside for last look at the mountain. He pointed upward towards its top and said, "Snow." Nobody understood, for there was no snow on the mountain. A day or so later, though, the snow began to fall, gently at first, then with growing fury. Within hours everyone in the house was trapped, unable to leave, and thus they were blessed to witness Robert's passing in isolation from the outside world.

On the evening before he passed, a great peaceful energy permeated his bedroom, and he began smiling and laughing. He said that Ramana had entered the room, along with Christ, Buddha, and many other saints and sages. He asked whether anyone else could see them and talk to Ramana and the others, just as he had predicted would happen after vision he had 10 years before.

His body and face were aglow, and he radiated an energy that invigorated everybody. Students remark that they felt Robert was working at a subtle energy level, transforming and purifying them.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Robert was fully conscious when he died and laughed and smiled to the end. He said there was no more pain, only "tingling," despite the fact he was now also suffering from liver cancer. Minutes before he died, he held his daughter's head, mouthing the words: "I love you; I love you!" His body was bathed by Mary, anointed with fragrant oils, and he was dressed in white linen and silk. Those of us who saw him were overwhelmed by his beauty. Parts of his body remained warm for days, especially his feet and his chest.

When Robert's guru, Ramana Maharshi, was dying he told his grieving disciples, "They take this body for Bhagavan and attribute suffering to him. Is it not a great pity? They are despondent that Bhagavan is going to leave them and go away. But where can he go?"

Robert left with a similar message. "When you wake up," he once said, "there is no such thing as being well or being sick. But you don't understand what I say to you, and you go to different doctors, taking colonics, going to healers all over the world. What you should be doing is searching for the Self. Then you wake up and see it was all a dream. The cancer did not exist. The searching for relief did not exist. I did not exist. You are free.

Awaken from this mortal dream. Who has to awaken? Ask yourself. There is no thing to wake up. Can you say why there is really nothing to say? We can

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

play all sorts of games with Mantras, and tantric techniques, but for what end? Just know that you are nobody; there is absolutely nothing to do; you do not exist. This relieves you of everything. It relieves you of all responsibilities to yourself in the world.

Some of you still believed that if you become this way you'll become so sarcastic and belligerent, that you will not care or be loving or kind, but this is not true. On the contrary, as you drop everything, as you let go of all your preconceived ideas, your doggedness, as you forget all of your rituals and all the things you have been doing all your life, what we call love begins to function as 'You.' What we call compassion begins to function as 'You.'

Living kindness, peace, these attributes will automatically take over, for you've lost all fear. When you've lost all fear for existence, love automatically takes over.

You create a teacher to wake you up; but you are already awake and do not know it. A teacher gives you teachings, gives you grace, and what you understand is that you are already awake and in peace. In return you take care of the teacher. It is a reciprocal game. In your game, it is your dream. Therefore waken now and be free.

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

Your heart has to be your guide. If you are sincere, you will know where to go and what to do. If you are working out of your ego, you will find fault with everything. I can tell you this much, everyone is in the right place. There are no mistakes. None have been made. None are being made.

Those people who are with certain gurus belong right where they are, for the time being. Turn within and your heart will tell you where to go.”

Dimitri

A LETTER RECEIVED IN 2008 FROM ONE OF
ROBERT’S STUDENTS IN SEDONA:

Hi Ed,

So nice to hear from you!

There is a story I would like to share with you about when Dimitri left his body. It happened like this: I believe this event took place in the month of October.

On one of the days that I gave Robert a massage, instead of doing it in the morning, he had asked that I do it in the evening. I think this was because Nicole

had the carpets cleaned. So I came over in the evening and Robert was given a massage. Right after I finished, I heard Nicole yelling out that Dimitri did a pooh on the freshly cleaned carpet. She was quite upset about it.

I came out of the bedroom, picked up Dimitri and told Nicole not to worry, that I would clean up the mess. I took Dimitri outside and placed him on the ground. I went back inside, cleaned up the pooh, and then went outside to bring in Dimitri. When I picked him up, he felt heavier for some reason.

I left him inside the spare bedroom and went to pack up my table. Robert was sitting in the living room, waiting for his dinner. Then I heard Nicole scream out, Dimitri left the body! Dimitri left the body!

I rushed out to see what she was screaming about and lo and behold, Dimitri wasn't breathing at all. I tried picking him up but he was completely dead-weight. I felt for a pulse but there wasn't any. I put a mirror under his nose and there was no sign of breath. Immediately, Robert came over and looked at his dog lying on the floor. Robert picked up one of his paws but it flopped back down.

Nicole was a bit hysterical, and I felt extremely bad, because I was the last one to handle Dimitri. But,

given Dimitri's already weak physical condition, I wasn't surprised that he had died. According to the vets, Dimitri should have passed on months ago.

We left Robert alone inside the bedroom with his dog and that's when I noticed that Robert did something to the dog's head and I didn't think anything of it, so I went back inside to collect my table and bag and to wait around to see what he wanted to do about Dimitri.

Seconds later, Nicole came rushing in taking me by the hand and lead me back to where Robert and Dimitri were. What I saw bowled me over. Dimitri was sitting on his haunches, gazing up into Robert's eyes, like he was completely alert and energized. Then suddenly, he fell to the floor and blood seeped from his nose. For almost 30 seconds, Robert had been giving Dimitri a transmission, even after Dimitri had already physically died.

I asked Robert what had happened, and he told me that Dimitri's Spirit needed a little help on its way. And that he would never have to be reborn -- his karma was complete -- he was liberated. Tears streamed down the sides of my face, as I truly witnessed something miraculous.

The following morning, I took Dimitri's body to the crematory. Robert showed no emotion, as I knew he

Self-Realization and Other Awakenings

wouldn't. As much as he loved that dog, he knew that no thing is ever born, and no thing ever dies.

That following Sunday, we had satsang and Dimitri was prominently talked about. Robert and Dimitri were like one in the same. I remember when Robert moved to Sedona, I used to see him walking Dimitri along the West Highway 89A.

I have lots of stories leading up to the time of Robert's fading. It did snow on the day before he left the body. I did read some of the accounts told from the eyes of Nicole and her devotees, a lot of it was embellished. But I do not want to write anything about those times, as I promised her that I wouldn't whilst she was still in the body. I understand why she is so protective and fearful about Robert's teaching, that's all she has left.

Ed, just keep on doing what your are doing, and tell people the truth about Robert -- he was the Mysterious Sage as you had so eloquently described.

--Adele

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