



## *The Dance Begins*

During the early 1980's I stopped being a Zen monk. I stopped seeking to know who I was, stopped studying koans and Buddhist texts, and stopped seeking teachers. I had experienced countless samadhis, no-mind, and no-body states, but I felt little different after a dozen years of arduous practice. I felt as if these meditation-induced states hadn't touched 'me' at all. Though I found no-one, no thing, no presence at all when I looked inside, I still felt like a 'me' most of the time, and I was not happy.

That is, there had been no enlightenment after 15 years of intense practices and study under many Zen masters and a few gurus.

I dropped out of spiritual seeking, and studied the emotional aspects of being a person. I studied psychology, received a doctorate, became a psychological assistant, and a few years later, had my own practice, so to speak, under someone else's license.

Introspecting my emotions made me even more aware of my 'unhappiness', which really wasn't unhappiness, so much as a growing indifference that had spread to all levels of my life. I couldn't get interested in anything for long. I just wanted to be by myself, and look inward into a pervasive emptiness that was growing and gradually consuming my being. Here I felt comfortable and at peace. Here too, occasionally, I felt an overwhelming awe, as if I were looking into the presence of God. There was no rushing, no confusion, no agitation here, only a quiet, peaceful indifference and awe.

As a psychologist, externally looking at me, I would interpret my subjectivity and behaviors as vegetative symptoms of depression. The major difference was that I was in the continuous experience of an inner emptiness, a mental space that contained all inner phenomena, which was gradually expanding, eating away any interest in the world. My fixation was on this emptiness, or better, a sense of presence or the absence of presence.

During late 1987, I happened on a book about a Hindu spiritual teacher that turned my world upside down: [Pointers from Nisargadatta Maharaj.](#)

In this book Maharaj states, "You are not whom you think you are, you are God Himself." I was stunned. For days, I wandered around as if I had been hit over the head. These words awoke something deep within. He told me I was not the body, not the mind, not a human and I was not mortal, subject to death. How utterly freeing and wonderful was this, and despite the seeming absurd content of his message, I believed him! I knew he was telling the truth.

After 20 years of searching, I found words that stunned rather than perplexed me. Zen was confounding, perplexing, and impenetrable. These teachings talked instead to my soul. You see, Zen Lacked an expression of who one is and the practices of different teachers widely varied, and the goal – enlightenment, Kensho, Satori – were never explained or described. So if it hasn't happened to you, you can't have a clue as to what the experience was like or what one discovered or how it changed you,

'Miraculously' – and everything becomes a miracle once launched on this path – a few weeks later the author of that book, Ramesh Balsekar, came to Los Angeles to explain his own understanding of what he had learned from being with Maharaj.

I was even more stunned. Ramesh said everything I knew or believed was illusion, a mere image or sensation in Consciousness. This experience of Ramesh and Nisargadatta was very shortly followed by my meeting my own guru, Robert Adams. Ramesh's teachings propelled me like an arrow to Robert, who comes from a similar Advaita Vedanta tradition. In that tradition, the masters are called Jnani's, those who have become self-realized – whatever that meant.

Therefore, I finally met Robert, who had lived with the great Hindu teacher, Ramana Maharshi during the late 1940's. Ramana is one of the greatest masters – of a spiritual tradition known as Advaita Vedanta – to have lived during the past few hundred years, or at least one of the best known. Advaita (Not-Two),

is a philosophy of non-dualism, which is essentially the same understanding expressed with different language and different examples by Nisargadatta Maharaj and by Ramana.

Being with Robert gave me full access to the totally confounding teachings of Advaita, and the equally confounding effect of his personality and actions. It also gave me the opportunity to observe someone who lived in our world, but was not of it. Robert was not touched by the world. He would always say, "Don't get excited; whatever you see, touch, hear or feel is not real. Look within and find who you really are." Sometimes he would say, "What is the worst that can happen to you? You can die, and what's so bad about that?"

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." However, a day later he would say: "Nothing exists, not the world, not your mind or body, not the Absolute nor God. These are all just words." I never knew how to take his words. They flew in the face of the evidence of my senses which constantly showed me the external world. I thought to myself, "How can he say these things?" How could Ramana, Nisargadatta and Shankara all say essentially the same thing and yet be so out of reach or normality?"

Still I trusted that there was something to what they said. I trusted that the world was not real and that I was not a human being trapped in a body. I just had no idea at all of what they were talking about or what those phrases meant, or what my all encompassing experience of the Void meant as experienced from the inside. They were speaking gibberish to me. So, I lived in an apparently real world listening to all of them tell me the world was not real and to wake up from the illusion.

But, how to do this? As a monk I had struggled for years to wake up by meditation, koan study, austerities, seeking masters, Self-enquiry, etc., and I could not. I had tried everything and had given up, knowing there was nothing I had left undone. Nothing. I knew enlightenment was beyond my ability to create or allow and gave up, knowing I could not get this understanding by my own devices. I surrendered my spiritual future and progress to Robert, and to the teachings to let them do the work the end I could not complete.

My single remaining 'practice' after being with Robert for a while, was just to continue what I had always done before: to look within into the emptiness that contained everything, and which seemed to be growing ever deeper and more

silent. The effect of this practice on my outer life manifested as an intensifying indifference to everything that I had thought important before. I became more acutely aware of the suffering in the world and began to withdraw even more from it. I recognized my very small ability to change things and therefore stepped out of political activism, to just set boundaries around a much smaller world and try my best to give that world and all the beings therein, comfort.

According to Vedanta, Consciousness, which supports and is all experience, has three attributes: existence, knowledge and bliss (Sat-chit-ananda).

After that surrender, and after years of staring into that growing Void and listening to Indian Bhajans (Described in the Bliss of Chanting section on this site) my mind became ever more silent, which led to a sense of growing blissfulness, an intense state of quasi-sexual (Kundalini) tension that vibrated every particle of my beingness in a state of ecstasy.

After a long time, I felt that I knew bliss (Ananda) well. However, after this first year with Robert, I began to ask myself, "Where is the knowingness (Chit) and the feeling of existence (Sat), of I-Am?" I did not feel as if I knew anything. I had felt like a complete idiot, having lost any practical knowledge of the world, and having no spiritual knowledge.

Therefore, one day I tried the tactic of following the experience of bliss, which was a stable and concrete 'feeling', to its experiential root. That is, I felt the bliss, looked within it for its core, and felt within that core for its feeling source. I discovered one day, for the first time, a sense of pure knowingness, the root kernel of knowing without any specific object or understanding being known. It was not a big experience, but I felt I knew what pure knowing was. After years of knowing nothing, I felt completed by knowing, knowing nothing.

This may not sound like much, nor was the experience that shattering at all. Yet, it was a completion. When I first started my real practice in the late 1960s, I felt that the essence of my search would be in finding the basic particle, so to speak, of knowing and knowledge. I thought it was like an ultimate predicate calculus, where one sought the various and most primitive ways of combining concepts into knowledge and how those concepts were related to the sense of experiencing knowing or knowledge. It is one thing to know. It is another to know that you know and how you know. I was now experiencing just knowing without knowing anything about anything. There was just pure knowing without an object.

After a few weeks of feeling this sense of knowing, I said to myself, "I now know Chit and Ananda, where is the sense of existence? A week or so later, I took a seminar offered by a friend who taught a unique technique of letting go of emotions and desires. I had practiced this technique for a few weeks and had many experiences of 'energy' releases in the area of my heart. This particular day, while looking into 'my' inner emptiness, and attempting to let go of some desire or another, I felt a great energy flowing upward through my body, in continuous torrents that, so to speak, blew my heart away. I could no longer experience anything special in the area of my heart; there was no longer any hindrance to the flow of energy within. I became completely blissful everywhere, inside and outside, and the vast emptiness that had for years been only still and silent, now moved with incredible speed and energy. It was a little like observing a tornado of thought fragments, images, energy spinning around, and also moving upward through my being. The emptiness was now filled with a sense of presence and energy moving far too rapidly to be caught and studied by mind. I felt I had finally understood what Robert meant by the experience of I-Am. Boy, was I wrong.

When I told Robert of my discovery of the three-fold attributes of Consciousness in my own experience, he just smiled and said, "There are not three, there is only one!" I now knew that I had to stay immersed in the I-Am experience, which felt like the basic sense of existence, of being embodied and alive—the Sat. As another friend, Jean Dunn, said, "...by doing so, Consciousness will reveal all its secrets."

One day while looking inward into that energy maelstrom that filled my being, and which I now regarded as the presence of I-Am, I recognized that I, whoever that was, was watching I-Am; that is, I, as subject, was knowing myself as Consciousness in motion. The duality of subject and object separation in Consciousness began to be repaired. I now felt I was knowing Consciousness, and it was I. Thus was established the link between knowing and being.

I felt that if I continued this practice for another million years or so, I would finally understand what Robert and Ramana were saying, because what they said was far, far beyond even this experience of all-permeating bliss, knowingness and existence. I understood nothingness well, and now bliss, knowing and being, but I did not understand what they meant when they said that nothing is real, not the world, not the body, not anything. I felt completely stupid about the nature of reality, about my own self, and about the ultimate nature of Consciousness, until one day, I took a shower...

It Is Not Real - The Dance Begins  
From a Collection of Works by [Edward Muzika](#)

NEXT: [Robert and I](#)

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