

Jan Esmann: Satsangs from www.lovebliss.eu

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Self-realization

October 3, 2006

Question: What is Self-realization?

Jan: It is oneness with the Self, prior to anything. Initially it is a nothingness because you step out of something-ness... but soon the nothingness is extremely blissful love. So in a sense it is something. And it is pure beingness which has a throb to it, it is alive. However, despite this the Self remains eternally Pure Being prior to consciousness.

Q: What do you mean, nothingness? How can something be nothing and bliss at the same time?

J: I mean nothing seen from the point of view of the ignorant little self. Self-realization is a state of no thing; yet it is fullness also. It is called no-thing-ness, because every thing you thought yourself to be before Self-realization, simply goes away. Apart from that you still have a mind full of it's silly things, but you are no longer caught in it; no longer identified with it; no longer identified with Jan. You realize that neither Jan, nor the mind have any permanence. In that sense Self is emptiness. But once you reach it you will understand it is in reality the only fullness that is; everything else is empty. The Self is love-bliss.

Q: What do you mean, Jan is not real? I see you in front of me, we are talking, you are real enough.

J: The Self is real, and it is pure nothing-fullness-bliss. The mind is real in a temporary sense. It exists in this moment as a product of circumstances. It is because of its continuity that you think it is real. From the point of view of the Self it has no permanence, and the concept of self, the I, that you have before Self-realization, is an illusion. After Self-realization the remnants of this fictive I begin to melt away by itself; then true ego-death begins.

Q: It feels permanent and real enough to me. I mean, I am a person sitting here talking to you. If it is unreal and becomes an illusion after Self-realization, then Self-realization is death, is it not?

J: Self-realization is the death of the illusion that you are the ego and the mind. With Self-realization that death has happened. Also the death of the ego is inevitable, though that does not happen just when you get Self-realized. Self-realization is only the beginning, the pre-requisite. If you try to kill off the ego without being Self-realized, that would only lead to misery. Don't try that. Get Self-realized, then it begins to happen by itself; it is unavoidable. In fact once you get Self-realized, you will realize that you were more dead before and only after becoming one with the Self have become fully alive.

Q: Why is ego death unavoidable after Self-realization? In what way does this work?

J: It takes energy to uphold an illusion. When the energy supply is cut off, the illusion begins to disintegrate. Ego is impermanent, but you are entangled in it and that upholds it. Once you get Self-realized you are no longer entangled and the ego is alone with no support. Ego falls off, you feel it very clearly going on. Ego begins to disappear.

Q: In the 1890's, I think it was, the psychiatrist Bucke coined the term cosmic consciousness and wrote a book with that title. Have you read this book? And can you say if his cosmic consciousness is Self-realization?

J: I have read the book, yes. His cosmic consciousness is the same as Self-realization. But I dislike the term cosmic consciousness, because there is nothing cosmic about nothingness. Cosmic is so grandiose; there is nothing grandiose about Self-realization. In fact it is the most humble state you can have. How can it be otherwise? You are nothingness-love-bliss! Only something can be cosmic, nothingness-love-bliss can only be humble.

Q: What's it like living as a nothingness? It sounds a bit scary to me.

J: Don't be scared! Remember it is YOU and it is love-bliss. Even if you initially only experience the nothingness side of it, the love-bliss will soon emerge. The ego and the mind get scared because they don't understand it. Maybe I should not have used the word "nothingness", because it causes confusion. It is of course supreme fullness. Also understand there is nothing new about it. You are already the Self. The problem is you don't know it because you think you are the ego, the mind, all the emotions going on in the body and the mind. That's why I said Self-realization is nothing. Nothing new is added to you, you only get rid of an illusion you are trapped in. Self-realization is a beautiful state. To be true it is not an emptiness, though it is no-thing-ness; it is in its nature a fullness of pure love-bliss.

Q: So is Self-realization not a matter of evolution?

J: Up to a certain point it is, but when that point is reached, you no longer need the illusions and your job is to discard them and step out of that game. Evolution implies something that evolves. The Self is no-thing, so it does not change or evolve; things change and evolve. That's why I called Self "nothingness" in order to clear that misunderstanding of evolution out right away. Self is perfect as it is. What is imperfect is your understanding of perfection. You think that what ever you have, you have to have something better, something more perfect. A better mind, a more pure soul, a higher state of consciousness, and so forth. And when you get that, what ever it is you desire, that soon seems imperfect and so on. This is the minds notion of perfection and it justifies this endless game by calling it progress on the path of evolution. It is a game with only losers.

Q: When it happens, how can you be sure the state will last?

J: There is nowhere for it to go. Once you have realized your innate no-thing-ness, you can't become something again. It is not possible. Then real evolution begins, and that is the evolution of unfolding and manifesting the love-bliss in your daily life.

Q: A point of no return?

J: As I said before: don't be scared. It is your own Self. It's not some otherness, some thing, you get stuck in. That's one reason I initially called it nothingness rather than love-bliss. If you are afraid of reaching a Self-realization point which is a point of no return, then rest assured you will not reach it. It only comes when you are ready. Once you reach

it, the mind may react and some anxiety come up, but it soon passes. The mind has to get used to a new state of affairs. At first it scares the mind and ego that they are no longer in charge, but then it becomes pleasurable.

Q: Is it only nothingness at first? If so it sounds a bit empty and meaningless.

J: Emptiness. very soon turns to joy that simply arises in you out of nowhere. It can also turn to extreme bliss. As the first weeks passed I felt the love-bliss increasing gradually. It goes up and down, but by and large emptiness. is turned to causeless joy. And then to a state of love-bliss so intense words utterly fail.

Q: If you are nothingness and full of love-bliss and the mind and desires are illusions to discard, what's the motivation to do anything? I also at times feel empty, but that is not nice and it drives me to accomplish something to fill me up.

J: You don't need filling up, because you are full. But what you are full of is no-thing, so I somewhat erroneously called it emptiness., though it is in reality vibrating, throbbing love-bliss. So the nothingness is in no way the same as when you, as an ego-identified person, feel empty inside. You are extremely full. As for motivation, things change after Self-realization. You no longer act out of an urge to fulfill something or get filled up or get a kick. Things sort of happen by themselves and you flow along. Problems arise, of course, and you fight them, but it is still a feeling of letting the drama unfold itself, rather than you insisting the drama follows your script. You want to play your part in the drama the best you can, but though you are in it, you are out of it at the same time. And you don't want to impose your script on the world anymore. Also great compassion arises.

Self-realization as nothing or bliss

October 17. 2006

Question: You wrote how you initially experienced emptiness in everything. Do you still experience this and could you elaborate a bit on that experience?

Jan: Initially i saw the Self as a so called no-thing-ness, as emptiness. Today I almost regret using that expression, because it is total fullness. Shortly after I got it, I sat at an informal meeting and looked at all these people talking and interacting, and I saw absolute nothingness. I was amazed. I kept wondering how pure nothing could talk, act, think, and so forth. Or you could say I saw people acting and was amazed how they could do so when in reality they were pure nothing. How does nothing become something? I have no idea! It amazed me and I wondered about it every day. Today i see it as the throb of Shakti.

Q: So you still see this nothingness in everything?

J: Yes. All the time. But now I see it as the divine love-bliss of vibrating Shakti.

Q: So you see it in yourself also?

J: I don't see it in me, I am that nothingness-love-bliss, to be sure. So are you! And yes, as I just said, I see it as Shakti manifesting.

Q: What about emotions, thoughts and ideas? I create my own thoughts and ideas.

J: Thoughts and emotions come and go automatically. You don't create the thought. The thought happens in a mind that you happen to be associated with right now. The same is true for everybody though most don't see it because they identify with the mind. As with everything else in creation, emotions and thoughts are just phenomena in space and time, they have nothing to do with you. It's like the cells of the body: every minute cells are created and cells are discarded, but you are not the creator or the owner of them. Likewise thoughts are the cells of the mind: they come and go in accordance with the nature of the mind and its interaction with the surroundings. This is just the way things are. ... I can see this idea that your thoughts are neither you nor yours somehow disturbs you.

Q: Of course it is disturbing. We are used to considering ourselves as our thoughts and feelings. And to claim authorship and ownership to our thoughts.

J: Try this for a moment: pay attention to your thoughts and see how they arise automatically ... Relax ... Now mentally begin slowly counting. One ... two ... three ... Count slower ... Now while you continue counting, put your entire attention on the silence between two numbers ... That's close to the nothing I am talking about. It is who you really are. You are not your thoughts, nor the thinking. Thoughts arise automatically, so you are not the author of them.

Q: I experience nothing between the counting. It is not beingness or anything special. It's just, well nothing.

J: Exactly. Be that nothing ... Try it now.

Q: As I do that, the nothing does change its quality, it does get a feeling of beingness. It feels both very peaceful and very pleasant.

J: Yes. As the experience gets deeper, you will find it is what is really real, and that the thinking is really unreal. But for now be content with the peace. Be aware that since you are totally identified with the mind, this no-thing-ness may sometimes be scary to the mind. But with time it will reveal itself as joy or bliss. Of course this simple practice of counting is only an illustration of the fact that you continue to exist even when there are no thoughts and that you and your thoughts are separate. The basic idea of this illustration is to show you that there is pure awareness that is prior to anything it can be aware of. It is important to get this awareness to become self-aware.

Q: You said you initially saw it as nothingness, but that it has changed. In what way has it changed?

J: The experience has deepened, or changed, since my initial write-up. It's far from just nothingness anymore. It is still no-thing, of course, but not only do I experience it manifesting as love-bliss, I also experience it as a throbbing pulse in beingness, that's Shakti. There are no more periods of just plain no-thing-ness. Usually the whole body is burning with bliss.

Q: Don't you lose your grounding when this happens? I mean, when I get ecstatic, I am not grounded anymore.

J: No, it does not destroy grounding. It is such a physical thing, love-bliss. It is something that transcends and also merges with matter, so you move into presence, not out of it. You should understand that I am not talking about ecstasy at all. Ecstasy is an exalted, restless state. Love-bliss is peaceful, despite it being of such tremendous energy.

Q: So nothingness is not nothing, it is bliss and energy?

J: Yes, exactly, but that comes later or it comes in glimpses. To have it permanently you first need to get anchored in the nothingness of the Self. It is not possible any other way, because that would only generate a disturbed ecstasy. Glimpses of bliss before Self-realization give rise to excitement in the mind and ecstatic joy. After Self-realization, when bliss comes, it comes with great peace and a still, unmoving throbbing feeling of supreme love-energy in your being.

Q: Can be unhappy and blissful at the same time? Isn't bliss happiness?

J: Bliss is not happiness. Happiness is a state of mind, bliss is the nature of the Self. Of course, when bliss is there, it is difficult to be unhappy. Yet it is my experience that you can be in a state of bliss at the same time as the mind is frustrated by some circumstance in life. That's just how the mind works, and this frustration is unhappiness in any person, whether he is Self-realized or not. But continuously you are not the frustration, you are nothingness-beingness-love-bliss witnessing it all without getting entangled in any of it. As time goes on, bliss becomes more and more permanent, and this process is very rapid.

Q: In the name of enlightenment, many seekers go to workshops to get a happy mind. What do you think of that?

J: As far as getting Self-realized it is a waste of time. Therapy, or any kind of working on the mind or psyche, can be nice, but it will not bring you one bit closer to Self-realization.

Q: Why not?

J: I think I have just explained that. In short: You are not the mind. Whether the mind is fucked up or clear and happy makes absolutely no difference to your potential for getting Self-realized. In fact those with a happy mind probably often have a harder time getting Self-realized than those with an unhappy one. The reason for this is that the unhappy ones want to get out of the mind, the happy ones want to stay identified with it.

Q: How can we get closer, then?

J: Find a master who can give it to you. Get your kundalini awakened and work with it. That's how I reached it, so that's what I recommend.

Q: Many new age teachers tell you to stay away from kundalini. And to support their view, they tell you scary stories. You seem to disagree?

J: Kundalini is entirely benign; kundalini is Shakti and Shakti is of course the divine energy of love-bliss. Shakti is the love of my life. Like any love affair, there are ups and down, but don't dismiss the benefits on account of a few problems. Kundalini is the source of all enlightenment and all bliss. Without kundalini, there can be no true bliss, no true enlightenment. Self-realization as pure no-thing-ness, without any love-bliss, is possible without an awakened kundalini, but if you want to go beyond that and get the love-bliss, you need to awaken kundalini.

Q: How do you experience kundalini?

J: As immense bliss filling every pore of the body, it is divine beyond description. In everyday life kundalini simply manifests uncaused joy in me; since Self-realization this has been fairly permanent. Before that it was only occasional. To begin with, the immense bliss was occasional, but now it is permanent.

Q: You say the other thing to do is to find a master, that can give it to you. I have heard you can awaken kundalini in others. This is called shaktipat, I believe.

J: Yes. I have awakened others kundalini many times. But I can't decide if this or that person should have it. I sense if someone is ready to receive it or not, and then I might pass it on. If you want to get in contact with a master, who gives it, then get in contact with Anandi Ma at www.dyc.org.

Q: How would you recommend we meditate in order to integrate all this?

J: I can tell you a basic meditation for awakening kundalini and open the doors for bliss. Sit comfortably and follow your breath. Then as you breathe in, remember the word "Shakti". As you breathe out, remember the word "Om". Then as you breathe in imagine you are drawing energy up the spine. As you breathe out imagine the skull expanding as energy and a radiance from the top of the head. Do this for at least half an hour twice daily and you will soon experience bliss. The stronger you can feel drawing up energy,

and the effulgence at the top of the head, the better. Please check out the more detailed instructions on the meditation page.

Self-realization and the blissful recognition of the Self in other

January 18. 2007

Question: You haven't written anything in two months. How come? Are you still in limbo?

Jan: I have never been in limbo. In the last satsang I merely wanted to make certain confusions clear, that may attack you just after Selfrealization. I haven't written anything for two months because my state has been changing dramatically.

Q: So what's your present state?

J: I live in a state of love-bliss. Like being hopelessly in love all the time. I am in love with absolutely Nothing and this Nothing is present in everything around me and in everything inside me. It is the dawn of perpetual bliss. It is divine, it is The Absolue Self revealing Itself and you loving it. Mind you, it goes up and down in intensity. Some days there is immense bliss, other days just a gentle joy.

Q: How long has this state lasted? I mean, do you think it is a fleeting experience?

J: It has been steadily growing ever since I got gnan vidhi. Initially there were ups and downs as the new state stabilized, but the last two months have been a steady increase in perpetual bliss. Even to the point, that I don't loose it while I sleep either. At the peaks of this state, whether I dream or not there is just bliss. I go to bed in bliss, I sleep in bliss and i wake up in bliss. This has been growing for two months and is still growing in intensity and omnipresence.

Q: Omnipresence?

J: Yes, what I mean is I see this bliss in everything around me all the time. Or rather this is dawning on me, since it can become so much deeper, I think. Shakti in me recognizes Shakti in everything else, and this recognition is love-bliss loving itself. Again, the intensity and clarity goes up and down, but it is never entirely lost.

Q: Is the bliss-state part of the nature of pure Selfrealization, or is it a different state? What's god-realization?

J: Enlightenment comes in stages. First stage is when you loose identification with anything, even with non-identity, because you are pure soul which of course is Self. This state in its purity is what I call primary Self-realization, because you realize the Self, become one with the Self, and no longer have any identification with anything. You have no identity anymore and there is only nothingness. Of course the identity, the ego and psyche, you previously had remains, but it is no longer you as Self. You are a constant witness to everything and perpetually separate from everything. In its purity it is cool enough, but when you move on it is not a nice state. Tolle talks about this pure state as being "in the Now". Maharishi Mahesh Yogi called this state Cosmic Consciousness, which actually is a loose term the psychiatrist Bucke coined in the 1890'ies. The name Cosmic Consciousness is silly, because there is nothing cosmic about it at all. In fact it is the most humble state since there is pure nothingness and you are that nothingness. You can have it in a perfectly clear and pure form, then it is a peaceful and quiet prescence in the now, but as soon as you begin to move towards the bliss state, it becomes very painful. This mothin is god-consciousness.

Q: Is primary Selfrealization the state you got with gnan vidhi?

J: No, to be honest, I got it in 1984. I got so much more with gnan vidhi. It took twenty two years in The dark night of the Soul plus gnan vidhi to expand the primary Selfrealization to experience the Self in everything around me, and to open the door to the stage of pure love-bliss. As I said, moving on from initial Self-realization is not nice, because you are a witness to everything and everything is so, so empty. Gnan vidhi opened the door to the second fuller Self-realization. The transformation from primary Self-realization to full Self-realization can be called God-consciousness because you project the love and bliss onto God. You still haven't realized that it is your Self, so you think it is something other than you revealing itself to you; that other is of course God.

Q: So the bliss you are experiencing, is that the full stage of Selfrealization?

J: Yes, exactly. But during The dark night of the Soul there is a phase called God-realization. Everything is seen as a manifestation of the divine and everything is seen to contain the divine, to be the divine and to express the divine. You enter a love relationship with God and you long for God so intensely, words fail. This longing comes about because of the utter emptyness of primary Self-realization, or Cosmic Consciousness.

Q: What's the final stage, then?

J: I think everything merges into one. All distinctions vanish. I don't know much about this. Only at this stage it is moksha, true liberation. This is real enlightenment, the other stages are just preparations, I think. This is beyond full Selfrealization, or rather its culmination since once you reach full Selfrealization it is inavoidable.

Q: I had a period, when everything seemed divine. Is this a glimpse of God-realization?

J: No. Seeing everything as divine is a projection of your state of happiness or even ananda. During God-consciousness you see the divine in everything, not things as such as divine. You see divinity manifesting in and as everything. But the only place you can't see God, is inside yourself, where there is only nothingness. That is why it is a painful phase. You know there can be so much love and bliss and divinity, yet you know yourself to be nothingness, a void. This is what Juan de la Cruz, who coined the term Dark night of the Soul, wrote so much about 500 years ago. In full Self-realization you see the Self of everything and recognize that Self as the divine and recognize it as the same Self as you know yourself to be.

Q: Let's round up primary Self-realization. What you said about sleep caught my attention. Are you, as the witness, separate from the one who experiences dreaming?

J: Yes, of course.

Q: Does this mean you can control the content of the dream and change its course?

J: No. It has nothing to do with lucid dreaming. And likewise, lucid dreaming has nothing to do with this state of witnessing. Nothing what so ever.

Q: It seems as if your understanding of the process has only recently dawned on you. Is that so?

J: Yes, funnily enough, after losing self-identification in 1984, after losing my small self, I became quite miserable for many years. And since no one could tell me what was going on, I of course assumed something was wrong with Jan. I could see others were happily identified with their ego's and had a self, yet I did not, and since I believed Self-realization should be a happy and peaceful state, it never really dawned on my mind, what had happened. This misunderstanding of my process prolonged my suffering unnecessarily, I think.

Q: If you no longer had a self, who suffered, then?

J: The psyche did. The fiction called Jan suffered. The ego, the psyche, Jan is just a product of the body and karma, it is not you. It will suffer and enjoy as it has always done, since that is its nature. This will only change after final Self-realization.

Q: Why is that so?

J: Because even during godrealization everything is so, so empty; everything appears to be an illusion. The only real to you is the divine presence in everything, and you only experience that in more or less short periods, then lapse back to emptiness -- and keep yourself going on the memory. During the godrealization phase you occasionally see god in everything, including the crumbling remnants of your psyche and ego, but then you lose it and feel extremely sinful and impure.

Q: So what about in final Self-realization?

J: Then, in fact, the remains of ignorance, you carry around, become very funny.

Q: Remains of ignorance? I thought if you were enlightened, then there were no more remains of ignorance.

J: Well, yes and no. Let's not call Selfrealization enlightenment because it is not moksha yet. I admit that once you step out of the small self and become totally identified with the absolute Self, then there is in a sense no longer any remnants of ignorance; but what I mean is that the small self still exists since it is not you and is solely a product of the body and of your past. I don't consider it full enlightenment until you have reached final and full liberation (moksha). It is my impression, that in moksha there is no longer any remnants of a small self lingering around. In primary Selfrealization, you realize the absolute Self as no-thing-ness, but the little self remains completely unchanged. You have just stepped permanently out of it and the identification-mechanism is destroyed. Of course, when you step out of the small self and the identification-mechanism is destroyed, then the small self will begin to crumble and disintegrate and this auto-destruction is the real Dark night of the Soul. In final Self-realization you realize the nature of the pure Self, and that is lovebliss.

Q: I often feel non-identified with my ego. I have made a practice out of watching it.

J: You can have a sort of non-identification with the small self, but unless the identification-mechanism is destroyed completely, then it is not primary Self-realization but dissociation.

Q: How do you go about destroying the identification-mechanism? It sounds like the basis of ignorance, and if you are ignorant, you can't confront that basis on your own. How did you do it?

J: Yes, you are right. But today we have gnan vidhi, which is a special ceremony where this identification-mechanism gets destroyed by a competent spiritual master. In my case the mechanism got broken down in 1984 after I had entered nirvikalpa samadhi for about half an hour. When I came out of that meditation, the identification-mechanism was just crushed. I have no idea how it really happened, since I was unconscious while in nirvikalpa samadhi. I just "woke up" in a state of extreme bliss and no longer had a sense of I, or self. I did not even know my name or age and could not answer, when asked about it; all was gone. Fortunately I had my guru nearby and he helped me get some sense of small self back, so I could function properly.

Q: Getting enlightened sounds like a hard time.

J: It has been so for those of us who were totally on our own and really did not know heads or tails of what was going on with us. But now times have changed. Also now we have gnan vidhi to make the process smooth and fast. And it is time that those of us, who

have been hiding our growing enlightenment, step forward and give a helping hand to those on the way. The support and insight, we can give, will make the transition easier too.

Q: How do the stages of enlightenment relate to kundalini?

J: You can apparently get primary Selfrealization without any awakening or arousal of kundalini what so ever. But to get final Self-realization, you have to anchor kundalini in the sahasrara (the crown chakra, the brain). Then part of kundalini is permanently in sahasrara, part of kundalini darts around your body transforming it. I think the final stage, moksha, is when kundalini in its entirety has merged with pure being in sahasrara. Gnan vidhi fully opened my sahasrara and anchored part of my kundalini there and it has not come down since. In god-consciousness, kundalini sometimes is out of its hiding place in the root chakra and moves up the spine, then you experience the divine in everything. But then kundalini goes back into hiding and everything becomes extremely empty. That is why god-consciousness is not a stable state, but a phase of fluctuation, of transformation.

Q: So, if I understand you correctly, then primary Selfrealization comes with a dramatic and well defined shift inside you; something clearly marked. But godrealization is an unstable period of transformation on the way to full Self-realization.

J: Yes. God consciousness is indeed a period of transformation and is not a clearly marked developmental stage like primary Selfrealization. It comes and goes in various degrees. However, you can safely say, that if you have reached Selfrealization without any kundaliniarousal at all, and kundalini then becomes active and rises in your spine, then you are on the way to godconsciousness. As kundalinishakti moves round your body and up and down your spine, you will go in and out of divine intoxication, bliss, where you see god in everything. This will appear and disappear until you reach the stage where some significant part of kundalini gets stuck in the crown chakra and never comes down again; then you will never lose bliss, though it at times may be sort of low, at other times so intense, you can't function at all. This second shift is also clearly marked and is what I call full Self-realization. It is marked by kundalini shifting its abode from the root chakra to the brain.

Self-realization and the I (Part I)

March 31. 2007

Question: All this talk about bliss and love is fine, but what has it got to do with me, the evolving I?

Jan: The I is a fiction; it is not you, though you at present think it is you.

Q: You mean the ego? The I is the Self that evolves to enlightenment.

J: No, I mean the I. Understand that the I and the ego are inseparable. The ego is the complex of past and present identities. The I is the identity produced by the identification-mechanism. The ego is not an illusion, the I is. The ego is a product of your karma, your body and your experiences in life; nothing more, nothing less. Your current name is Ganesh, that is what your current I is focused on and what you identify with. Your past I was Peter and that was an identity structure based on past impressions and karma that you wanted to dissociate yourself from, so you changed your name to Ganesh. Changing your name will, however, not make the I go away; it only changes the structures in the ego you pick to identify with and therefore it will more or less change the way the I feels about itself. But do not fool yourself and think that because the I changes then you have evolved a step towards enlightenment. It is all just an ego game and all is equally ignorant.

Q: I don't agree. Changing my name has helped me support the evolving consciousness in me and made it easier to integrate Self in my sense of who I am and in my everyday life.

J: Your perspective is wrong. Nothing evolves with respect to getting enlightened. What you call evolution, I call changes in the I based on shifting identification. Your karma brought you to a point in your evolution, where you were sick of your I, and instead of getting enlightened, you decided to replace the old I with a new I. Now to make matters worse, you anchor this misunderstanding in your spirituality by calling the change a step in your progress towards enlightenment. Thus you project a number of steps into the future, that you have to take in order to get enlightened. The problem is, you can go on projecting such steps infinitely and will never get enlightened. You can project such steps infinitely because that is exactly what you have already been doing for countless lifetimes. You are just repeating a good old pattern in the guise of spirituality. I sincerely recommend you give it all up right now.

Q: I know I am not my name, that is commonplace. The point is I evolve towards enlightenment and use as many means as I can to get there and stabilize that evolution.

J: I never meant to imply you think you are your name. I know you somewhat do not. I say somewhat, because though you do not identify with the name as such, you identify with the fiction the name refers to. As for the matter of evolution, I am telling you, you do not evolve towards Selfrealization and the Self does not grow to a point, where it realizes itself. You are already the Self right now, the problem is, you don't know it. The Self is and has always been perfect.

Q: Yes, but I at the same time understand enlightenment more and more. That is evolution. I am certainly closer to enlightenment, more Selfrealized, today than I was 30 years ago.

J: No, you are not. Either you are Selfrealized or you are not Selfrealized, there is no in-between. After Selfrealization enlightenment comes in degrees through Godconsciousness and growing love-bliss and then in a final shift to moksha, which is full enlightenment. But you are not more or less Selfrealized. Thinking so is an ego game,

because you take pride in considering yourself "more enlightened". More enlightened than who? Usually "Others", because you consider "others" to be like you were 30 years ago when you assumed you were just like everybody else. Now you say you are better than you were thirty years ago which in a subtle way says better than others.

Q: Selfimprovement is a prerequisite for enlightenment.

J: Not really. You are not Ganesh. I am not Jan, I don't care much about him anymore, to be honest. Jan is just a shell I live with and I agree that Jan is not a particularly ideal personality. The personality is a body you incarnate in, just like the physical body. Most identify with the physical body, more identify with the personality. So called spiritual people identify with the changing I. The reason you think that an enlightened person must have a nice personality is because you yourself identify with your personality. You think you are "I, Ganesh" and that to become enlightened you must change somehow. That is a fundamentally wrong understanding of enlightenment and it will prevent you from reaching it.

Q: I don't agree with you at all, because the enlightened persons I have met have all had an incredible charm and loving kindness about them. You can't have enlightenment and a problematic personality at the same time. It is a contradiction of terms.

J: Yes, their personality reflects their enlightenment. But where you go wrong is, you think the personality has to change in order to get Selfrealized. You can certainly get Selfrealized while still being a not very nice person; I could, so you can too and so can everybody else. What you observe is that in full enlightenment the personality will change. That is true, but that comes after Selfrealization.

Q: I think it should come on the way to Selfrealization because an imperfect self can not uphold the pure experience of the Self.

J: No, it's not how it works. I know, because I made it, you are just speculating. Where you go wrong is, you think there is something to uphold. There is not. You are desperately trying to hold on to enlightenment, that is one reason why you are missing it all the time. Furthermore what you hold on to is a fiction about what is essentially fictionless. You are holding on to an illusory idea about what enlightenment is, and you use your bliss experiences during bhajans to confirm that illusion because it makes your ego feel good. Then afterwards you project your fictional norms about what enlightenment is onto others and denigrate their state if it does not fit those norms. Those norms are essentially constructed by your ego to feed itself into the pleasant illusion of progressing towards Selfrealization. It's a trap, don't you see?

Q: I am not holding on to a fiction. I experience true bliss at times, just as you experience bliss. It is experiences of the Self and they are clearly steps towards becoming more and more Selfrealized.

J: What you experience is not the bliss of the Self, it is the bliss of singing bhajans. It is not the same bliss that I am talking about. True, it is a very subtle bliss in the I and personality, that can create a gap through which you may eventually fall into the Self and its bliss for a moment. But by and large your bliss is a state comparable to a state of trance. It is not the stateless. Do you not agree it is a state?

Q: Well, yes, I must admit that. But what I am trying to say is that that state grows more and more in me and that that not only helps realizing the Self, but is a prerequisite for Selfrealization.

J: There are no prerequisites for Selfrealization if you are a decent person. The more indecent and selfish and greedy you become, the harder it gets. Mild arrogance is not a major problem, just as mild spiritual pride is not a major problem. But identification of subconscious spiritual pride and the enlightenment project is a major trap, though not an actual hindrance, just a major distraction that is hard to overcome. Remember, the Self IS, that's it and that's all. It is here right now. Where could it have gone in order that it should become? If the Self was to hide, it could only hide in the Self, there is nowhere else for it to go. It is present, it is finished, it has nothing to evolve and nothing to get rid of. Stop fooling yourself!

Q: What do you mean decent?

J: Free of the cardinal sins. You know, decent. You have spiritual greed and that hampers your realization. You want to be a disciple of the enlightened ones, because that feeds your ego. You don't want to be a gnani, because that would destroy the I, that is so proud of itself and its achievements. Please understand: your personality, your ego, will still be there after Selfrealization, but the I-ness will be gone for ever. It suddenly just vapourizes. It is not something that gradually comes about. Either there is I-ness or there is not. In fact you can no longer use the spiritual cliché "I AM", because there is no longer an "I" that is. You just ARE. It is so simple, but you are making it so, so complicated.

Q: I think performing good acts like singing bhajans will generate good karma that furthers enlightenment.

J: Selfrealization is not a product of karma. So no karma of any kind will help at all. You have to get out of all karmic games.

Q: Are you saying good karma is useless?

J: Well, good karma helps become a decent person, so it does help, but once you have become pure, then Selfrealization is close at hand. On the other hand, becoming fixated on doing good karma will become an ego game and a trap just like any other kind of karma. Moderation is best. After Selfrealization it's a slightly different matter, but that's no problem of yours yet.

Q: What's the difference? If doing good karma after Selfrealization helps get fully enlightened, then can't one take some of those steps even before getting Selfrealized?

J: As far as I understand it, you really can't take steps in advance. Well, not as far as I understand things. I'll explain why I believe it is so... Now, the difference is, that before Selfrealization the problem is not the ego, but the identification-mechanism; after Selfrealization, the problem is the ego. People usually get this all mixed up and think the ego is the problem before Selfrealization -- and in order to get rid of it, they trouble themselves with all sorts of so called spiritual practices and diets, and what not. After Selfrealization you have to get rid of the ego and once you have gotten rid of that, you get fully enlightened (and with this I mean moksha). So in a sense you are right that fully enlightened persons are nice chaps, because, yes, they do not have an ego like a fully Selfrealized person does, though the Selfrealized person is free of any identification with it, or with anything else for that matter.

Q: So what's wrong with getting rid of some ego before Selfrealization? Will it not shorten the steps to full enlightenment?

J: The point here is, that if you don't get rid of the identification-mechanism, nothing in the world will help you get rid of the ego; you will merely change it. Even your spiritual practices will build up ego. Concentrate on getting Selfrealized, then in fact the rest will come entirely by itself.

Q: How do you mean, by itself? Don't you have to do any sadhana after Selfrealization?

J: After Selfrealization ego begins to break down by itself. It begins to desintegrate. Living with ego becomes very painful after Selfrealization. It is a pain you can not even imagine and it has nothing to do with the self loathing, you might know before Selfrealization, for that is also merely an ego-thing. No matter what you do after Selfrealization, it will contribute to the disintegration of ego. True, you can speed up the process or slow it down, and that may cause you to do spiritual practices of some sort.

Q: Painful? I thought Selfrealization was a happy and peacefull state.

J: At times the pain of the disintegration of the ego is immense; if it was not because you simultaneously developed love-bliss it would be unbearable. Selfrealization is not an easy state. In fact, since we were talking about bad character traits, you might actually see bad traits emerge in a Selfrealized person because as layers of the ego vanish, suddenly hidden things may emerge for a while and surprise both yourself and others. But it is passing.

Q: Could you mention some sadhana, that might be beneficial to do after Selfrealization?

J: You will know when Selfrealization happens to you. First and foremost you just want to bathe in love-bliss. Life becomes sadhana. If your kundalini is not awakened before Selfrealization, then awakening kundalini and raising it fully becomes essential for you to

move on. You could do the same stuff that people do before Selfrealization, but after Selfrealization it will have a totally different meaning to you and a totally different effect on your spiritual progress. This means that doing sadhana in a group of non-Selfrealized people becomes difficult, because they will think you at odds with things if you speak out what is on your mind and in your heart. Selfrealization has its own challenges and problems, but don't worry about that now.

Self-realization and the I (Part II)

May 9. 2007

Question: What do you mean, the small self is a fiction?

Jan: It is not an illusion, but on the other hand it does not have any ontological reality to it; it is a selfperpetuating construct, a machine building itself and claiming autonomy. So it is rather a fiction.

Q: But are you not Jan? The person sitting in front of me talking?

J: Of course not. Neither are you whoever your name refers to. The small self is just another body you incarnate in, just like the flesh. It is real enough, but it is not you. Traditionally it has been called an illusion, but that is a misunderstanding because you can't say a fiction is unreal since it exists in space and time. The illusion is really only the notion, that you are your small self, - or your body for that matter. In truth you are just pure being. And this being is in its nature lovebliss.

Q: How does that fiction come about? I mean, it sound like a trap, but what's the point in that?

J: There is no point in it at all. And yes, it is a trap. Or rater it has become a trap in our time and age where the psyche is worshipped as God or at least as the more or less conscious truth of who you are -- making psychoanalysts and psychotherapists our modern gurus. Believing you are your small self is like being a beggar who all his life has been told he is a king and who believes that to be true. It is a fiction about himself -- the fiction is real enough, but believing it to be true is an illusion. Fortunately all you have to get rid of is the illusion. People think they have to get rid of the small self in order to become Self-realized, but that is not so. Since they identify with the small self, they are beggars living their lives solely to get one acknowledgement of their egos after the other - - beggars for selfgratification. But the sad trap is, that the more they get, the higher they think of themselves and the more they identify with the small self. So they live in the illusion they are kings.

Q: Don't you believe in the spiritual value of psychotherapy with respect to getting Selfrealized.

J: No, not at all. It is totally useless in that respect.

Q: Do you mean that feeling good about oneself is a major problem?

J: No, that is not what I meant at all. Feeling bad about yourself is just as much a trap as feeling good. In fact you should rather not feel anything about yourself at all, but you can't do that until you get the first stage of Selfrealization. When you reach that, you will observe how the small self continues to feel something about itself all the time and you will see, that this is a trap. The small self is in its very essence selfreflexive. Remember the first stage is freedom from identification with the small self and realization of your nature as nothingness-being. So the best strategy on the way is to avoid any occupation with the self and also to avoid the extremes of feeling too good or bad about your self. You see, psychotherapy or psychoanalysis as a spiritual discipline for so called "growth" is in fact a major stumbling block on the way to freedom from the small self. It makes you more and more occupied with the illusion and thus more and more caught in the trap. New Age spirituality will not get you enlightened.

Q: So what's the use of psychotherapy or workshops?

J: If you feel bad about yourself, then by all means do therapy and workshops, but only so far as to stop being occupied with yourself. Don't fall into the trap that working on or with the self is a means to grow towards a state of enlightenment. Enlightenment is not something that grows and suddenly flowers into maturity. There is nothing to develop. It is there already and it is already perfect and it can not be worked on.

Q: I don't feel perfect, and I certainly feel, I grow out of imperfection to a more integrated state thanks to workshops and therapy.

J: Oh yes! Surely! But don't fool yourself and think you are becoming more enlightened because of it. You are not! Integration of the small self stays within the small self, and to this I count also Jung's idea of the self-archetype. It is a widespread fallacy that Jung's notion of the self is the same as the Self realized in enlightenment; it is not since the Jungian self is an archetype and has qualities. The real Self has no qualities at all except lovebliss and consciousness.

Q: How do you get enlightened, then? You seem to imply you can't do anything about it yourself, since that will only be the small self exercising its illusion and getting more entangled in the trap of selfreflexivity.

J: Yes, now we are getting somewhere. As long as you think of yourself as the small self, you can do nothing. That's why the only way to get there by your own initiative is through samadhi. Samadhi in essence means to step out of identification with the small self and into identification with pure being. Alternatively you can have someone give it to you. I did both, but ultimately it was given to me by Deepakbhai during the gnan vidhi ceremony.

Q: So the next question is, how do you get into samadhi?

J: Awakening kundalini is the direct means, but you also have to practice meditation. Meditation plus an awakened and rising kundalini will take you there for sure. Your meditation should be to help kundalini reach the brain, then kundalini will give you samadhi. As I said you need somebody to give it to you, kundalini will give it to you. In fact, once kundalini is awakened and rising, that is all she wants. You can awaken kundalini through meditation, or you can get it awakened with shaktipat by a guru like Anandi Ma. In any case the described meditation is in my experience worth doing since it will speed up kundalini's journey and make it easier.

Q: Does the small self wander from life to life? I mean, we reincarnate, don't we?

J: The tendencies of the small self perpetuate themselves from life to life and they generate a new small self from life to life. The energy in the small self keeps on going, but the specific ego is generated in each life around a basic core, that reincarnates. This means, that the less you identify with the small self, the more you will have continuity between lives and eventually you will be able to remember past lives. The more you are identified with the small self, the more you will actually lose. I told you, the small self is a fiction. Believing it to be you is a trap.

Q: Does the Self not reincarnate?

J: The Self can not be said to be incarnated or disincarnated. Remember it simply is and does not depend on anything, nor is it qualified by anything. It is the pure being, that permeates all your lives and it is your presence here and now. It has no history, since it does not grow or age, therefore it can not be said to reincarnate. But do remember, it is YOU. The Self is the detached witness of all your lives; it is the deepest continuity throughout the changing existences.

Q: So what actually reincarnates if not the Self?

J: First and foremost the identity structure built up around the identification mechanism reincarnates. In other words, everything you believe you are will wander from life to life. The dynamics of the identification mechanism is anything that is self-referential and which generates identity structures in the psyche. These dynamics are any psychological workings that can be put on the formula "I ... this/that/him". Like: "I hate this", "I desire that", "I cheated him". So all the basic psychodynamics are the culprits: hate, desire, greed, lust, but also self-referential activities like cheating, hurting, deceiving, etc. that define yourself through a negative space. The negative space is either within you, like "I need this", or projected on to an other, like: "She is wrong", etc. Banal love is also a culprit since it is defined by a lack and a want which is self-referential. True love, however, is not self-referential and based on lack, but is based on abundance and is other-centered. So is true kindness, true compassion and true devotion, and so forth. But today most kindness, compassion and devotion is self-referential and springs from more or less

unconscious calculations like: "If I am kind to him, he will help me". Such hypocrisy greatly enhances the identity structure.

Q: What happens to all this after Self-realization?

J: Its days are numbered. After Self-realization all this may still have energy in it and will go on for a while. If it has enough energy after death, it will generate another incarnation. But once you get Self-realized you feel it falling away at an incredible rate. So your sadhana after Self-realization becomes twofold: first and foremost to merge in lovebliss, secondly to be aware of the energy in the identity structures still hanging around whenever they become active. And when they become active, you simply observe them from the Self and with love-bliss and they will crush. Some energies have to manifest and so be it; you simply observe that also and remember it is just karma unfolding.

Q: Is all this you call unfolding energies, the same as karma?

J: Yes, exactly the same. Remember that with Self-realization you step out of these energies and this is the same as saying you step out of karma. In the Bhagavad Gita it is called stepping out of the gunas; it is the same thing. Self-realization is freedom, it is liberation.

The difference between bliss and lovebliss

June 1. 2007

Question: I experience bliss when meditating. It's like an explosion and my heart races wildly. Is that lovebliss?

Jan: No, it is ecstatic bliss. Ananda.

Q: What's the difference?

J: You have to make a distinction between supreme joy, basic bliss (called ananda) and supreme bliss (called paramananda), which is lovebliss. Basic bliss comes when you are still identified with the small self. It can be peaceful, which is actually supreme joy rather than bliss, or it can be ecstatic, which is sometimes called a cosmic orgasm and which is ananda. Once you no longer identify with anything and you have become the Self, then lovebliss will begin to manifest in you and you won't get ecstatic anymore. Lovebliss is silence and peace, it way beyond ecstasy.

Q: When I experience bliss, it goes up and down and it changes its flavour from being sweet and gentle to being fierce and deeply transforming.

J: Lovebliss is silence and stillness and it is stable and unchanging. Once you reach it, it just goes on and on in the same peaceful way. What you are experiencing is ananda, or basic bliss, not supreme bliss.

Q: OK, but it feels great! Should I try to avoid it?

J: No, no! By all means, go for it! It is a symptom of good kundalini arousal.

Q: So is that why you say it is transforming?

J: Yes, kundalini is transforming you and a by product of that process is ananda, or cosmic orgasm. It is very fine and a very good experience to have. Also it is very enjoyable. If you experience it to such a degree, that it's ecstatic, that is all the better, but you should make a practice out of going beyond the ecstatic bliss into stillness without losing the bliss. The ecstasy of ananda will then go away and there will be paramananda, which is lovebliss.

Q: I wish I could.

J: The more you get used to ecstatic bliss, the sooner you will be able to slip through it to supreme stillness-bliss. So it is fine to make an intermediate practice out of bliss in order later to be able to transcend the ecstasy and reach lovebliss.

Q: My master told me to avoid bliss and go for satori, or pure being. He said bliss was a distraction.

J: It depends on what you want to reach. If your goal is simply to reach pure nothingness-being, or satori, then yes it is a distraction. But if your goal is to go beyond that, then you can enjoy bliss as much as you like.

Q: Should one not take it one step at a time?

J: It's not a matter of one step at a time. It is simply different paths and different goals. If you opt for a path which includes bliss, then you will surely reach nothingness-being (satori) also but in addition you will have opened the door to lovebliss. Those in pure satori have a hard time understanding lovebliss and that there are states above their nothingness-being.

Q: What do you think of the bliss of sexual orgasm?

J: Hehe, in what respect?

Q: With respect to getting enlightened and whether that bliss is useful in that process. Is it the same as ananda and can one reach ananda via tantric sex?

J: No, sexual orgasm is not the same as ananda. The problem is, that in order to use sex and orgasm-sublimation as a means to ananda, you have to know basic ananda very well beforehand. In fact so much so, that you can slip into it during the orgasm and then go beyond it into lovebliss. Then you automatically will not ejaculate. You have to be spiritually very advanced in order to do those practices and your kundalini has to be awakened and aroused at least to the throat. I have met many who do tantric sex, but none who knew what it was about. They all merely practiced prolonged pleasure, extended sexual orgasm or orgasm sublimation. They misnamed this intense pleasure as ananda and believed they were in samadhi. This makes it all the more difficult for them ever to get enlightened even in the basic degree of nothingness-being.

Q: Why does it make it more difficult?

J: Because when their kundalini gets aroused, they will immediately become extremely lustful. So much so in fact, that it may be impossible for them not to give in and attempt some tantric practice, even with themselves if they are alone. This will keep kundalini stuck in the lowest chakras. Or at least it will become harder to get it further up.

Q: So do you believe in celibacy?

J: No. Not particularly. Just don't confuse sex with spirituality. Mixing them is asking for trouble, but the trouble can be overcome with strong willpower, of course. If you don't have that, then be careful.

Q: I experience bliss when singing bhajans.

J: It can either be supreme joy if you are calm, or it can be ananda if you become ecstatic.

Q: Why not lovebliss?

J: Because the bhajan itself is a distraction. If you want lovebliss, you have to go beyond all distractions just as you have to go beyond ananda. This means that you will have to experience ecstatic bliss, then stop singing the bhajan and go beyond the ecstasy into paramananda. That is surely possible. But since you have to stop singing the bhajan, you can't say the lovebliss came because of the bhajansinging.

Q: Have you done this practice? Or is it merely theoretical?

J: I have done it. Once a week I attended a Mata Amritanandamayi bhajan group and spent most of the time not singing bhajans but being in samadhi. In the end I decided to stop singing bhajans altogether and just sit at home in samadhi.

Q: In lovebliss, do you see this lovebliss in everything?

J: Yes. No exceptions. But you have to be in it to recognize it in everything around you. If the lovebliss recedes, then you will not see it in anything, but you will still see

nothingness-being in everything. That never goes away. However, once lovebliss breaks through for good, then it will never quite disappear, only recede into the background of awareness if some transformation is going on in your mind or heart that grabs your attention.

Q: What's it like? A tingling sensation in the body?

J: No, it is way beyond that. Every cell of the body screams in love of the Self. Every breath is a pulse of lovebliss. It is ecstasy without agitation. The Self experiences itself in itself and by itself. This is felt in every cell of the body as immense bliss, but it is calm and peaceful. And it just goes on and on and on.

From bliss to lovebliss

June 8. 2007

Question: What should we do, when we experience bliss in meditation?

Jan: Enjoy it of course.

Q: Isn't that a trap?

J: It depends on how you relate to the enjoyment. If you identify with the enjoyer and get anchored in ego-gratification, then it is a trap. The sense of I am the owner of bliss, is of course a trap, but if on the other hand your notion is that you are being infused with divine grace, then it is not a trap. Just don't claim ownership of the bliss; receive it as a gift and enjoy.

Q: it still sounds as if one could get stuck there.

J: You should always try to go beyond ecstasy into peace without losing the bliss. You will then go from ananda to paramananda.

Q: How?

J: It takes years of experimenting. But basically, simple as it may sound, you need to be able to enjoy the bliss fully, then take a breath and let go. If you are immersed in enjoying the bliss, without any fear or reservation, then the letting go will automatically let the shakti pull you into paramananda. Remember this is where the shakti wants to take you, so once you reach ananda, then you are at the door of paramananda. So you should merge with the bliss and in the merging forget yourself. Then let go. If on the other hand you succumb to the ecstatic bliss as a supreme sensual gratification, then you will get stuck. because of the incredible delight of ecstatic bliss, this is of course a very possible error to commit.

Q: So what you call enjoying fully is the same as merging?

J: Exactly. You can't enjoy bliss fully if you are scared of it or overwhelmed or if you separate yourself from it by ego-trips like pride or greed or possessiveness. I know it is difficult in the beginning, but you need to be able to enter ecstasy and then regain your coolness. The only way you can reach supreme coolness is by transcending ecstasy, not by controlling it. Paramananda is supremely cool because there is no ego in it. It is just calm bliss and love.

Q: You distinguish between bliss and lovebliss. That gives the impression that love comes after bliss. I had the impression, that love came before.

J: I am talking about paramananda, which is a state, not a fleeting experience like ecstatic ananda. This state is both love and bliss at the same time. It is also called satchitananda, which means being-consciousness-bliss. It is the same as the supreme Self, called paramatman. Lovebliss has nothing to do with worldly love nor even with love of persons or objects as such, it is simply pure Being in and of itself. You can experience love without bliss and bliss without love. So you can't say one comes before the other. I know some claim bliss is higher than love because they maintain bliss belongs to chakras above the heart and love belongs to the heart, but that is not my experience at all. There is love all the way up, but it changes its quality and your understanding of it changes also. It is the same with bliss. You can call supreme joy bliss -- which is the common use of the term bliss. Or you can call ecstasy bliss or the merging in the Self bliss. So in a sense there is bliss all the way also.

Q: So are love and bliss separate aspects or expressions of the Self?

J: The Self is lovebliss. You can't distinguish the two at all. But remember it is totally at peace and totally detached. Also both are Shakti in its pure form, which is identical with Shiva in its pure form. Shiva is of course pure being -- and pure being, the Self, is not passive, it has a dynamic throb to it, it vibrates so to speak, and this vibrant throb is lovebliss which is Shakti. In Kashmir Shaivism it is also called Spanda.

Q: But everybody knows what love is. So few know what bliss is. Unless of course, people speak of bliss as supreme joy.

J: Very few know what love is also. Most people speak of infatuation and desire as love. Common love is dualistic, it has two poles: a desired object and a desirer who wants the object. Boy wants girl or vice versa. But in supreme love, you don't desire the loved object. Very few know this kind of love, just as very few know the kind of bliss that is paramananda. The interesting thing is, that if they knew only one, the other would soon follow. They are two sides of the same coin so to speak.

Q: So what should we do, if we experience one or the other in a high degree in our meditation? How do we move on to lovebliss?

J: When kundalini reaches the brain, lovebliss will be your natural state. It can be more or less intense depending on how much of kundalini has taken residence in the brain, but never the less it will be You, meaning you will realize the supreme Self as You. So in order to reach beyond love and bliss as a duality, you should work with kundalini in an effort to awaken and arouse it and bring it to the brain.

Q: Yes, but in meditation, when ecstasy comes, what then?

J: Never react to bliss as an object -- as something separate from you that you have the good fortune to experience. Remind yourself that it is The Self beginning to manifest in you and aim for blissful being beyond blissful ecstasy. Don't think about whether it is love or bliss or lovebliss, simply enjoy the bliss fully and let go into calm merging with it, then you will transcend the ecstasy and suddenly find yourself in total calmness, which is even more blissful. The transformation from ecstasy to peaceful paramananda is rather sudden, it is like a bubble that bursts. Meanwhile you may become filled with light and you may even merge into a supreme sky blue space of pure consciousness. Simply enjoy that and remind yourself it is the Self manifesting. It is not an experience that you are having, it is you true Self emerging, so enjoy it and merge with it.

Q: So when bliss suddenly comes, should we stay detached from it?

J: No, not at all. Merge with it. By enjoying it fully, you will naturally merge with it. Don't distance yourself from it by observing it or being detached or anything like that. Considering the bliss an experience to observe or be detached from is a very bad practice. It is your Self emerging, so merge with it, be totally engulfed by the bliss and it will suddenly become tranquil lovebliss.

Q: So we really can't do anything to get from bliss to lovebliss, except surrender?

J: Exactly. You have to surrender all the way. Surrender, surrender, surrender. You can't merge with bliss if you don't surrender to it. You can't surrender to it, if you distance yourself from it. You remove the distance by totally enjoying it. And enjoying totally means that there is nothing in your awareness but the bliss. And this means, that you should have no fear of it, no pride while experiencing it, no sense of causing it or owning it. When bliss arises, there should be only bliss in your awareness.

Q: But when I experience bliss, my heart races, my breath becomes fast, and my body tingles. All that is very distracting. Should I try to fight that and remain calm?

J: Don't fight any of all that. They are all good signs, called kriyas. Kriyas are spontaneous activities caused by the shakti itself. So what you should do is simply to be with what ever is going on and allow it to happen as it happens automatically. You can stop it, but that will most likely stop the bliss also. Remember, at this stage bliss causes agitation or ecstasy. Let the body and mind be excited, but still try to have nothing in

your awareness but the bliss. Then suddenly the bubble of agitation will burst, you will feel a huge expansion and be in a state of calm lovebliss.

Q: So what if out kundalini is not awakened and rising?

J: Yes, once kundalini is awakened and rising, it is a very easy and enjoyable path. It is very automatic. The hard part is to get kundalini awakened and rising, so you will begin to get bliss into your system. In order to start this process, I have described a simple meditation and I also recommend shaktipat. If you do the described meditation with the firm conviction that kundalini really is rising, at least partially, you will soon get kundalini aroused and experience bliss. Then when the bliss comes, forget your meditation practice and merge with the bliss by enjoying it totally. Then when you come out of the bliss, immediately pick up your practice again. Don't try to figure out how you got there in an attempt to get there again. Remember the bliss is not of your doing, it is the Self revealing itself, it is an act of grace, a gift. So surrender to it, when it is there, and when it is not there, invite it by doing the simple kundalini meditation.

On dumping the ego

June 17. 2007

Question: I am still having trouble distinguishing between the I and the Ego.

Jan: The I is an illusion arising from identification with the ego. The ego is a construct of your past experiences and reactions to them. The I is George, the ego is Georges's personality. Usually the two are identified with each other since they really form a complex and are not as separate as i try to describe them. In reality the Self is neither. I assure you, it is like in a dream, when you totally believe yourself to be some person, then wake up to discover you are not. Self is pure being. It has no ego. With respect to being Selfrealized, the nature of the ego is completely irrelevant. You can be a nice person or a temperamental person, or what ever. The Self does not care. It is an illusion that only some egos are worthy of Selfrealization. Unfortunately "spiritual" people use this weird idea to denigrate others and to feel proud internally.

Q: People tell me I have a strong ego and I have to dump it.

J: What people are telling you may be right about the personality of George. My intuition is that what you mean is not that you are selfish, but that you are a strong individual. There is no problem with that. On the contrary: If you want to be able to cope with strong spiritual experiences, you need a strong personality/ego. Weak egos may become disintegrated and may develop psychological problems once one begins to merge with nothingness-being-bliss and kundalini seriously begins to work on one.

Q : Did you dump your ego before you attained Realization?

J: As you have guessed by now, I did not "dump" my ego before attaining the Self. But the illusion of being one with Jan suddenly burst, then "I" imploded into the Self and "understood" my true nature by being it completely.

So I recommend you don't worry much (a little is good) about what people say when they evaluate you. It is not good to evaluate others, nor is it good to be evaluated. It helps nothing at all, it only causes inner turbulence and more ego-identification. So just ignore them. Instead try to transcend the identification with the ego. One way to do this is very hard and difficult, yet it is what most "spiritual" people intuitively opt for: destroying the ego. Of course, if you destroy the ego, then the separation from the Self MAY (not necessarily WILL) become thinner. On the other hand it may build up spiritual ego instead, which is very difficult to deal with and transcend. An other way is to understand the distinction between Self and the I/ego complex and then try to step out of it with your spiritual practices. Here I followed the path of bliss/kundalini and it took me there. Finally gnan vidhi made the flip for me, but you know that from my website. This path is what I try to convey on the website.

Q: But shouldn't you fight the ego?

J: Yes, you do have to "fight" the ego. Why? Because the fight itself is a spiritual practice that helps you dissociate from the ego and thus reduce the identification. The results of the fight are of secondary importance. Most people have got this turned upside down and believe the results of the fight are the most important thing, but that is because they identify themselves with the ego and think the changes in the ego is progress towards Selfrealization, - in truth it is not. You can change the ego from now on till eternity and still never get a bit closer to Selfrealization. What you need is to step out of the ego-game -- and remember correcting the ego is one part of the game.

Q: What about unselfishness?

J: As I write in one of the satsangs, you should strive to be a decent person, and strive to be better than that also. You should practice being unselfish. It needs a strong ego to be unselfish! Weak egos have a hard time being unselfish, because they can't cope with the loss and also need the gratification of the sense of having something or of being right or whatever is at issue. Spend some time every week doing something simply for other peoples sake. I teach meditation for free one evening every week and give free shakti transmissions; that's one thing to do, which I am good at and enjoy, so that was a natural thing for me; also I run the lovebliss website and spend time answering mails. You find your own field. Find something enjoyable, of course; no need to harrass yourself. Also it is good to practice being humble. You can be very humble internally, while others may see you as a strong ego or arrogant; so once again, do not be overly concerned about others evaluation of your ego -- you are NOT the ego, so it does not really matter. Love of God is fine too, since it is a way to develop love without concern for the circumstances or the reward. Love God while thinking he is hiding in others, and thus you will love others also. In reality this is love of the Pure Soul in others, from your Pure Soul to theirs.

Q: My understanding is that if I keep cultivating the love for Self and All that the ego will eventually be displaced

J: No. that is not how it works if your goal is Selfrealization. What do you expect to displace the ego with? The Self? No, It can only be an other ego. Maybe a nicer ego, but never the less an ego. The Self is not a new kind of personality, you suddenly acquire. After primary Selfrealization, the good old ego is still there; nothing changes in that respect. The Self and the ego are entirely separate. Only much later will they merge, but that is beyond our present issue. Once you reach primary Selfrealization (oneness with the Self as nothingness-being, without lovebliss), then the ego will begin to transform by itself, it will begin to dissolve. So don't worry about dissolving the ego now, concern yourself with getting free.

Once that is said, do "keep cultivating the love for Self and All". But be carefull it is not just an egogame. You can tell the difference if your cultivation is for your own gratification (in order to fell good and proud about your spirituality and self), or if you do unselfish work simply out of kindness and love for simply doing good to and for others. This is the true meaning of the word Seva (selfless service).

Q: Do you teach that the relative self has to drop the motivation/desire to awaken?

J: No, the motivation to awaken does not have to be given up. Why should it? If that was so, then all motivations/desires would have to be given up and that is not possible or at least so difficult, you can forget about it. But the state of the Self is desireless. It's not a matter of purifying the small self to a point where it resembles the Self, that is not possible. Its more a matter of illusion suddenly bursting and you realize you are nothingness-being. From that nothingness-being you witness Georges motivations/desires. So no need to get rid of them. But reducing them is always good, of course. Just don't set goals that can never be reached. Lastly, it is not the relative self that awakens; selfawareness steps out of self and, in fact, collapses into pure being. This is a rather sudden thing, when it happens, but not necessarily dramatic. You just suddenly don't think you are George anymore and it dawns on you, you are nothingness-being. Only later will the lovebliss emerge.

Q : I think you recommend taking Shaktipat after Gnan Vidhi?

J: I recommend shaktipat anytime - and gnan vidhi anytime. They are not related.

Dark Nights of the Soul - or Enlightened Pain

Jan. 3. 2007

Question: Could you tell us something about suffering on the path to enlightenment? I mean, what really goes on during the two dark nights of the soul?

Jan: Sure! What do you want to know?

Q: Is it unavoidable, or is it just something, that a few experience? And if it is unavoidable, how long will it last?

J: He, he! What you are worried about is really if you will experience it or not! But OK. To answer the crux of your question: yes, it is unavoidable, and no: it is not something that just a few will experience. Everyone will have to go through both the dark night of the mind and the dark night of the soul. The first night is more of a crisis, while the second night is more of a regular depression.

Q: So how do you distinguish between the two?

J: First night happens while your identification mechanism is still intact and is caused by your realization that all identities are invalid. Second night happens after the identification mechanism has broken down and vanished and its suffering is caused by the disintegration of remaining identities in the mind and soul. Second night is far more severe and long lasting than the first.

Q: So how do I know if I am in the first or the second?

J: If you ask this question, you are probably in the first. Believe me, if your identification mechanism has broken down and vanished, you know, because you are absolutely nobody what so ever, - that is: you are pure being.

Q: I feel I am not my mind and I have realized the relativity of all identifications. Isn't that a sign of Selfrealization and of being in the second night?

J: No. What you describe is exactly the situation in the first night. We say Self-realization, but in reality there is no realization, because that implies a duality between a realizer and the realized. There is no one to realize the Self when Selfrealization happens. Selfrealization is the end of duality between Self and subject in that unmanifest being becomes Selfaware and also all identification ends.

Q: What goes on during the first dark night?

J: In the first dark night, you undergo a destruction of your fundamental beliefs about who you are, about the nature of the mind-ego-soul complex, and so forth. This implies, as you described, a questioning of the validity of any identity what so ever. But since the identification mechanism is still in operation, you are basically trying to replace one set of identifications with another. The problem in this night is, that as soon as you have adopted a new set of identifications, you realize they are just as bad as the old set. So a crisis sets in which has no proper solution. This is not depression as such, it is merely a perpetual frustration. It is a state of unrest. It is a state where your habit of having a ego-foundation is being challenged by every new foundation proving itself to be invalid.

Q: Yes, I recognise that. In fact I think this is what most sincere western seekers are going through.

J: Yes exactly. But sadly most seekers try to solve it by replacing one identification structure with another in fairly rapid succession in the big illusion that this is spiritual progress and evolutionary growth. Hence they never make it to Selfrealization nor into the second night. There is another trap, and that is the Zen-trap: that of replacing identification-with-something with identification-with-void. This is the no-mind trap. Just because your mind is fairly empty, it does not mean you in any way have ended identification with it. Duality remains even though the mind may have receded. If no-mind was the crux of enlightenment, then enlightenment and ignorance would be mind things, and they are not.

Q: What's the quickest way through the first dark night of the mind?

J: Ha, ha! I wish I knew! And isn't that just the question, we all have asked: How does one get Selfrealized as fast as possible? Well, of initiations, I strongly recommend gnan vidhi since this special initiation is designed to separate your pure absolute being from the relative mind and give Selfrealization. In other words, gnan vidhi is intended to take you swiftly through the first dark night. And shaktipat is always recommended. But regarding what you can do yourself, you should do radical self enquiry in the manner of Ramana Maharishi. Question any identification, you discover in yourself, and let go. Talking about letting go, you should of course meditate and remember proper meditation is a matter of sensing the absolute, then letting go and falling into it. Please see the meditation page on this website.

Q: So if that's the essence of the first dark night, what's the essence of the second dark night?

J: The second night is the real dark night of the soul, - it is akin to a depression. Here the integrity of the soul-mind-body complex has broken down and this for some reason produces anxiety and depression which has its counterpart in the dysfunction of the synapses of the brain. You have realized that you are not the soul, nor the mind, nor the body, but pure, unmanifest being. As the integrity of this soul-mind-body complex breaks down, the neurotransmitters misbehave and you become depressed and/or tormented with anxiety. It is, sadly, unavoidable. How long it lasts is another matter; I have no idea if there are any rules here. St. John of the Cross wrote about the Dark Night of the Soul that its duration and intensity was proportionate to the level of enlightenment God is working to elevate you to. In addition Suzanne Segal's autobiography "Collision with the Infinite" illustrates the anxiety and confusion that follows after Selfrealization. She suffered much depression and anxiety following her Selfrealization.

Q: Would taking antidepressants harm the process going on in the dark nights?

J: They will do no harm, for sure. But you will find that they are not a full and satisfying solution. In other words they will alleviate the suffering, but not put an end to the spiritual dimension of it, that is, the purgation will still go on. If the suffering becomes too great, then you can take medication; it will do no harm. The process is not driven by the depression or anxiety - depression and anxiety is a symptom of the process; so do what you can to alleviate the suffering. The suffering is just the mind-body reacting to being emptied of its usual content. In truth, during this suffering, it is only the body-mind that suffers; you are free of it and witness it. Remember, at this point you are absolutely nothing, so how can you be said to suffer from disharmonies in the relative? Never the less, you have a body and mind and they suffer.

Q: So what's the solution? The end point?

J: Total breakdown and disappearance of all remaining identification-structures of the soul-mind-body complex.

Q: How can we aid that process?

J: Awaken kundalini. The shaktipat initiation is perfect for taking you through the second dark night. Practice radical Self-enquiry and question any habitual sense of identification that pops up in the mind. Realize that everybody are Pure Being, just as you have realized yourself to be. See Pure Being in everyone and everything and remember that ignorance is just an illusion. Practice compassion and forgiveness.

Q: This sounds a bit like the first dark night. What's the difference?

J: The first dark night ends when the identification mechanism breaks down and vanishes and you have no identification with anything anymore. You can't say you identify with Pure Being, because that would imply a duality and there is no longer any duality. You ARE Pure Being and that is of course unmanifest ... so you are unmanifest and no longer a somebody. Yet many of the old identity-structures still hang around, so your personality, mind and ego may not grasp what has really happened to you, when you get Selfrealized, because the mind, etc. can of course not grasp the unmanifest. This residual ignorance is basically what gets cleared in the second night. So in the first night you have to get out of identification all together, and in the second night, you have to clear away old residual identifications and practice seeing Pure being in everything.

Q: Would you recommend reading St. John of the Cross's book: The Dark Night of the Soul?

J: Well, yes and no. Remember he wrote under the threat of the inquisition, so he had to talk about enlightenment in terms that the church could accept. You could also read The Cloud of Unknowing.

Q: What part does karma play in all this?

J: A huge part. Clearing away residual identification complexes is just a contemporary way of saying you are clearing away residual karma. Identities are the product of karma, nothing else, they have no reality in themselves. Karma creates impressions in the mind which act as self-perpetuating structures that channel energy and consciousness. These structures add up and form an identity complex.

Q: Could we alleviate the second dark night by breaking down identity structures as a kind of sadhana? So that when the second night comes, it will be less severe and of shorter duration?

J: No. What you are describing is the first dark night. For the second dark night to come, you have to stop identifying with the identity structures, and then they begin breaking down by themselves. The second dark night is this automatic breakdown and falling-off of identities. If you try willingly to break down identities before you have become liberated from identification, then you will just be replacing one identity with another. True, the new identity will probably appear to be more spiritual, since it is an identity which encompasses fighting identities, but you will be identified with the fighter. So it is, with regard to Self-realization, of no more value than any other identity.

Q: So can't we do anything to get through the second night?

J: Get kundalini awakened and into the brain. Shaktipat will help here.

Q: If all identities are equally valueless, then we are all equal with respect to Self-realization?

J: Exactly.

Q: But some personalities are more conducive to spirituality than others. I mean some people meditate and strive, others don't. And very few get Self-realized. Surely the speed of your progress has something to do with who you were before you got Self-realized.

J: No, not at all. Realize the enormous humility this insight generates in you if you ponder it.

Q: Yes.

J: You see, spirituality is not a matter of who you are, it is a matter of unbecoming - and eventually total freedom from being anything but pure being. This is what the two dark nights are about and why they are unavoidable. They are both processes of unbecoming and that is why they are dark and painful.

Q: But what is the process of unbecoming after Self-realization? I mean, isn't the Self unmanifest pure being?

J: Yes, unmanifest pure being. And with that realization, Selfrealization, of your own nature as unmanifest, the mind is now without its habitual influx of identification, so it is in a sense empty of essence, and this is what causes the "building" to crack and crumble. There is nothing to uphold it anymore. It is automatic and painful to the mind-body complex.

Q: The mind fights back.

J: No, not really, there is no fight involved.

Q: But there is resistance to letting go certain things.

J: That is in the first night, yes. In the second night there is nothing to let go of since you are not holding on to anything anymore. In reality, in both nights, the pain is there because identity-integrity breaks down and that in and of itself is painful. In the first night you have not grasped your Self as unmanifest, so you are under the illusion that Selfrealization is finding a truer You-identity. But since this is just replacing one identity structure with another, it will never end. You will think about what it is like to be unmanifest pure being, but as that is trying to understand the unmanifest in terms of the manifest, your enquiries into the nature of Self will be frustrating.

Q: Can the suffering be useful in some way, or is it just unavoidable, senseless pain?

J: When the identification structures break down, suffering arises, but in this situation the illusory nature of identity becomes more easy to see than when you are happy. The cracks become apparent and the cracks are voids where beingness can be perceived, where the unmanifest can relate to itself as separate from manifest structures of identity. And so if one understands the nature of what is going on in the dark nights, then the suffering itself can be a sadhana.

Q: One last question: Can the bliss or lovebliss coexist with the suffering of the dark nights? If so how can that be? I thought bliss was the absence of suffering and vice versa.

J: Oh, yes, they can coexist and usually do. The two are not opposite poles. In fact they are not related at all so one does not exclude the other. There can be tremendous suffering and tremendous bliss at the same time

Types of bliss

January 23. 2007

Question: Could you tell something about the different kinds of bliss and where lovebliss fits in?

Jan: Before primary Selfrealization, you can in meditation have fits of ecstasy that are very blissful. They are caused by a sudden rush of prana in the system and are not to be mistaken for what Selfrealization is like. In primary Selfrealization, or cosmic consciousness as some call it, there is no bliss, only void. This is the state most contemporary spiritual teachers talk about. As you move on, bliss emerges as a recognition of Self in other and since this recognition is also love, I call it lovebliss. Some call this next stage god consciousness, where Self recognizes Self in other in lovebliss.

Q: I am confused by the many uses of the one word "bliss". It denotes everything from domestic bliss, through orgasm, to enlightenment.

J: yes, you have to distinguish between bliss and lovebliss. Or as it is called in sanskrit, ananda and paramananda. Now, today we have to include a third category because of the confusions created by the modern so called tantrics: the bliss of orgasm. Bliss of orgasm is far inferior compared to ananda (transcendental bliss), and ananda is far inferior compared to paramananda (lovebliss).

Q: What do you experience when and in what way? Are there degrees of bliss?

J: OK, to go from the bottom up. Bliss of orgasm is something I take for granted everybody knows. Through tantric practices you can prolong and deepen the orgasm, but it will never become more than just an orgasm - no matter how long it lasts, how intense it is, or how many you can get in a row. Now, I am aware that orgasms can be psychologically deeply transforming, give rise to metaphysical lights in the brain, and so forth. But I maintain that no matter how good the sex is, it will never come close to lovebliss, nor even regular transcendental bliss.

Q: Why not?

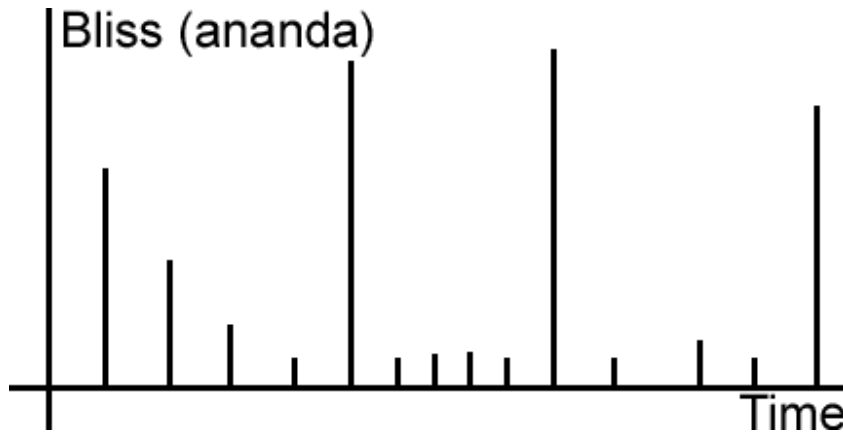
J: That's just the way it is. I am sorry, but I did not design things. Orgasm and ananda are not related in any way. I say this despite the fact that, when you first experience ananda, you will compare it to a thousand orgasms going off at once. But as you get more acquainted with ananda, you will soon realize that it has nothing to do with anything that could be triggered by the physical senses; it is totally transcendental. However, it is not of the Self. It is an in-between phenomenon that you may get stuck in if you think it is a foretaste of enlightenment. Then you might begin hunting these experiences.

Q: My teacher claims you can reach ananda by transcending the culmination of an orgasm during sex.

J: Yes, it is possible, but very difficult. Still, remember that the ananda you reach beyond orgasm is yet not of the Self. It is merely a rush of prana through the body-mind complex and - if you are lucky - into the brain.

Q: I practice mantra meditation and often experience flashes of supreme bliss where my heart beats wildly, I sweat and the mind runs like wild.

J: That is ananda. Ananda is ecstatic and agitated even though you may be immobile like a rock while it lasts. In the beginning it is like this diagram shows:



Fits of ecstatic bliss before Selfrealization

You get an initial bang-experience. Then time goes with no experience of bliss, then suddenly it is there again, but most likely not as deep because you try to hold onto it and that is not possible. So as time goes, your bliss experiences become less and less intense. Then suddenly it is there again. But subsequently nothing happens, or only sporadic inferior blisses. Then another bang, and so forth. Notice the lines are sharp and vertical. In the beginning, that is before Selfrealization, the bliss experiences will be like that: either they are there or they are not. there will be no inbetween and they will come in flashes during meditation.

Q: So what about after Selfrealization?

J: Then it will be like this:

When paramananda comes, it is with no effects what so ever. Paramananda sneaks in on you and it is soft and calm; it is bliss, peace, silence and love at the same time.

Q: What makes the lovebliss grow?

J: The automatic breakdown of old identity-structures and the subsequent emptying out of content from the mind-body complex. This is corellated with kundalini merging with Pure Being in the crownchakra. So the apparent growth of lovebliss follows clearing hindrances on the relative level. But in reality the lovebliss does not grow, only your perception of Self in the relative grows as layers of old ignorance gets cleared away, and this Selfrecognition is one with lovebliss. Now, here language fails, because this statement could seem to imply a duality between you as Self and the other as its Self and that the recognition of one Self in the other is full of lovebliss. But that is not so. Self recognizes Self in everything: in mind, in thoughts, in feelings, in objects and other people.

Q: How does this relate to getting rid of karma?

J: Clearing old structures of ignorance is the same as saying you are burning old karma.

Q: It sounds like it's two different processes going on and that the two different processes give rise to different kinds of bliss.

J: Well, yes and no. Fits of euphoric bliss, ananda, is the result of a process and is a phenomena that is generated by prana and kundalini acting in the chakras; so it is within duality. Lovebliss, paramananda, is not generated by anything since it is the nature of the Self. However, there is a proces of revelation. So from the point of view of the relative, that is from the mind, there is in both cases a process going on. The ananda-process is a process of kundalini working itself up through the spine and the chakras. The paramananda-process is the process of kundalini merging back into the absolute in the crownchakra. The ananda process is the process that leads to Selfrealization, the paramananda process is the process that leads to recognition of the Self in everything. So in the first proces you transcend the relative, in the second process, you no longer transcend anything, because you are the transcendental field, instead you here begin to experience the transcendental in the relative in a divine recognition. One thing is important to remember, the first type of bliss is an experience because there is an experiencer. The second type of bliss is not an experience because there is no longer an experiencer; it is divine recognition.

Q: Does ananda grow gradually into paramananda? I mean is the paramananda-process a direct continuation of the ananda process?

J: No. Usually there is a period in between, where you live in pure Selfrealization without bliss (cosmic consciousness). This period can last many years or even the rest of your life if you never get kundalini awakened and into the brain. On the other hand, if your sadhana has involved raising kundalini, like if you have done kriya yoga, then you might

go quickly through the period of blissless Selfrealization and go smoothly from ananda to paramananda. But the most likely in that case, is that you shift between ananda, paramananda and blissless void.

Observing the observer

October, 2008

Question: I have meditated most of my adult life... that's like 30 years... and have come to the conclusion that meditation brings you nowhere. I have realized that it is just the mind grinding some mantra over and over and this will never take you to Self. You just sit there with closed eyes and the mind grinds on, just as it would with open eyes, so what's the point?

Jan: Sitting with closed eyes can do tremendous good and sitting with closed eyes can be nothing but sitting with closed eyes. It depends on what is caused to take place while the eyes are closed. Some things can easier take place when eyes are closed than when they are open.

Q: What do you mean with this "caused to take place"? Isn't it a matter of letting go and not expecting anything to happen? I just want to observe innocently.

J: OK, one thing at a time... Both issues are very important to understand. ... If you just want to observe innocently, you are stuck in the duality of observer, observing and observed. It does not matter if you observe innocently or aggressively, you are in either case stuck in a subject observing an object. Now, you can either observe a more or less known object, or you can observe an imaginary object. What most people do, when they practice observing the observer, is to make a virtue out of spending hundreds of hours observing an imaginary object.

Q: So, are you saying that "observing the observer" is just another mind game? Ramana Maharshi taught that this Self-observation was the essential path.

J: I am saying there are basically two forms of meditation: One is meditating on a well known object. The other is meditating on an unknown object. But the point is that if you meditate on something you know absolutely nothing about, you will be meditating on an imaginary object and this meditation is still within duality. Any meditation that has observation as its foundation will be within duality, and it makes no difference if you are meditating on something known or unknown. In addition to this, which is actually the other side of the coin, as long as there is a meditator meditating, or an observer observing, there is a relationship in consciousness. But the mind can not engage in a relationship with an object it knows nothing about. So when you meditate on "nothingness" or engage in "innocent observation of the observer" you enter a situation

where you are actually meditating on vague intuitions about what this "nothingness" or this mysterious "observer" actually is.

Q: But I am not meditating on anything at all. I am practicing merging with the observer. The ultimate observer is the Self. So this is the direct means to Self realization.

J: Well, yes and no! What do you know about the observer? Only what you imagine! The only thing you know something about is "the observation" and "the observing subject" and since this is your reality you are creating an imaginary "observed Self" in the back of your mind which you are trying to merge with.

Q: But we meditate to gain knowledge about IT! To progress in deeper and deeper understanding and Self-realization. And the more we progress, the more true this so called imaginary understanding will be.

J: That is what most people believe, but it is the crux of the problem. First of all, you do not "progress in deeper and deeper understanding and Self-realization". Either you are IT or you are not.

Q: So, are you rejecting this age old and honored meditation?

J: No, not at all. I am merely explaining to you that most of those who engage in it have no clue what this meditation is about. And in particular I am trying to explain to you where they go wrong. Is it not true that the meditation you describe is intended to acquire knowledge about IT so that IT will change status in your awareness from being an imaginary object to being an experienced object. Yes?

Q: Yes, I want to experience The Self, of course.

J: Making an imaginary object less imaginary through experience means it gets data attached to it. These meditators earnestly seek data about The Self, or IT. They want insights, understanding. But since those who practice observing-meditation desire insight and a knowledge that can progress in depth, they progress along the wrong track of trying to make the object of their meditation less and less imaginary. This is the same as making the object of their meditation more and more concrete. When you rephrase it like this, most people can see it is a side track. IT, which is UNMANIFEST, is of course not concrete in any way. IT can never become more and more concrete and one can never acquire more and more information about IT. ... Realizing IT can at best be described as a total blow-out.

Q: Yes, that is just my point when I speak of observing innocently. In this innocent observing you are not trying to attain any insights or deeper understandings, you are merely observing the observer.

J: Again we have several issues. One thing is that this observing the observer can go on for ever, right? Once you have realized one observer, that observer can be observed by

another observer, and so on. The other thing, which is the important thing, is the whole notion of "observing". What does it mean to observe? If there is observation, there is bound to be an observer, the observation and an observed. You can believe you are observing without any intention to gain any understanding of the observed, but that still leaves you with the observer, the observation and the observed. Nothing changes just because you insist you don't care the least about the observed. A1 observing A2 still makes A2 and object for A1. If only the two A's could merge, that would be fine, but as long as there is observation, there will remain duality. And as long as A is not Self realized, A2 will never be identical with A1 because there will be projected a lot of imaginary notions about what A is that make up the actual object of meditation. These projections are mostly unconscious of course, which only makes matters more difficult.

Q: Is it not so that if you can just observe, the observation will somehow subside and Self realization will take place?

J: If there is observation, there is bound to be an observer and an observed. You may put whatever you imagine nothingness to be in the place of the observed, and you may train the observer to be indifferent to the meaninglessness of observing imaginary nothingness, but it is essentially still the same. There is observation, and as long as there is observation, there is duality.

Q: But won't it short-circuit at some point? I mean, I am already the Self, right? So it's like peeling an onion: eventually you reach the core which is nothing.

J: I know the onion theory, of course, but I think it is part of the illusion it is intended to remove. The first fallacy is that Self should be covered by layers you have to remove in order to reach Self realization. That is not the ultimate truth. Ultimate truth is that there is nothing that hides the Self and there never has been and there never will be. There is only wrong notions about the Self. Do you understand this? There is nothing but wrong notions about The Self. Nothing! You can work on your wrong notions about the Self for lifetimes and you will not get the least closer to Self realization. If you want to stick to the onion model, understand that for every layer you peel off a new layer manifests.

Q: What you are saying is that it is essentially hopeless to reach Self, because no matter what we do to reach Self, we are just dreaming on in our projections.

J: Not at all, I am in fact confirming that the only path to Self realization is Pure Being, but I am spending most of my time explaining what are wrong notions in order to clear them up. This does not mean I adhere to the onion model, because it's my point you can go on clearing up wrong notions for ever. That is also why therapy and self-work will never bring you the least bit closer to Self.

Q: OK, so what about this "caused to take place"?

J. Let's go into that in the next session.

Practicing minimum distraction and quick return to Self in meditation

November, 2008

Question: I was sitting with eyes closed and just wanted to find out what it was that I was experiencing. There was not much, but what I felt was a resistance. I knew I was aware, but there was a tension that was not going away. It was a feeling of not being free. I wanted to let go, but its not possible.

Jan: OK, here's what you mention:

1. resistance.
2. awareness.
3. someone who claims the awareness.

All three are present in you and working at different levels of consciousness. In itself awareness is pure, but if there is someone who claims ownership of the awareness, then there will inevitably be resistance to letting go.

Q: There was someone experiencing this. It is all mind, so this sitting with closed eyes is doing no good.

J: As I said before: Sitting with closed eyes can do tremendous good and sitting with closed eyes can be nothing but sitting with closed eyes. It depends on what is caused to take place while the eyes are closed. Some things can easier take place when eyes are closed than when they are open.

Q: When meditating I am not expecting anything to happen at all.

J: Yes, but never the less something happens. And the key is not so much what happens as it is what causes it to happen. This cause is prior to the conscious happening and is in itself something that happens. You sit and meditate and may be resting in pure being, but then suddenly you become conscious that you're off in thoughts or feelings and you are identified with the ego or the mind.

Q: Yes, this is how it is. When it happens I stay with awareness of what is going on.

J: There is not much point in staying with anything you get lost in, for it will never help you get closer to Self. In order to get free of the stuff you get caught in, you should ignore the stuff and instead turn your attention to the original sense of I-ness. At times you are in deep meditation and are resting in pure being for a while, then there is a slip or lack awareness and soon you become aware that you are caught in thoughts and you really have no clue how that happened. What you in that situation should do to get to the root of the problem is first of all NOT to pay any attention to the stuff you get caught, but rather turn your attention to the basic I-ness prior to all the stuff in consciousness and prior to the sense of experiencing it and being caught in it. You deal with mind-stuff from now on till the sun burns out and you never reach any end to it. The only way out of it is

to turn your full attention to the I-ness prior to experience and therefore prior to getting lost.

Q: What do you mean with "I-ness"? Do you mean me? Or the I AM?

J: I mean the fundamental first sense of being a subject, of being a mind, of being somebody. This first sense is prior to personality, that is why I call it "I-ness" and not "you". On the other hand it is still within duality, so it is not Self. This first sense is also prior to observation.

Q: Is this the "I AM"?

J: "I AM" is a tricky expression. Many use it to denote Pure Nothingness-Being, the Ultimate Self. But that is not a good expression, as far as I see it, for in the expression "I AM" there is an I that considers itself to BE. But in Self realization, you have gone beyond this illusion and realize the I simply is nothing more than a construct in consciousness, a phenomena, a consciousness-body you have incarnated into just like the physical body. And eventually the I will vanish just like the body will.

Q: But I thought I had to get enlightened by going from not-Being because I was caught up in dreams and thoughts, and and that I would become more and more serene until finally I was in a state of I AM. And that this was enlightenment.

J: No, on the contrary. In enlightenment you have freed yourself of any sense of I and you certainly have not evolved into an enlightened I. You can say there is "AM" (nothingness-Beingness), but you can not say there is an I that is or owns or experiences that AM-ness. Now, language bids us to use phrases like "I AM", but it will have one meaning from the enlightened perspective and an other from the unenlightened. And I have seen the phrase cause confusion in seekers because it makes them believe that they as persons have to evolve to a serene point where their individuality simply is. This latter is a complete fallacy: it will never happen, because it is not in the nature of the I to simply just BE; hence "I AM" is complete nonsense. "AM" in "I AM" implies a stable and unchanging state of serene, peaceful presence that has overcome the "I". Well, this will never ever happen. It is not in the nature of the I to simply BE. It is the nature of the I to change and to interact with what changes around it. The "I" will never, ever get enlightened. "I AM" denoting the ultimate serenity of Pure Being is a contradiction of terms and therefore nonsense.

Q: But I am not enlightened now, that is for sure, and I long to get enlightened. If I can't get enlightened, I must say you confirm my initial remarks that meditating with eyes closed is a waste of time.

J: If you meditate in order to get your I transformed into Pure Being, then you are wasting your time. On that premise the best you can ever expect to get is some ecstasies that will pass.

Q: Okay, so what should take place during meditation? You said something was caused to take place.

J: Yes. Now, "causes" will never take you to Self. They take you out of Self and into mind. When meditating you suddenly discover you are off in mind-stuff and you have no idea how that happen. It happened because something was caused to happen in your consciousness and only later did you apply your awareness to it and then only saw the mind stuff. You never saw the original thing that caused the distraction. I say it is "caused" to take place, because it is not of your volition or under your control yet. It just happens and only after it has happen do you realize you are in a different space then the goal-space of Pure being.

Q: Yes, this is what it is like.

J: What you are currently doing, and what most people do in this situation, is to continue with the flow of awareness -- but you forget that you are now wasting your awareness on useless stuff. So what you should do is stop wasting awareness on mind stuff, feelings and so forth. In this situation only very few can jump right back to absorption in the Self, so what I recommend is to practice awareness of the primal "I-ness". This is not a clearly defined complex of likes and dislikes, thoughts and feelings. It is the first vague sense of being and individual, a subject, a point of consciousness relating to objects around it. This is "I-ness". It is not a structured or defined "I" in any sense. It is a very, very simple sense of being somebody. Untrained awareness always wants an object, so it can not rest in the unmanifest for long. Therefore you should practice awareness of the subtlest and most primitive, basic or simple sense of being someone. Not on any of the manifestations of this someone, that lies on levels above and which this basic someone identifies itself with. You have to become aware of the sense of someoneness, or I-ness, prior to identities.

Q: But isn't this I-ness within duality? Shouldn't we go for the real stuff: the Self, The Absolute? Why meditate on our basic duality and primal ignorance?

J: Because you, and most people, can't meditate on Pure Being, The Self, The Absolute. They can have glimpses of suddenly plopping into Self, but they will quickly become so agitated about it, that they are out of it within seconds. And the distance between the Self and the level they bounce back to is so great, that it will usually be very hard to get into oneness with Self again. So the trick is to practice awareness of the closest relative level of your consciousness in order that you, when you bounce out of oneness with Self, will not drift further into distractions than to a point from where you can very easily plop back into oneness with Self. Practicing this will shorten your sadhana tremendously.

Replies to common fallacies about enlightenment

October-November, 2008

Introductory remarks about Selfrealization

The "I" is being created constantly. If seeking Self-realization, one should clearly understand that the I is not a stable entity, it is not a given and constant being. The I is in constant change, recreating itself at every moment, and that is why it is regarded as not real. You identify with it, but this identity is not you as far as The Self goes. Experiences, hopes, dreams, ideas and feelings interact constantly and this interaction produces the "I". Along side of this there is a tendency to identify with all this, and that tendency is the basic I-ness. Once one gets Selfrealized, this tendency vanishes and there is no longer any I-ness, or I AM-ness. The interaction of the experiences, hopes, dreams, ideas and feelings still go on, but one is no longer involved in them. This is freedom. It is Oneness with Pure Being. It is "IS-ness", rather than "I AM-ness". When trying to sense the I-ness, one should be aware that it is mainly a feeling of being an individual, a someone. It is not something more or less definable, like an emotion or a thought. The I-ness and the I AM-ness are two sides of the same coin, and they together make up the primal ignorance to be overcome just before entering Self-realization.

The fact is, nothing can be said about enlightenment except that it IS. The closest you can ever come to say what enlightenment is, is that it is IS-ness after you go beyond the realization that you are NOT the primal I AM-ness or the primal I-ness (which is the same). Enlightenment is not even "nothingness", since this implies absence. Enlightenment is not something you grow into, since this implies change of something non-enlightened into something more enlightened. And you MUST realize that in enlightenment there is no longer a someone that has become something, because there is only you as the Self. And you also MUST realize that enlightenment is NOT something you get or reach or grow into, it is BEING WHO YOU ALREADY ARE PRIOR TO ANY SENSE OF I-NESS.

There is no difference between Self-realization and basic enlightenment. However, how enlightenment manifests can vary and one can therefore speak of types of enlightenment, but the basis of all enlightenment is Self-realization, which is oneness with the Self and freedom from confusing non-Self with Self.

Ignorance about the Self is not the truth, nor your real situation. It is only a major distraction.

The following misconceptions about Selfrealization and enlightenment were mostly found on the internet, some in books, some came to me as emailed questions.

1. Fallacy:

We are all born to become enlightened.

Jan: Enlightened is not something you "become". The truth is rather something like this: We are all born enlightened and we have never been anything else and simply can not be anything else. But it is truer to say: We were never born. But let's stay with the first "truth". Enlightenment is not something we develop or grow. Enlightenment could be said to be: Self, aware in and of itself in a non-dual oneness. This means that Self-realization is not a matter of acquiring insights, like when getting to know an object or a subject. Self is not realized in bits of information or flashes of insight or fits of ecstasy. This Self has always been your Self and always will be your Self. The problem is not "becoming" enlightened. The problem is solely liberation from identification with non-Self. And you don't stop this by eliminating the individual things you identify with. In fact it is better to just leave objects of identification alone and focus on not identifying with them in the first place. The only way to overcome identification is to go prior to the primal identification-mechanism and prior to the primal I-ness. After repeatedly going prior to the primal identification-mechanism (and the primal I-ness), and letting awareness merge into Self, the identification-mechanism will gradually diminish and eventually vanish. Then Self simply IS. And one realizes that one has been THAT all the time and that ignorance was just a major distraction.

2. Fallacy :

Enlightenment is a brief awakening of the mind when all prejudices and discriminations are momentarily set aside, and the world around you becomes a source of wonder.

Jan: Nope. Enlightenment is none of this. Enlightenment is not "a brief" awakening, nor is it an "awakening". First of all, enlightenment is to realize ones nature as prior to anything temporary, hence it can not in any sense be "brief". Enlightenment is never "brief", either it is there or it is not. You can have "brief awakenings" of many kinds, but be assured they never have anything to do with enlightenment. Second, "enlightenment" is not an awakening of "the mind". Mind is relative (ever changing) and enlightenment is realizing your true nature as non-relative because it is a pure non-manifest nothingness-being. Thirdly "enlightenment" is not a state of "wonder", simply because "wonder" is within the realm of duality and indeed because any "wonder" will be a condition of duality, and enlightenment is prior to duality. Nor is enlightenment in any way "wondrous". It simply IS. Enlightenment is Pure Being, and Pure Being is unmanifest, hence enlightenment is neither "brief", an "awakening", "of the mind" or related to "prejudices and discriminations". If it was "wondrous" or a matter of "wondering", there would be duality and this is not in the nature of enlightenment.

3. Fallacy:

Recognize that enlightenment is a purely subjective experience, nobody can tell you how to become enlightened as it is your own inner journey.

Jan: Nope. Enlightenment is prior to the subject and it certainly is not an "experience" and least of all a "journey" . Enlightenment is realization of ones true nature as unmanifest and therefore in no sense a journey. The statement "nobody can tell you how

to become enlightened" is a common misconception. One who is enlightened and has fully awakened Shakti, can transfer spirituality to others as easily as handing them an orange. If this fails, the problem is never that the enlightened one can't do it, the problem always is, that the receiver either can't receive or can't hold what is being given. Most people are so identified that handing them real spirituality is like trying to kill a fire in the kitchen by pouring water on the roof.

4. Fallacy

Learn to recognize the little moments when you do become enlightened as they are moments you suddenly grow as a person and your brain suddenly plugs you into another part of the universe.

Jan: No. There are no "little moments" when a "you" becomes enlightened. And enlightenment is not something you "grow" into and certainly enlightenment has nothing to do with "a person" or a "brain" becoming "plugged into another part of the universe". My above comments should suffice as comments to this also. But please, please, please grasp the fact that anything you can in any way consider to be "you as a person " and anything you can in any way consider to be "a momentary experience" and anything you can in any way consider to be "growing" has nothing to do with enlightenment at all. Enlightenment is freedom, plain and simple. "Personal growth" is bondage within the growing ego/mind.

5. Fallacy:

Don't go chasing enlightenment as it comes to you when you least expect it. It could be something as simple as seeing your baby walk for the first time, feeling compassion for someone, reading a book, kissing your spouse. Don't chase it but learn to recognize it.

Jan: This stuff about "learning to recognize it in experiences" is nonsense. First of all, enlightenment is not an experience within duality, or dependent upon experiences. Secondly, enlightenment is certainly not something acquired through learning. And enlightenment has nothing to do with any kind of experience, or event, no matter how sublime or delightful. Also, enlightenment does certainly not "come to you when you least expect it and less so if you chase it". If that was the case, then everybody in world, except the yogis, would be enlightened. Yogis chase enlightenment with all their heart and all their mind and all their will.

6. Fallacy:

Our only obstacle keeping us from fully awakening is our mind - therefore we must stop the mind.

Jan: Nope. If you manage to stop your mind, you have accomplished nothing but stopping the mind. Enlightenment does not care if the mind is active, passive or stopped, because enlightenment has nothing to do with the mind. So the mind is certainly not "our only obstacle keeping us from fully awakening". The mind is no obstacle at all, the real obstacle is that you identify with the mind. If you identify with your mind, and you succeed in stopping the mind, you will still be identified with a stopped mind - and will

still be just as far from enlightenment as if your mind was a chatterbox. The ONLY obstacle that keeps you from enlightenment is the subtle I-ness, the identification principle, prior to mind. So concentrate on that and leave the mind alone and you will get enlightened much sooner and with less trouble. Changing the relative will never bring you into oneness with the absolute, so stop wasting time on mental gymnastics and instead step out of it all.

7. Fallacy

Ultimately, there is only one problem: the time-bound mind itself.

Jan: This is from Eckhart Tolle. Fortunately he makes far more sense elsewhere, so I am surprised he says the *ultimate* problem is the mind. No, the *ultimate* problem is identification. The mind is just the body taking care of itself, it is not a problem.

8. Fallacy

The very entry point into the ego-less state or the enlightened state is the present moment. The ego can only be transcended by accessing the present moment.

Jan: This is also from Tolle. What is wrong is the notion that the "power of now" will make you enlightened either as an entry point or as a total presence. What is also wrong is the notion that there is a mysterious relationship between time, presence and enlightenment. The statement says that the ego can only be transcended by accessing the present moment. Well, that is wrong. You can be in the present moment from now on and for ever and still not get enlightened. The reason for this is that the ego only exists in the present moment and thus Tolle is basically off track. There is no ego in the past and no ego in the future. The ego is entirely in the present moment for the simple reason that the ego solely and utterly depends on identification with what is currently going on in the complex of mind/psyche/emotions/etc..

9. Fallacy:

All of your answers are within you, as you, RIGHT HERE (in the eternal now).

Jan: Enlightenment is not a matter of answers, so it doesn't matter at all where any answers are -- whether they are inside, outside, right here or on the moon. The statement is a bit peculiar in that it identifies the spatial ("here") with the temporal ("now"), but the idea probably is that if "you" are totally with what your senses offer you, you are bound to be in the "now". The use of the word "you" is problematic, because it refers to two different things. It is one use of the word "you" when referring to the "you" that will be "right here (in the eternal now)" and a different metaphorical use of the word "you" that is meant when saying "you" are enlightened. It is important not to muddle the two up. You can not in any way speak of a "you" that gets enlightened, but for the sake of communication we have to do so in a metaphorical sense. The "you" that is one with the enlightenment-state does not contain anything within, so the teaching, that with respect to enlightenment all answers are within, is misleading.

10. Fallacy:

You do not 'need' any masters, enlightened beings, special people or places or books or methods.

Jan: True, enlightenment does not need any support or confirmation. It is true that since enlightenment simply IS, and also since what is realized in enlightenment is your Self, then it does not "need" any aids. But hanging out with an enlightened being who has mastered Shakti and is in lovebliss, will inevitably lead to the enlightened being transmitting Self-awareness to you and awakening your Shakti, simply because it is his/her nature to do so. The statement is like saying that if you want to go from Paris to Copenhagen, you do not need any trains, planes, cars or other methods of transportation, just your own two legs. The statement is not untrue, but it is kind of odd to choose to travel in the slowest possible way.

11. Fallacy:

To get enlightened, you only need SELF-TRUST & Present Moment Awareness.

Jan: This is a continuation of the previous statement. Trust in yourself will never (in itself) lead anyone to enlightenment. Because enlightenment is not of the self in which trust can be placed. Enlightenment is not dependent on awareness of anything, whether it is in the present, the past or the future. It is of course nicer to have your awareness in the present moment, but it is certainly not a gateway to enlightenment in the least. It will reduce identification with the pain body, but that in itself is also not a gateway to enlightenment; it is more in the category of therapy. You can have a terribly hurting pain-body and get enlightened, and you can have a happy and peaceful life and also get enlightened. And it is my hunch that those with the hurting pain-body will probably get enlightened the sooner since they have a stronger inclination to dis-identify.

12. Fallacy

Once you've realized you're dreaming, you can't follow the dream the same way as before. Now you know it for what it is, and you know that you can now wake yourself up. That's the Awakened Mind, that's Enlightenment. [...] So, when you ponder your life and who you are, ask yourself if all this is real, or are you not in fact dreaming?

Jan: This is Buddhist teaching. However, the statement confuses "awakened mind" with "enlightenment" (enlightenment has nothing to do with the mind, no matter how awakened it is). It is quite true that "once you've realized you are dreaming, you can't follow the dream the same way as before". But what's the point of this teaching if you are still following the dream? With respect to getting enlightened, it makes no difference if you follow the dream one way or the other. The author of this statement has not understood that you are not out of dreaming until you are Self-realized, and the author has merely replaced a mediocre dream with a grandiose dream and commits the fallacy of assuming that because the grandiose dream gives him a greater kick it is more real. Now, replacing one dream with another in a radical way could be conducive to a mind-realization that if the previous state of affairs (which one took so seriously) was a dream, then this new state of affairs is also a dream. But unfortunately most do not draw this simple conclusion. They generally commit the fallacy of thinking that their *previous*

agenda was a total dream, but that their *current* agenda is less a dream, if a dream at all. And if the new dream has a nice label, like "Buddhism", all the worse for that. They have merely replaced one dream, which they took tremendously seriously, with another dream, they take even more seriously. And so, as far as getting enlightened, they are worse of than they were before.

13. Fallacy

The Awakened Mind is something more concrete than Enlightenment (which is pretty abstract), but the result is the same.

Jan: This is a continuation of the previous statement. It shows that the author has no idea what enlightenment is at all (he calls it "pretty abstract"). He then commits the fallacy of identifying his abstract speculations about enlightenment with the concrete results he has experienced of working with the mind ("the results are the same"). And he implies that since the results of working with the mind are more concrete than enlightenment, awakening the mind is better than getting enlightened. Well, this is all wrong. First the author commits the fallacy of transferring the concept "enlightenment" from the sphere of abstract speculation to the sphere of known fact, and in the process of this transference he transfers the quality of his own inferior understanding, "abstract", to suddenly be a quality of enlightenment. What the author of this statement should have done instead was to admit, that he has no idea what he is talking about. If you are enlightened, enlightenment is not an abstraction at all. Rather it is so, that from the enlightened perspective, the mind (awakened or unawakened) is something that is not concrete. I wouldn't call it an abstraction, but certainly not concrete. The authors introduction of concreteness as a measure of value and validity is totally beside the point.

14. Fallacy

Enlightenment/Salvation comes through forgiveness of illusion: Constant Peace, Happiness, Joy & Freedom!

Jan: This is the kind of nonsense you find in A Course of Miracles. It is based on duality. It presupposes that there is a subject who forgives an illusion and also that there is a subject that is somehow rewarded with "constant peace, happiness, joy and freedom" because it has mastered the act of forgiving. Let's analyze it: This teaching maintains there are five things: 1. a subject who gets enlightened by doing something, 2. a means of enlightenment which is forgiveness, 3. A state one is rewarded with. 4. Enlightenment is synonymous with salvation. 5. Enlightenment is identified with "constant peace, happiness, joy & freedom". Well, enlightenment has nothing to do with salvation, because salvation requires a lost subject to be saved, and in enlightenment there is no longer such a subject. In fact, you could better say that enlightenment is freedom from the illusion of salvation. Identifying freedom with peace, happiness and joy is problematic. There is no freedom in emotions, no matter how nice they are, in fact, as long as there is identification with the subject who experiences peace, happiness and joy, there can not be freedom. On the other hand, the subject can be going through sorrow and unhappiness, yet if there is no identification there will be total freedom.

15. Fallacy

You can wake yourself up.

Jan: That depends on what you understand with "you" and "yourself". But basically the statement is wrong since it presumes a "you" that is in one state and which can enter an other (awakened) state. Anything that can change like that is not within enlightenment.

16. Fallacy

How "enlightened" someone would actually be, in a context of evolutionary enlightenment, would be determined, I suppose, by whatever degree beyond 51% the individual had actually become the authentic self, as an awakened and evolving human being.

Jan: This is from Andrew Cohen. It states there is the "individual", who is "an evolving human being", so we can safely assume that this evolving individual is understood by Cohen to be the real person. And as this individual evolves it does so towards becoming more "authentic". And furthermore it is stated that if the individual is more authentic than inauthentic (has crossed the 50% border), then the individual is enlightened. The 51%-individual is considered enlightened to the least degree, but never the less enlightened. Well, all this is wrong. Enlightenment is not a matter of evolutionary degrees.

Enlightenment is solely a matter of one basic issue, and one only: Is there a confusion of non-Self with Self? And this on a slightly grosser level boils down to one basic issue: Is there any identification? A binary problem (yes or no) can not be described as 51% yes and 49% no. Either there is identification with the ever changing "I", or there is not. If there is, you are not enlightened. It is true that there are different manifestations of this basic enlightenment, and also true that after one has reached this basic freedom and Selfrealization, there will be progress in how it manifests in the world and in ones life. But all this presupposes one simple and basic thing: Is there, or is there not, confusion of non-Self with Self? There is no such thing as 49% non-identification or 49% non-confusion. So either you are enlightened or you are not. And after you have become enlightened, the way in which you manifest enlightenment in life will evolve and change, but the basic Self-realization will be the same freedom from identification and freedom from assuming non-Self is Self.

17. Fallacy

Our own intense emotions - even negative ones - can be a path for spiritual growth towards enlightenment

Jan: This, and the following statements, are from Sally Kempton. No. Intense emotions are within the soul. They are within the realm of change. Emotions and what they can accomplish are in no way related to enlightenment. It is true that if you go completely into an experience of noise you will find silence, and if you go into a complete experience of agitation you will find peace. But this silence and peace has nothing to do with enlightenment, it is merely silence and peace.

18. Fallacy

It's the radical truth behind the Spanda Karikas verse: If we choose to practice with such strong energies, they can lead us into the very source of our own power. Entering a strong feeling is like splitting an atom, except that when you practice going to the heart of an intense feeling, the power you will find inside it is essentially the very creative force of the universe.

Jan: No. Spanda Karikas is a text from the Kashmir Shaivism tradition that wanted to correct the fallacy of Vedanta that the only entry point to enlightenment was pure being and transcendence. Spanda Karikas is about realizing the unity between Shakti (poorly translated as energy) and Shiva (Pure Being) from the point of view of Shakti as an entry point to enlightenment. Spanda is a term for the enlightened cognition that Shakti and Shiva are one and that this unity can be perceived in and as everything as a kind of dynamic presence. The author of this statement has committed the common fallacy of understanding Spanda Karikas to mean that any form of energy can be an entry point to enlightenment, since "all energy is Shakti and Shakti and Shiva are one" (or something along that line). The first misconception of this author is that she thinks Shakti means energy and she therefore assumes that the more energy something has, the more Shakti it has or is. Well, this is wrong. It is true that dynamic forces are manifestations of Shakti, but so are static objects. And there is no difference between a static object and a dynamic force as far as Spanda goes -- or Shakti and Shiva for that matter. Spanda denotes the unity of Shiva/Shakti experienced as a dynamic presence in everything manifest; in fact everything manifest is experienced as a concretization of this dynamic presence. The notion that turbulence equals Shakti is totally wrong and it leads to the misconception that the more turbulence, the better, if only you handle it correctly.

19. Fallacy

But there's a big difference between using strong energy to get high or to feel more alive, and consciously using energy as a way to move deeper into our own essence. That movement, of course, is what the inner life is all about.

Jan: This depends on what is meant by "essence" and "inner life". Unfortunately statements of this sort rarely say. The first fallacy is that enlightenment is "inner life". Well, it is not: enlightenment is beyond inner and outer, or it is both inner and outer, as you please. The statement equates "moving deeper into our own essence" with "what the inner life is all about". But as long as there is an "I" and an "essence", there is duality. You can take any "I" and move it deeper and deeper into "essence" from now on till the sun burns out and you will still not get enlightened. Also getting Selfrealized is not a question of "moving", neither in a concrete or metaphorical sense. The next point of the statement is "consciously using energy". What does the author of the statement mean by this? Well, we have no idea. But Self is not within the realm of consciousness and its motions, and as long as someone is using something, the very "using" will prevent Selfrealization, no matter how consciously "using" is.

20. Fallacy

True meditation takes you into a relationship with your own heart.

Jan: No. True meditation mirrors Selfrealization and thus takes you beyond duality. Any relationship is within duality, so true meditation frees you of relationships. If there is a you and a heart, forget it.

21. Fallacy

Meditation is not just a practice. Meditation is a natural state. It's an actual channel in our consciousness, a bandwidth of tranquility, energy and joy that reveals itself when we learn to pay attention. Once you discover how to tune yourself to the meditation bandwidth, it will empower your life from within.

Jan: Selfrealization is not an empowerment. Empowerment means there is someone who gets empowered by something or someone else and this is within duality. She makes a confused statement: Meditation is "a natural state" and yet meditation is "a channel into your consciousness" and also "a bandwidth that empowers you". Well, I assure you, every aspect of her statement is wrong with respect to Selfrealization and enlightenment. Why? Because every aspect of this statement is within duality and depends on a relationship between A and B. Furthermore, the entire goal of her meditation is to empower "your life from within", which means she believes the goal of meditation is to empower the relative sphere of life or, in other words, to get a good kick of power into your worldly life. Nothing of this is within the sphere of enlightenment or Selfrealization. In fact it contradicts it. Her point is that meditation is a bandwidth, you can tune yourself to, and that if you do this attentively, it will empower you. This is true for some kinds of meditation where one does not want to get free of the "I", but not true of meditation where one wants to get free of I-ness and merge with Self in Selfrealization.

22. Fallacy

Liberation (mukti, enlightenment) is the complete liberation of the senses from the control of the mind. The purpose of life is to live the life of the senses. The senses must be free and independent of the mind.

Jan: This is from Bhagavan (the diksha guru of Oneness Movement). Nevertheless it is total nonsense. Neither the mind nor the senses have anything to do with enlightenment and whether they are connected or not is irrelevant.

23. Fallacy

You will feel that you are connected with everybody. So you discover true love. True love and true joy are not separated, they are one and the same. You feel connected with everything and everybody. You do not live for yourself any more.

Jan: This is also from Bhagavan, the diksha guru. Within the realm of duality (relationships) this is all very, very nice. However, it has nothing to do with enlightenment and Selfrealization. Selfrealization and enlightenment are not a matter of relationships. Your relationships change after Selfrealization, but this does not mean changing relationships will help you get enlightened, nor that changed relationships is the essence of enlightenment.

24. Fallacy

Enlightenment is the opening of one's eyes to what is. In order to attain Enlightenment, the exact way to Enlightenment must be known. First, the activities of the karma which try to conquer the self must be stopped. Second, one must be able to see what is. Third, there must be conscience and courage. Fourth, the karma in oneself must be extinguished through endless love.

Jan: This is from Tathagata. On the one hand it is stated that enlightenment is characterized by the ability to "see what is" and on the other hand the path to enlightenment incorporates to "see what is". If this ability is the quintessence of enlightenment, it can not also be a prerequisite to enlightenment. It is stated that the first step to enlightenment is: "the activities of the karma which tries to conquer the self must be stopped". This stopping, unfortunately, is not possible. An enlightened person's life is just as much within the sphere of karma as anybody else's, but the Self-realized one is free of the binding influence of karma since there is no identification. Also it is wrong to say karma "tries to conquer the self", as if karma has ill intentions and a bad will ("tries"). The truth about karma is that it is completely neutral and that it does not try anything, since karma has no consciousness. Also karma never "conquers" the self. The small self upholds ignorance partly by identifying with the mind's reactions to the effects of karma. It is not karma that upholds ignorance by conquering the self. The fourth step to enlightenment is stated to be "the karma in oneself must be extinguished through endless love". Well, love is itself within the sphere of karma so it can not be a means of extinguishing karma. Endless love will generate good and nice karma and neutralize bad and unpleasant karma, but it is still within karma. Finally, you do not have to extinguish "the karma in oneself" to get enlightened for the simple reasons that there is no karma in the Self and that karma is not the basic problem of ignorance. Karma is a bothersome circumstance of life at large, but it is not the root, or cause, of ignorance. It is true that in enlightenment you are in a Self-cognition prior to karma, and thus can be said to be free of karma, but it is a misunderstanding to conclude from this, that one has to free oneself of karma to get Self-realized.

25. Fallacy

If you are aware of your "I AM-ness" right now, it is an infallible guide to Big Mind. If all objects are gone, what remains is I AM-ness. I AM-ness is pure Self. I AM is the only thing that exists. Suffering and bondage is the misidentification of I AM-ness with an object.

Jan: This is from Ken Wilber. He commits the common fallacy of identifying "I AM-ness" with the pure Self of Self-realization. Pure Self is prior to "I AM-ness". Once awareness merges with Self, one realizes that "I AM-ness" is the primal ignorance and the last illusion to get free of. There is no "I-ness" (or "I AM-ness") what so ever in Self. In fact the "I-ness" and "I AM-ness" is the ultimate hindrance to enlightenment and the beginning of all other forms of ignorance. It is true that "Suffering is the misidentification of I AM-ness with an object", but it is not true that "Bondage is the misidentification of I AM-ness with an object". Bondage IS the presence of "I AM-ness", or "I-ness". And out of this bondage suffering arises because of misidentification of "I AM-ness" with objects.

26. Fallacy

When practicing, the moment you recognize you are distracted, the moment you realize who is distracted, " I am distracted", you are instantly and automatically reinstalled in "I AM-ness".

Jan: This is also Ken Wilber. It is from a lecture where he teaches how to do a practice for enlightenment. Unfortunately this practice only anchors the practitioner in the primal bondage and the root of suffering. It will not lead to Selfrealization. The reasons for this are explained above and will also be elaborated in the following.

27. Fallacy

Enlightenment is the recognition that your nature is nothing other than all things. As all things evolve, so does enlightenment. The enlightenment Buddha got is not the same as the enlightenment we get today. Enlightenment itself is changeable, it evolves.

Jan: This is from Diane Musho Hamilton and reflects Ken Wilber and Andrew Cohen. It is nonsense. Enlightenment is not a recognition that ones nature is all things, rather it is a recognition that ones nature is no-thing, or nothing. But all this implies separation between a cognizer, a recognition and a something assumed to be the nature of the cognizer. The basic realization that occurs slightly prior to enlightenment, is that anything you thought yourself to be is a construct depending on, building upon, one single basic illusion: That the Self is I AM-ness. And once one realizes the illusory nature of I-ness and I AM-ness, then awareness collapses into no-thing-ness, or pure unmanifest being. This collapse is NOT a recognition, for there is no longer anyone to recognize anything. And there is most certainly not a recognition of being "all things". The idea that enlightenment evolves, and that Buddha's enlightenment was less evolved than contemporary enlightenment, reflects a lack of enlightenment on the part of the person who originated this wrong idea, and on the part of those who propagate it. Enlightenment is total freedom from anything that changes, hence also from anything that evolves, and so the nature of enlightenment can not be said to be evolving. Enlightenment is total, absolute and unconditional freedom in and as the unmanifest Self. If enlightenment was an evolving state, this would not be the case. Enlightenment is not a state, if it was, it is true it could evolve and change. The entire concept of "evolutionary enlightenment" (which Wilber and Cohen promote) has nothing to do with Selfrealization. Of course "enlightenment" is a flexible term, but normally enlightenment and Selfrealization are synonyms. Evolutionary enlightenment is based on the notion that "one" can be more or less "the authentic self" and that this "authentic self" is characterizable as "I AM-ness" and if one is more identified with "I AM-ness" than with something else, one is considered to be enlightened. Furthermore, this "I AM-ness" can apparently be in different states, since enlightenment is believed to evolve. All this is wrong as far as Selfrealization goes. Only states evolve. Since enlightenment is freedom from confusing "a state" with Pure Being, evolution is not within the nature of enlightenment.

28. Fallacy

Even great masters, who seem very enlightened, even they go through falling asleep, waking up, falling asleep, waking up. The difference is that they can hide it better, because they don't act out when they have fallen back to sleep, when they feel like the petty small human again. What happens with the great master, however, is that they remember more quickly again who they are.

Jan: This is from Christine Breese. It is not true about Selfrealization (enlightenment). It is only true of the level of realization where self is understood as "I AM-ness" (which many wrongly believe is enlightenment). But in this so called "enlightenment" the basic I-ness has not been transcended and awareness has not merged into Self. As long as there is I-ness, this basic ignorance of Self due to identification with I-ness, will consist of the seed of identification, and therefore anyone at this level of realization will at times "feel like the petty small human again" due to eruptions of identification with less subtle layers of consciousness. But enlightenment and Selfrealization means that the seed of identification has been transcended and there is no longer any confusion of I AM-ness with Self. Once this has been achieved, one will never again have moments of falling asleep into "petty small human" identity. It is true that after Selfrealization, the "petty small human" remains, and true that it will act out once in a while, but it is wrong to say a Selfrealized person will fall asleep during those moments and become identified for a while. This sort of temporary identification with personality structures and with acting out is latent in the "I AM-ness" and "I-ness". So any loss of non-identification, ever so shortly, is a sign that one has not transcended the primal ignorance of I-ness and merged awareness and Self. Hence a sign that Selfrealization has not been achieved.

29. Fallacy

There is nothing one must do except be awake in the moment, and everything else takes care of itself. The first challenge is to become lucid, rather than operating on automatic pilot through life. The next challenge is to maintain that lucidity without falling back to sleep into the human condition. Stopping the mind is the first step. This is where it begins. It only deepens from there.

Jan: This is also from Christine Breese. This practice can lead to temporary realizations of the I AM-ness state, but not to Selfrealization. Please see above comments about this. The notion that stopping the mind is required in order to reach Selfrealization is wrong. Realization is not on the level of mind, so whether the mind chatters or is silent is of no importance at all.

30. Fallacy

The common basic definition of enlightenment is that the enlightened one lives in total and constant contact with the divine, that this persons ego is permanently dissolved in divine ecstasy, and that the person in all acts and words is a pure channel for the divine energy.

Jan: This a common misconception. It maintains that enlightenment is a relationship in the nature of "contact". And it maintains that this relationship is defined by three things: 1. It is with the divine, 2. it is developed to a very intimate degree, 3. it is of the nature of

ecstasy As a consequence of this, it is maintained, the enlightened persons ego is "dissolved in ecstasy", and also the enlightened person is a "pure channel" for the divine. However, this is a misconception. Basic enlightenment is in no way defined by a relationship, in fact enlightenment can be characterized negatively as the absence of the relator -- in other words, there is no longer anyone who relates. After enlightenment, there are of course all sorts of relationships going on in life, both internally and externally, but there is no longer anybody relating. It is a basic characteristic of ignorance that one identifies with an imagined part in life's relationships. Ignorance circles around this error: If there is a relationship, then "I" must be relating, therefore, "I AM". And so the confusion of Self with non-Self results in I AM-ness, and out of the relationship arises fragments and structures that contribute to a more structured ego. It makes no difference if the relationship is with objects, other people or the divine. Freedom from the relating part in any relationship is a characteristic of enlightenment. It is a characteristic of basic enlightenment that one has transcended I AM-ness and I-ness all together and merged awareness into Self. This is not necessarily ecstatic, in fact it basically isn't. However, an enlightened one may develop a relationship with the divine and may develop ecstasy. But so may anyone who is not enlightened. So relationship with the divine can not be said to be a characteristic of enlightenment, nor can ecstasy. One should be aware, though, that the nature of a relationship with the divine will be quite different after enlightenment than before, but this is not relevant here.

31. Fallacy

Enlightenment is the conquest of death through turning the body into light. This type of enlightenment is perfect mastery over matter. It is the ultimate enlightenment.

Jan: This is what the Tamil Siddhas teach. However, it has nothing to do with enlightenment. It does not matter if your body is material or light. If there is identification with it, there is not enlightenment. Enlightenment is prior to I-ness, I-ness is prior to any body what so ever.

32. Fallacy

Enlightenment is one of the attainments people seek on their spiritual quest. It is the highest level of light that most people experience within themselves. That is the state of enlightenment. But enlightenment is defined by each generation. Each generation defines new heights available within enlightenment.

Jan: This is from channeler Lee Harris. It is wrong from beginning to end. Enlightenment has nothing to do with levels, nor with light. Anything that can be divided into levels is within the relative. Enlightenment is oneness with unmanifest pure being prior to I-ness. Enlightenment is not defined within each generation, enlightenment has always been known to be undefinable, yet always tentatively defined in ways pointing to the same state I just hinted at as pure being prior to I-ness. Enlightenment is freedom from confusing non-Self with Self and this implies freedom from I-ness and I AM-ness. There may be an "I" lingering, but there will be no identification with it at all, hence enlightenment has always been understood as freedom from confusing non-Self with Self, freedom from I-ness and freedom from identification. This is not a level to be

attained on an ever expanding hierarchy of attainments, and this has nothing to do with light or darkness. It has to do solely with Pure Being prior to anything.

33. Fallacy

From Self-realization to full enlightenment... After reaching Self-realization, the real growth of consciousness begins. This happens through integration of the great fire the Self is meeting this world. After reaching Self-realization, the body turns back to being just a body. From here on, the real growth starts. This growth means that the "I", that through the general enlightenment was released from the body, starts to disappear. Then there no longer is somebody being a nobody - but nobody being a nobody. At this time the karma of Ones own body is burned out and the body is cleansed, which means it becomes a clear passage for the Self. Without being a part of duality, having a body not knowing what the "I" is, the road is clear. This is non-duality. There are no diversions away from the road, as the cause of identification with the body. The body has realized its Self - but not The Self. The dissolving happens when the Self integrates into the body. This can now happen because non-duality makes it possible - there is no running and no fear. Becoming Universal Consciousness means seeing all of the mystery this life is, becoming able to see-feel life in all of its many colourful aspects, with all parts of this amazing reality visible. But reaching this Truth, there will be noone but The One - the universal seer watching.

Jan: This is one woman's description of what she believes is her progress from "Self-realization" to "full enlightenment". Let's look closely at what it says since it throws light on a high state and also on its limitations and illusions.

She defines "Self-realization" as a state where the "I" "through general enlightenment was released from the body". But this is not Self-realization with a capital S (meaning The Self). It is the small ego-self's ("the I's") freedom from identification with the body, nothing more. It is not freedom from the small self and does not involve merging with Pure-Being-Self in any way. This can be called self-realization (small s), but not Self-realization (capital S).

With regard to getting Self-realized, the I's non-identification with the body is neither a benefit nor a hindrance, it is totally irrelevant. The whole and sole issue regarding Self-realization is to go prior to I-ness and I AM-ness. She says "general enlightenment" is the process that releases the "I" "from the body". But enlightenment is not a process, it is Oneness in ultimate Self, prior to I-ness and also prior to the I AM-ness of the witnessing state (where there is no manifest "I"). Also, enlightenment can not be "general" since generality is within the relative sphere of life. Enlightenment is absolute in the sense that it is prior to (and permeating as well as being) every conceivable aspect of everything. The "I", as well as generality and "the body", belong to the relative and therefore her notion of Self-realization is totally wrong.

She states that "real growth of consciousness begins" "after Self-realization". But no, the truth is that after Self-realization consciousness begins to disintegrate and vanish; this has nothing to do with growth. In fact Self-realization is the end of spiritual growth since there is nothing left to grow. Remember: consciousness is the self-centered complex of karma, mind and emotions which awareness usually identifies with and wrongly believes to be Self. She says this freedom from body-identification "means" the "I" "starts to disappear", but this is not so. This situation (of non-identification with the body) is only the beginning of a radical transformation of identifications, not the beginning of the dissolution of I-ness.

The dissociation of body and "I" is a characteristic of kundalini being concentrated in the heart without Self-realization. To call this dissociation "Self-realization" is nonsense.

She continues: "This happens through integration of the great fire the Self is meeting this world." This sentence is unclear, but she states "the Self" is "great fire", and when this great fire "meets the world", then "This happens" ("growth of consciousness"). In other words: "When the great fire of the Self meets the world and one can integrate this meeting, growth ensures". This is indeed a perfect description of the kundalini-process (prior to Self-realization and prior to enlightenment). Now, the Self is not "great fire", but Shakti working in the body most certainly is. Ultimately, in enlightenment, Self and Shakti are realized to be one, and then there is no more "fire".

She then states that after the disappearance of the "I" there "no longer is somebody being a nobody - but nobody being nobody". Now, this is not Self-realization, but the level of I AM-ness where there is an extremely subtle sense of being "nobody" witnessing everything. In Self-realization this witnessing-stance also goes away. In order to understand this, one should understand the witnessing stance is indeed prior to the "I" and is indeed perfectly described as "nobody being nobody", but Self-realization is prior even to this. Just because the "I" "starts to disappear", or one is no longer identified with the "I", and one realizes oneself to be nobody (nothing, not-I), it does not mean Self-realization has occurred and one has entered non-duality. It is merely reduction of the energy and complexity of the manifest "I" and also realization of non-diversified consciousness. Specifically subtle I-ness and I AM-ness lies between Self and non-diversified consciousness as a subtle point of reference. I AM-ness is characterized as a sense of "nobody being nobody", but it is not Self-realization yet.

She continues: the body then "becomes a clear passage for the Self. Without being a part of duality, having a body not knowing what the "I" is, the road is clear. This is non-duality." No, this has nothing to do with "non-duality" at all. In her description there is clearly duality between "nobody being nobody" and "body", and duality is also expressed in the statement that the body acts as a "passage" for "the Self" (apparently she now uses the term "Self" differently). But in real Self-realization, the Self needs no passage, for (with regard to the body) the Self is present beyond, in, as and around the body while all the same remaining unmanifest and without location. This is the non-duality of enlightenment. Thus, speaking of "a passage for the Self" is not in the nature of

Self-realization or enlightenment. What she describes is the characteristic freedom and limitation of the witnessing state.

She ends her journey with a description of what she believes to be "full enlightenment". It goes: "But reaching this Truth, there will be no one but The One - the universal seer watching." However, this is still the witnessing state (perfectly described), but it has nothing to do with "full enlightenment", nor Self-realization. What she says is the final "truth" is: "Becoming Universal Consciousness means seeing all of the mystery this life is, becoming able to see-feel life in all of its many colourful aspects, with all parts of this amazing reality visible. " This is indeed very nice, but it is not what enlightenment "means". Having this ability to appreciate "the mystery of life" does not mean one is enlightened, nor does the wonderful empathy expressed in this sentence.

It is noteworthy how her narrative and definition of enlightenment revolves around the body throughout. But in fact enlightenment is in no way dependent on the body, so describing Self-realization and enlightenment in terms of the body's process and the body's state is misleading and a misunderstanding. She writes about "full enlightenment": "There are no diversions away from the road, as the cause of identification with the body. The body has realized its Self - but not The Self. The dissolving happens when the Self integrates into the body. This can now happen because non-duality makes it possible - there is no running and no fear." Again she poses a duality between the body and The Self and says the integration of the body and The Self is possible because of "non-duality". This is of course a contradiction; if there is "non-duality", there can not be duality between The Self and the body. She says "non-duality makes it possible" to "integrate the Self into the body", so she clearly sees non-duality as a pre-requisite to integration. However, if there is something to integrate, there is duality. She understands non-duality as a characteristic of pre-I beingness (the unmanifest) only. Of course, when we have unmanifest pre-I beingness without qualities, there is no duality within this beingness, but the non-duality of enlightenment is very, very different from this since it incorporates the (so called) "manifest". This means that in "full enlightenment" there is no duality between the body and the Self in terms of Self-realization (hence the Self does not "integrate into the body"). This true non-duality is very hard to understand and very hard to describe. But reducing the age old concept of non-duality to being only a quality of unmanifest Pure Being separate from the plural manifest is a misunderstanding of the traditional meaning of the term non-duality.

What she also states here is that "full enlightenment" is characterized by "no diversions away from the road", however, in Self-realization and enlightenment, there is no longer a road. She concludes that full enlightenment is "the universal seer watching", but this witness state is in fact only the door to Self-realization. As she herself so aptly speaks of "no diversions away from the road", one certainly is firmly on the road to Self-realization and enlightenment once one enters this witnessing state. But calling this witnessing-state full enlightenment beyond Self-realization is wrong. The witness-state is the entrance to Self-realization.

34. Fallacy

You can't become free if you do not know what you need to be free from in the first place. Know thyself. The way to freedom is living it rather than running away from it ...How can you know pain without feeling it?

Jan: This concept of freedom is not the freedom of Self-realization. It is the kind of freedom one seeks in therapy, where one seeks to know a problem in order to get rid of it. However, the freedom of Self-realization is not a matter of getting rid of anything. It is more in the order of waking up from a dream. To remain in the analogy, what above statement says is that in order to wake up from a dream, one must know the dream better. But this will just keep one in the dream. It is the same with getting Self-realized: Knowing the small self better is not going to free one of identification with it. Probably on the contrary. But what is most important to understand is that one is not attempting to get rid of the small self. What one is attempting is to get rid of the basic I-ness that causes identification with the small self. And there is nothing to know about this I-ness, it is a primal principle without any qualities. The "you" you identify with is not YOU. The YOU is already and always FREE. Enlightenment is partly realizing this, and also partly realizing that bondage is an illusion. ... So: Enlightenment is not a matter of running away, nor a matter of living it. Both these attitudes are equally wrong. In Self there is no pain, in mind there is pain. ... Both can co-exist. If you want to know pain, go on. But it will not lead to Self-realization. Yet all the time Self-realization is there within you waiting for you to let go of pain and merge with IT.

35. Fallacy

The "heart" is the abode of the Self, not the physical heart but the spiritual heart "2 digits to the right of centre". When we enquire "who am I?", we will find the answer there. If we watch the place where bliss arises we feel for ourselves that it is the very same place. The Maharshi (Ramana) said that the enquiry, "who am I?", also takes the form of "whence am I?", ie. where is the source of me.

Jan: The Self does not have any abode at all, since the Self is prior to anything manifest. Once the Self is realized, it is not in any physical location. If we are talking about physical reactions or sensations connected with realizing the Self, it is more correct to say the Self permeates the entire body and a large area around the body, because once one is in the Self, that is the space that becomes permeated with bliss and presence. So the question "where am I" is really strange since it has no answer. One should also be aware that the question "who am I" does not have an answer, since there is no "who" ("me") in Self, and the "I" one is enquiring about, is also not present in Self and indeed, because the Self is unmanifest. This means that the recommended self-enquiry is structured around ignorance and is in itself basically ignorant, and its goal is to get ignorance to disentangle itself from false identifications. This disentanglement is most valuable, but the part about the Self having a physical location and that one will there find the "answer to who am I?" is wrong. Since the Self is not within time and space, the notion that the Self has its abode within a small space in the chest is absurd.

36. Fallacy

If one looks at the thousands of spiritual practices that have been taught to humans in the past, the Awareness Watching Awareness Method is the most rapid and direct means to bringing sorrow, suffering and the ego to its final end here and now in this lifetime. The Awareness Watching Awareness Method is the most rapid and direct means to living in infinite-eternal-awareness-love-bliss.

Jan: This is from Michael Langford. It is a big statement. From the amount of time Michael has spent every day on his method, it is obvious that he can not have had much time left to practice other methods, in fact he makes a virtue out of not practicing other methods, so his statement is purely speculative. His method is that of Ramana Maharshi and it is a fine method, but it is not the fastest to what I call love-bliss, and though Michael also uses the words love-bliss, I doubt he is referring to the same as I.

Awareness watching awareness is part of any practice that leads to Self-realization, so Michael should perhaps have called it “the essential means”, rather than the most rapid means. The awareness watching awareness practice is aimed at freedom from identifications and ultimately at Self-realization. This Self-realization can have a peaceful “bliss”, but not necessarily, it can also be empty. The love-bliss of which I speak is massive in intensity and “peaceful” is not quite the word you would find most fit to describe it, though it is entirely unmanifest. Also the love-bliss of which I speak does not come with simple Self-realization for the simple reason that it takes a thorough transformation of your presence in the world until non-duality dawns on you, and you as Self recognize Self in everything around you. This transformation takes time, since it is not a matter of transcendence but a matter of rearranging substance. Awareness watching awareness is a purely transcendental method and it can not lead to this, it can only lead to Self-realization understood as freedom from identification, but not to Self-realization understood as direct recognition of Self in everything (non-duality). So the next question is: Ignoring these higher states, is awareness watching awareness the most rapid means to basic Self-realization? No, it is not -- for the simple reason that it is still a practice that starts in illusion and false identification (confusion of non-Self with Self) and seeks to help the deluded awareness disentangle from delusion about itself and its own nature (the Self).

The most rapid means is when the Self actively takes part in dissolving identification and delusions about Self. This is the most rapid and direct means because it is not “a means” and not “a practice”, thus it does not begin in ignorance and try to make ignorance unignorant through practice (such as other practices do, including Michaels). It is the Self burning and collapsing the manifestations of Self that cause confusion of non-Self with Self and thus it removes identifications, I-ness and ignorance. But it does far more than that as I will explain in a minute.

What do you do when you are on this path where the Self is actively and spontaneously removing the distractions that keep awareness from merging into Self? You surrender to grace and the Self (they are One and this oneness is soon realized on this path). Part of opening to this surrender is doing a small amount of awareness watching awareness when beginning a meditation, but once this practice has given a basic freedom from present

entanglements, one surrenders to the grace burning within and merges with it in oneness with massive energy and bliss-beyond-bliss. This merging begins to develop the higher states of enlightenment beyond basic Self-realization even before basic Self-realization has been achieved.

Since this is not a practice but a process of surrendering to (and merging with) what is continuously burning away ignorance from within (this “what” is the Self). The proper question now is: what do you do to get on this path? The answer is, that this path is grace and grace is not something you can create or do yourself, it is given to you either by divine intervention (I received it spontaneously from the Blue Being when I was still a teenager) or by the loving kindness of someone who is capable of awakening it in you (I do this with my close friends). This awakening involves Shaktipat, but also involves creating a connection between unmanifest Pure Being and the Self as manifest identity and I-ness so the Self become alive and vibrant even in the structures of ignorance. (As I have said repeatedly: ignorance is an illusion: all is Self already). Shaktipat is a special awakening of kundalini so that kundalini does not become dormant again, but aims solely and utterly at your ultimate merging separate-awareness into Self and dissolution of ignorance into the non-duality of the love-bliss-beyond-ecstasy-recognition by Self of Self in everything within and without.

However, there are means to invite the Grace of Self and kundalini to awaken and put you on this path. I have described them on the page about meditation. Do not underestimate these practices, though they may seem simple. There are others, and if you practice the ones on the meditation page daily for a while, let me know how things are going and I might instruct you in these other methods.

Adyashanti's three phases of awakening

The three phases of waking up (according to Adyashanti)

Adyashanti:

The three phases are three completely arbitrary lines that divide something that is actually whole. So it is a way of helping put into context what is actually one happening. Sometimes someone wakes up instantaneously and completely, but usually it is not so clear-cut. Yet most people are told it is clear-cut. Yet the fact is it is simply not that clear-cut.

1. Waking-to. Waking to the fact that there is (you could say) something Divine within yourself. Even as you awakening to the fact that "peace is always there" or "love is always there" ... Something is always there that you didn't notice before, and you realize it

always is there and always was there. Awakening to this takes God or Spirit out of its concept and brings it closer to a living reality. However this is not what we usually think of when we think of "waking up".

2. Waking-in. What is commonly called waking up. When you wake up to the fact you are that which you previously thought was in you. This is a sudden identity shift away from the personality, body, mind and personality to the formless Self. This is not awakening-to but awakening-as. Yet it is focusing on the emptiness of it, and not yet experiencing the fullness of it. This is where people run into the dark night of the soul where all the gifts that were given are suddenly taken away.

3. Awaken-out. By this I mean that our awareness is not always habitually looking inwards at the formless Self all the time and being identified as the formless Self. As beautiful as it seems, that formless Self suddenly looks outward, and it just doesn't see itself as formless and empty but it looks outwards and it sees itself in all forms and all things. And the fullness comes rushing in and there is a deeper experience of what is manifest is the numberless manifestations of what is. Their focus is no longer habitually looking inside at the formless Self all the time, and being identified as the formless Self. Suddenly it looks outwards and it sees itself in all forms and all things. And the fullness comes rushing in. There is really no difference between pure consciousness and its numberless manifestations. And we quit looking at our jobs, etc., as separate from this formless Self.

Jan:

Adyashanti speaks only of pure being. Bliss and Shakti do not have any place in his paradigm of realization. At the most he speaks of bliss as an inferior state prior to pure being, which testifies that he only knows of bliss understood as ecstasy and not as an immovable, unmanifest state beyond nothingness-being.

Adyashanti's phase three is still only a phase. Apparently this is where Adyashanti is since he stops his narrative here. However beyond this there is a state where there is nothing but bliss, neither inside nor outside, since inside and outside no longer have any meaning. At this point nothing exists but Bliss. This bliss IS pure being. This bliss IS the Shakti manifesting as everything "outside". Yet you are One with this Shakti and this Shakti IS Bliss and this Shakti-Bliss IS Pure Being and you are IT.

But this minor difference is really nothing to be concerned about. What Adyashanti says is generally wonderful and I whole-heartedly recommend listening to his satsangs.

Notions about the Self -- Illusion -- A Critique of Vedanta

Here we will discuss four basic notions of the Self and also go into the nature of illusion and show where Vedanta goes wrong

Four notions about the Self

1) The nature of the Self is Pure Existence. Thus in the Self there is no knowledge, no activity and no bliss -- and of course neither pleasure or pain. All these are seen as within the relative sphere that in toto is rejected as illusory. Self-realization according to this understanding of the Self will therefore be eternally unconscious and a complete annihilation without death. This point of view is that of the Indian philosophical tradition known as Vaisheshika.

2) The nature of the Self is Self-conscious Pure Existence. Thus in the Self there is no activity or bliss, but there is Self-awareness which is immortal. Self-realization according to this belief is a state of immortal Self-aware Pure Being separate from everything. This separateness is to be understood in its most radical sense. Any kind of fluctuation in consciousness is seen as an illusion and thus bliss and interaction with anything at all is rejected. This state of Self-realization would be somewhat equal to being Self-aware to the highest degree yet in a state of stupor for all eternity. This notion of the Self is that of the Indian philosophical tradition called Samkhya and their notion of Self-realization is called kaivalya. This notion of the Self depends on a strict duality between Pure Self-conscious Being (called purusha) and everything else (called prakriti). Everything else includes anything that moves or changes in any way and therefore all emotions are excluded from the notion of the Self. Those who adhere to this iccold notion of the Self reject bliss as if it is an emotion. They also deny the Self any form of creativity. They therefore have a hard time explaining how the illusory world of "everything else" (prakriti) came about in the first place. For an adherent of Samkhya, spiritual practice is solely a matter of getting out of ignorance. Which means getting out of everything and dissolving into the Big Void.

3) The nature of the Self is Blissful Self-conscious Pure Existence. This notion of the Self is well known from the Indian philosophical system called Advaita Vedanta. Here the Self is called Brahman. "Advaita vedanta" itself means "the highest wisdom about the non-dual Self". That sounds nice, and many teachers, both eastern and western, refer to "advaita" or "vedanta" when describing their teachings. I am not quite sure why, because the majority of them do not know the least about the bliss of the Self and do not mention it at all. They only talk about the Self as Self-conscious Pure Being, their teachings are therefore not Vedanta, but Samkhya. Advaita vedanta relies heavily on Samkhya, as well as on the old Indian wisdom texts known as Upanishads. Vedanta adheres, like Samkhya, to a strict distinction between Pure Existence and "everything else" which is seen as a complete illusion (maya). Vedanta has a big problem here, that any seeker of the Self should understand fully. One should understand it because so many refer to their teachings as Advaita Vedanta, yet they are blind to this problem. And one should also be

aware of this flaw in Vedanta, because there are higher teachings more in accord with reality and actual experience. I will go more into this later, but basically Vedanta has the same problem as Samkhya in explaining how the illusory world, mind and ego came about in the first place if the Self is completely inactive and non-creative and separate from everything. Thus there is duality between unmanifest and manifest which Advaita Vedanta can not explain or handle satisfactorily. For an adherent of Advaita Vedanta, spiritual practice is solely a matter of getting out of ignorance.

4) The nature of the Self is Dynamic Blissful Self-conscious Pure Existence. The word "Dynamic" does not capture quite what I mean, because it is hard to understand the unmanifest Self as Dynamic in itself without any duality. There is no appropriate english word. The Indian term is Shakti or Spanda. Shakti is the creative force of everything and it never ceases to be unmanifest blissful pure being. It is difficult for the mind to grasp this and it takes direct experience to understand it fully. This notion of the Self is not so well known, but it is most elegantly expressed in the Indian system known as Kashmir Shaivism. This notion of the Self is generally that of all schools of Tantra. The word "Tantra" has in the west mostly become associated with exotic sexual practices aimed at extended and deepened orgasms. However, Tantra has numerous schools and practices and in fact the possibility of using intercourse as a spiritual practice is a very minor part, and indeed a rather unimportant part with respect to getting Self-realized. Self-realization is of course the topic at hand. What unifies all these schools and practices, however, is that they agree upon the same notion of the Self. According to Tantra the Self is Shakti, thus most practices of Tantra approach the Self as Shakti. When I use the word Tantra, I generally refer to Kashmir Shaivism, since this is where I am most at home and where my experiences have been explained the best.

Tantra is often thought to have originated in Buddhist Vajrayana. Undoubtedly Vajrayana has been a strong influence, but Tantra is much older than Vajrayana. As mentioned above, Tantra is the recognition of ultimate reality as blissful and dynamic Self-awareness and also that this awareness incorporates the world and enjoyment of life. This can fit into many mythologies, schools of thought and practices. Basically Tantra teaches that Self-realization and the dance of life are entirely compatible.

Vedanta, like Samkhya, holds that knowledge of the Self is not different from the Self, the Self is Self-aware. But Vedanta maintains that this knowledge, this Self-awareness, is passive and indeed a state of passivity. Tantra on the other hand recognizes that the Self is vibrant and dynamic and therefore inherently active. While Samkhya believes that knowledge of the world is structured in the intellect (buddhi) and that it is therefore the intellect that has knowledge and knows, Tantra will reply that the intellect is merely the instrument of knowledge and that the knower is the Self. But in general Tantra is not interested in such knowledge and its acquisition, Tantra is focused on developing the Self's Self-awareness and on the recognition of everything as a play of consciousness inseparable from the Self. This also means that Tantra does not rely on revealed knowledge (like for example Christianity, Islam and other semitic religions); the knowledge of Tantra is based on direct experience and it is acquired through direct experience only. Tantra does not reject revelation, but it maintains that the revealed

knowledge can be verified through ones own direct experience. In contrast the semitic religions do not go beyond faith in what a prophet or messiah has revealed in the scriptures.

This brings us to the interesting question of illusion (false or wrong knowledge). Vedanta says illusion is neither a projection of the Self nor something unreal; it is simply false and neither real or unreal. In contrast Tantra maintains that illusion is real enough and that its nature is the same as any other knowledge, but in the case of illusion it is wrong knowledge. This has interesting implications because it means knowledge can be more or less perfect. Thus Selfrealization is one thing, but realization of the Self in other is a matter of degrees of purity and perfection. Ignorance is not absence of knowledge, it is wrong or imperfect knowledge. Vedanta on the other hand denies illusion any ontological status by maintaining it simply does not exist. Vedanta therefore has a problem explaining why everybody is not living in utter wisdom, enlightenment and Self-realization. The best Vedanta can do is say that people already are enlightened, they just don't know it. Which is quite true, but vedanta offers no explanation for why people don't know they are already enlightened; vedanta then refers to something called "Maya". The Maya of Vedanta is generally translated as "Illusion" and ignorance is ascribed to this mysterious force. However, where does Maya come from? Vedanta has no satisfactory answer, thus we are still in the dark about why people are ignorant about their own Self.

The basic problem of Vedanta is the self-contradictory nature of Vedanta's fundamental teachings:

- 1) The Absolute, the Self, is unmanifest, inactive, pure being.
- 2) Because of maya, people do not recognize this and live in suffering.
- 3) The world of plurality is an illusion.
- 4) Non-duality is the Absolute reality.

Now, what's wrong with this? First of all Vedanta claims non-duality is the Absolute reality, yet at the same time Vedanta poses duality between the Absolute and Maya; meaning a duality between the unmanifest Absolute and everything manifest. Vedanta of course has a sense of this predicament, but offers no solution and just replies that everything is an illusion and therefore the objection is also an illusion and a sign of ignorance. Yet it is a fact that the world has existed for millions of years, that people live in it and that people generally are not consciously aware of the Self as unmanifest pure being. Vedanta can't deny this, but rather than admitting Vedanta doesn't understand how this can be, Vedanta goes into denial and simply rejects the world as an illusion. Vedanta's main problem is explaining where maya comes from if the Absolute is passive, inactive and ever unmanifest.

Tantra offers a solution to this. Tantra rejects Vedanta's notion of the Absolute as a passive nothingness; instead Tantra maintains that the Absolute is both unmanifest and a dynamic creative force. From this creative force everything arises; both the world as well as personal consciousness. Maya is thus understood to be both the first sense of separateness from which individual consciousnesses and objects arise, as well as the play

of life at large. It is interesting that this notion of Maya is actually how Maya was understood prior to Vedanta. In the Bhagavad Gita and the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, Maya is described as a creative power with a three-fold nature known as the three gunas. This understanding of the Absolute Self does away with the predicament of Vedanta, and instead of everything being an unreal illusion, everything is a blissful play of consciousness. Personally I find my experience concurs with Tantra, not Vedanta. In a developmental scheme, Vedanta is a phase prior to this blissful unitary consciousness. Vedanta is therefore not actually wrong, it is just inferior knowledge and inferior understanding.

In the next satsang we will look at a small, but basic Kashmir Shaivism text called "The Essence of Self-recognition".

Comments on the Pratyabhijnahridayam (Essence of Self-recognition)

Introduction

This short work of only 20 aphorisms contains the essence of Self-realization. It is a small but very important work in Kashmir Shaivism. It was written by Ksemaraja in the tenth century.

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1) The Shakti of the Absolute Self (Citi) in and of itself is the cause of the manifestation, maintenance and dissolution of the entire universe.

The word used is "citi" and not "Shakti", but since citi is feminine it refers to Shakti, not pure unmanifest being (Shiva). In itself the word citi means pure being, it has three forms: cit, referring to the in itself resting unmanifest beingness (Shiva), citi, referring to the dynamic creative force inherent in pure being (Shakti), and citta, referring to the individual consciousness. This verse ascribes everything to Shakti.

2) By Her own will She unfolds the universe upon her own screen.

This again refers to Shakti, the dynamic creative force. The screen is a metaphor for Shakti herself, so the sutra continues the first sutra by adding that as the entire universe is manifest by Shakti it never ceases to be Shakti. Further the metaphor "screen" implies that not only is the universe a manifestation of Shakti and never ceases to be Shakti, but it is also Shakti that perceives the universe in and as herself.

3) That (projection on the screen, the universe) appears manifold because various objects are perceived by various subjects who are differently disposed.

Ksemaraja here introduces the individual subject and addresses the fact that people seldom see the universe as Shakti and that individuals seldom agree about what reality is. This is a peculiar situation. The first two sutras assured us that everything is Shakti, so the individual subjects are also Shakti, why then, do people not realize their unity with Shakti and recognize everything as Shakti?

4) The individual (atma) is a constriction of Shakti (Citi) but never the less is pure consciousness. Yet individual consciousness is filled with the constricted forms that make up the universe.

When the Pure Self restricts itself into an individual consciousness, the individual consciousness will relate to the universe as manifold restricted objects. Thus unity is lost in infinite plurality, and confronted by so many individual objects the subject contracts even more into an individual identity relating to other individual subjects and objects. Despite this ongoing contraction into an ego separate from everything, the self of the individual remains The Self.

5) Citi (the Self as Shakti) descends from the state of unmanifest Oneness (Cetana) and becomes the objects of awareness as well as the constricted individual mind (Citta) when engrossed in the objects of awareness (cetya).

This sutra explains the individual mind is nothing but a contraction or constriction of the Self as Shakti. It also explains that this constriction is not in the nature of Pure Awareness, but comes about by awareness being absorbed in the objects of awareness without recognizing these as Shakti. This has the interesting implication that freedom is not something one has to grow into or gain, rather it is a matter of getting rid of wrong knowledge about Self, awareness and the objects of awareness.

6) That individual mind is part of illusory understanding (Maya).

Not only is the understanding of the mind illusory with respect to cognizing Shakti and Pure Being [Shakti and Pure Being are one and the same], but the mind is in itself a contraction of Pure Being without any ontological basis other than Absolute Being [Shakti] -- which the mind is not only unaware of, but even quite incapable of realizing. Why can't the mind realize it's own source? Because the nature of the mind is a constriction of the source.

The next verse is very cryptic, but the comment should help:

7) Though essentially One, he (Pure Being) has two sides that consists of three aspects. He appears as fourfold and through seven pentads appears as the objective universe.

Now, what to think of this mumbo-jumbo? Obviously the sutra refers to other Kashmir Shaivism teachings, so with recourse to these we understand the following:

The two sides of the Absolute Pure Being are Shiva and Shakti. Shiva and Shakti in Kashmir Shaivism do not refer to the personages of the Hindu pantheon, but stand for the two aspects of Pure Being: Unmanifest Energy and Pure Being. On the one hand the Absolute Pure Being (Shiva) is ever unmanifest, yet at the same time its nature is dynamic creative force (Shakti) which brings the universe into existence. One might then ask what the nature of these two aspects are? Do they have something in common? Yes, the sutra explains, they have three aspects in common, and these three aspects are generally known as "sat-cit-ananda". Sat means existence, Cit means consciousness, Ananda means supreme bliss. Pure unmanifest Being is sat-cit-ananda and the dynamic creative force is sat-cit-ananda. Actually sat-cit-ananda is a concept from Vedanta, but Kashmir Shaivism incorporates this basic teaching of Vedanta and elaborates on it by explaining the Shakti aspect of the Absolute. Vedanta says there is only One (unmanifest Pure Being) that has three aspects (sat-cit-ananda), but Kashmir Shaivism corrects Vedanta by explaining that the One has a twofold nature which does not negate the threefold sat-cit-ananda of Vedanta. The Absolute both is Shiva and Shakti as well as sat-cit-ananda. In plain english: the Self is not passive unmanifest being, but is a creative force and is existence, conscious and blissful.

The fourfold appearance is due to the minds incapability to comprehend the unmanifest as inherently One union of creative force, existence, consciousness and bliss.

The seven pentads refer to Kashmir Shaivism metaphysics, which speaks of 35 (7*5) principles that constitute the created universe. I don't think there is much point in going into these, since our objective is Self-realization, not philosophizing. Why is all this not so relevant? The next sutra actually explains why:

8) All this is merely various systems of philosophy, which ultimately are roles played by Pure Being.

This sutra is clear enough. It reaches back to sutra 6, which said the mind is part of the problem of illusion. It does not matter how sharp and exact the classifications and descriptions are, they will never reveal the Ultimate Pure Being.

9) Pure Being, in the same way as Shakti, becomes obscured due to constrictions that appear as impurities covering the Self. Thus the individual soul comes into being and gets bound by illusions and reincarnation (samsara).

The previous sutras have focused on how everything is manifest in and of Shakti, but we are now reminded that Shakti and Pure Being are inseparable (one and the same) and that as Shakti appears covered with impurity, so does Pure Being. It may be easier to comprehend objects as constrictions of Shakti, while the individual soul may be easier to comprehend as a constriction of Pure Being. In reality there is no distinction between Pure Being and Shakti. From the point of view of the individual soul, there appears to be impurities hindering realization of Pure Being. The peculiar situation is that these impurities are also Shakti and Pure Being, however, the bound soul can not see this

directly and therefore has to deal with them as impurities clouding the understanding of reality.

What this sutra does not make clear, is that the basic impurity, or constriction, is the sense of "I", the I-ness or I AM-ness. The I-ness is strengthened by the mind relating to all the many objects in the mind. One part of the mind looks at an other and says: Ah! This is who I am! Similarly every part looks at every other part and generates a complex web of identification. The basis of this web is the I-ness or I AM-ness.

10) Nevertheless (though bound in illusion) the individual soul performs the same five functions as the Self.

The five functions are listed in the next sutra:

11) These are: (a) manifestation of constricted phenomena; (b) ideation, thinking and cognition; (c) attachment to and involvement in the phenomena; (d) proliferation by planting seeds of future phenomena and constrictions; (e) dissolution of the phenomena back into Pure Being.

The five functions are of course not so easy to translate since they are technical terms. Here they are:

- (a) Abhasana. To make something appear, which is actually unreal. Illusory appearance.
- (b) Rakti. The mind's attachment and involvement in concepts formed regarding phenomena; thinking and thought processing. It is the involvement of the subjective consciousness with the objective phenomena and the ideas, thoughts and concepts produced of that involvement.
- (c) Vimarsana. Experience resulting from involvement in the object.
- (d) Bijavasthapanam. Literally means "planting the seed", but it is used as a metaphor for proliferation.
- (e) Vilapana. Dissolution, sometimes interpreted as destruction, but it is really a matter of falling back into the unmanifest state from whence the phenomena arose in the first place.

What is described here is actually the cyclic process going on in the mind. It is: Creation of a phenomena of awareness --> Mental involvement in the phenomena --> Experience --> Consequences of the experience in the form of subtle seeds for new involvements --> Dissolution of the object of awareness.

12) The five functions, while in the absence of Self-realization, binds one in illusion (samsara). Bondage gets its power from infatuation with the phenomena.

This sutra informs us that the cycle of the five functions described in the previous sutra are actually the samsaric cycle of reincarnation in a dreamlike illusory reality. The reason one is bound in samsara is said to be the power inherent in one's infatuation with the experienced phenomena. Most interestingly the sutra states that this bondage in samsara only comes about due to lack of Self-realization. This means that illusion and bondage

only continues as long as there is an I-ness with which one identifies oneself and as long as one has not realized one self as Pure Being. So, what does one do about these five functions and the involvement in them?

13) That very same Pure Awareness that acquires knowledge of the individual mind, can through meditation turn upon its source and rise to the level of recognizing itself as Pure Being (the Self).

The Self constricts its awareness to the individual mind and forgets its nature as Pure Being. However, awareness can turn away from phenomena and inwards towards its source. When this is done in a radical way attention will collapse back into its source, which is Pure Being, and at that moment a recognition of the Self occurs. It is interesting that Pratyabhijnahridayam does not speak of "realizing" the Self, but of "recognizing" the Self. The point is that the Self needs to re-cognize itself, not to reach something it was not before by growth and change.

14) The fire of Shakti (citi), even though it descends to the level of concealment, is capable of being known in proportion to its strength.

Sutra 13 spoke of introvert meditation as a means to recognize the Self. This sutra, however, speaks of the emergence of the Self as Shakti burning away ignorance in order to establish Self-recognition in the individual. This process is pure grace. Initiation into this is known as shaktipat, which means "descent of Shakti". Shaktipat is passed on from master to student. In rare cases shaktipat is given by divine grace to an ardent seeker of Self-realization. Giving shaktipat is as easy as handing someone an apple, but often the one to whom it is given, just can't receive it or hold on to it.

15) (Shakti) On acquiring full strength, reveals everything as Pure Being.

The burning away of ignorance by Shakti is not limited to the stuff of the mind, it completely changes one's view of everything as Shakti reveals her presence in and as everything.

16) On attaining blissful Self-realization one becomes liberated even while incarnated. Though there is the usual mental activity and phenomena, Self-recognition never ceases.

It is a common misconception about Self-realization, that the mind becomes quiet or operates in a completely new manner. This sutra informs us that the mind will remain functioning as before, but one will no longer be identified with it after Self-realization. Similarly can be understood that there may be suffering in the mind, yet despite that one will be One with the bliss of the Self.

17) By opening up the center one attains the supreme bliss of Pure Being.

"Center" here refers to the Self. "Opening up" refers to the activity and results of spiritual practices for Self-realization.

18) The means are: (a) Cessation of wrong understanding. (b) Withdrawal and projection of Shakti. (c) Control of the flow (of Shakti, kundalini, prana) between the extremes.

a) "Wrong understanding" is a translation of the word "vikalpa" which can mean as much as "error, uncertainty and imagination". Therefore the suggestion to bring wrong understanding to an end just as much means to bring all fluctuations of the mind to an end. But it is noteworthy that though quieting the mind is a means to an end, it is not in any way an end in itself. Sutra 16 made this quite clear. It is therefore proper to translate "vikalpaksaya" as "cessation of wrong understanding" rather than "quieting the mind".

b) "Withdrawal and projection of Shakti" could also be translated "contraction and expansion of Shakti". This refers back to the need to get Shakti going at full strength. Projecting Shakti forth and withdrawing it again is an effective way to habituate the system to more and more Shakti while it keeps a balance between surrendering to Shakti and controlling Shakti. Ultimately, of course, one will surrender to Shakti and merge into Shakti. It is difficult to describe how this is done, but once the Shakti gets going after Shaktipat, it become quite obvious what this is about.

c) Another means is to control the flow of Shakti in the subtle energy channels of the body. These channels are known as "nadis" and the most important nadi resides in the center of the spine and is called "sushumna". Actually the two extremes of this nadi are a little above the perineum and at the crown of the skull. Shakti resides in the human body as kundalini and kundalini lies dormant in the area just above the perineum. Kundalini can be awakened and brought into the brain via sushumna. This is a very important practice. Preparing the sushumna for kundalini is very important and it is done by making prana flow up and down the spine in synchronicity with the breath. Prana is a basic vital force that is manifested out of kundalini. Since kundalini is Shakti, it is natural to use prana to prepare the way for kundalini and ultimately for Shakti.

19) By repeatedly entering samadhi, the residual impressions of samadhi will permeate one more and more. By thus repeatedly touching the Self, one will become permanently established in the Self.

As the Shakti grabs one more and more due to the practices described in the previous verse, one will enter union with the Self more and more often. This union is known as "samadhi". It is very important to note that Self-realization is not a result of the practices described in the previous sutra, but is a result of repeated and habitual samadhi.

20) Then one attains Oneness with the blissful light of consciousness. One attains the goal of all mantras. One becomes established in Pure Being prior to creation and reabsorption. One reaches higher than the Devas. One comes in control of all this. This is verily the state of Shiva (Pure Being).

Thus ends the Pratyabhijnahridayam, or Essence of Self-recognition.

Questions about practice

Q: It's interesting... I feel like Shakti is who I am and John is just a very interesting part of the scenery:-) John is still here but usually I recognize it or him as just a phenomenon that is often noticed within me.

Jan: Yes, the Shakti is the Self. Stu is just a phenomena with which you have habitually identified yourself. Now you are on the path to Self-realization. The state you have entered is called "turiya" (the fourth state) or "witnessing". It is an intermediary state where freedom from identification has become somewhat established, but where one is not yet One with Self (unmanifest).

Q: If a person has reached a point where there cannot be any identification with non-Self, but there is still some kind of "I-ness" remaining, what would the best kind of practice be to go forward from there?

Jan: Totally letting go, which is surrendering. Surrender to Shakti or surrender to Freedom. As your shakti becomes more active and grabs you completely, this will become a selfevident practice for you. For now trust Shakti will take you there and awaken shakti more and more and merge with shakti again and again. Then bliss will arise and this bliss will be realized as Oneness of Self and Shakti. This bliss is not an emotion or a feeling, it is Absolute Pure Being. But to return to the first sentence: Observe the subtle I-ness for a while, then observe the observation. Notice this is pure awareness without a source. Don't look for an observer at this point, for there is none. Just BE. It will dawn on you that this is freedom.

Q: Was wondering if the crown should be open/radiating Shakti all the time, or just as the next step after you've brought Shakti into the brain?

Jan: Do what works. The important thing is to merge into pure being prior to identification (I AM-ness). You will learn with time and practice and experience. But with time your crown will be radiating 24 hours a day.

Q: Is there such a thing as willing the Shakti in and around the body to vibrate to a higher frequency, thereby causing an even more pleasant feeling? I think I was able to do this a couple of times.

Jan: Sure! But I suggest you surrender to Shakti, rather than manipulate it. Energyphenomena such as you describe are symptoms, not the goal. But if such a practice intensifies shakti and makes surrendering easier, then do it by all means.

Q: When moving energy upwards, should you be moving energy up all three channels, or just the central channel?

Jan: Just the central channel. Inside the spine. Never pull kundalini up ida or pingala (side channels).

Q: I was wondering about the potential for kundalini going up the wrong channel beside the spine (ida and pingala).

Jan: It is there, but it is very, very unlikely to happen. I have never come across an instance of this. Gopi Krishna experienced this and went through hell. He solved it by doing a practice somewhat similar to the Shakti Pranayama mentioned under "How to meditate". Kundalini can send her prana into ida or pingala to a large degree, causing much heat or shivering, but it is usually no problem and balances itself with a little time. In such a situation, the worst thing one can do is panic and begin to fight the shakti, because that will create a block and prolong the situation. The best is to lead shakti into the spine.

Q: I am still unclear on the definitions of Kundalini and Shakti. Is Kundalini concentrated Shakti, or is it something different? I have imagined it as an evolutionary energy, like the energy of "pure potential".

Jan: Shakti is the creative aspect of the unmanifest Self. Shiva is the beingness aspect. The two are One. You as a person are a manifestation of Shakti out of your Self. Since you identify with the manifestation, you are not Self-realized but consider yourself to be the limited, manifest individual. As Shakti manifests this individual, she becomes "contracted" and this contraction is called kundalini. Kundalinishakti is the Shakti of the Self covered in layers of individuated thoughts and feelings (etc.). In fact these thoughts and feelings are produced, upheld and destroyed by kundalinishakti and so is the identification with them. Thus kundalini is the giver of ignorance as well as the giver of enlightenment. You could say kundalini is the primal individuation out of the oneness of Shiva and Shakti, which produces the ignorant state of I AM-ness upon which all other ignorance rests. Awakenning kundalinishakti to long back to the union of Shiva/Shakti starts a process towards enlightenment that will go on and on by itself. Once kundalini dissolves back into pure being, Self-realization dawns and will never be lost. Then your life will be an expression of pure Shakti and no longer an expression of a limited flow of energy from kundalini.

Q: What kind of yoga or prana work do you think is best for preparing for kundalini?

Jan: Experiment with the Shakti-Pranayama for awakening and arousing kundalini. Be comfortable with it and gradually extend the period you can do it without getting tense or losing your breath. If you can do 30 minutes right away, that is fine. It will take a few days and some experimentation to get a habit of the right breathing rhythm that suits you so you can do it uninterrupted for half an hour. After this do the Basic Meditation (consisting of three methods: body breathing, kundalini arousal and merging). I suggest 30 minutes pranayama and 30 minutes basic meditation. So one session is one hour. Two sessions a day.

Q: If during meditation your awareness and Shakti is pulled up into and above the crown chakra / energy radiating upwards, so that you perceive yourself as blissless Self above the body, and everything below as not Self... Is it better practice to remain like this, or better to instead merge with the bliss that is below-in the body (to transcend it into paramananda)?

Jan: Up-down, above the body, inside the body... the Self knows no such distinctions. The sense of Self above the body could just be identification with the causal body, or it could be that your mental/astral bodies have simply left your physical body and you have a sense of an out of the body experience and relief, but no bliss. It is indeed better to merge with the bliss-shakti in and around the body. Also raise the shakti up the spine. And merge into the witness as often as possible.

Q: I have spent decades working on awakening. It intrigues me more than anything. I am aware that working with the mind or egoic thinking will not result in any truth, but it feels like such a good tool...

Jan: The mind is not a good tool for awakening. It is part of the problem. Having a strong mind myself I know the lure of models and systems. Use your mind to reject everything except awareness watching awareness and also except Shakti. If you awaken Shakti, things will progress more rapidly and the realization you reach will be blissful, not just empty awareness. Whatever the mind can hold on to, reject that. What ever watches the mind, acknowledge that and practice merging identification into that. By and by you will be able to let go of identification altogether and simply BE. When you get frustrated by the above practice, watch your breath and let go.

Q: I love doing the meditations on your web site, and I feel you created a wonderful gradient by starting with becoming aware of the body. When I do the alternating meditations of body breathing and spine breathing the expansion and bliss become wonderful and the merge lasts for quite a while... but then it fades away and ego is back... I am wondering if this is because I begin to think about what is felt and the thinking maybe makes its own copy or version of this and from then on it takes over and I am only experiencing mind's usurped pseudo version of this love-bliss-expansion-floating... beingness?

Jan: As long as there is identification, there will be ego taking over again and again. You are not experiencing a pseudo-version of Shakti, but it is filtered through the body-mind complex and when ego takes over, one is left with the impressions and residual memory in the body-mind complex. But that is also good, because it will keep the Shakti working in the system.

Q: The first few days after receiving shaktipat from you, especially in the morning meditations, I had strong experiences of bliss, light, energy and distinct sensations of spontaneous risings of energy. The experiences of bliss I had were very powerful and in stark contrast to my regular personality, which is often timid and feels motivated by a sense of lack. Suddenly I realized how radically different my life would be if it was filled with this delight. Then I would not need to seek satisfaction from the outer world. Then I would no longer do this or that to get a bit of happiness. And this scared me, for who would then take care of things in the regular worldly life? Perhaps I would just live in a serene and blissful state and feel a strong urge to help others to reach the same state. I would become "saved" and "holy" in a negative sense. That scared me and limited the experiences somewhat.

Jan: Your concerns are understandable, but actually quite groundless. The bliss is of the Self, not of the world, so the joys and sorrows of the world will continue as before and will want to be handled as before. Of course one's perspective changes, but the world remains as it is and it challenges you and wants to be managed and taken care of. When you succeed in dealing with worldly matters, you feel happiness as before, when you fail, you feel disappointed as before. But behind that there is this bliss and at a certain point, as it develops, you become a witness to it all. Witness does not mean you do not care, it means you are detached, free. If you lived a life as a monk before the bliss, you will continue as a monk. If you lived a worldly life before, then you will continue living a worldly life. You don't suddenly exchange your personality with some radically different one. So you don't suddenly become "saved and holy". There are some who fall into this silliness, of course, but it is generally those who do not have an awakened Shakti to guide them from within. If you feel into the Shakti, you are experiencing, at a time when you are in bliss, then you will discover it is incredibly humble and that the state of consciousness connected with it is very, very humble. At a point during the unfolding of Shakti in you and as you, the Shakti might want to be shared, but it is not something you choose. If you try to be master over the Shakti and decide to play guru and give shaktipat on your own, then the Shakti will soon put you in situations where you will be humbled. Either the Shakti will retract from you, or you will find yourself in situations where you will have to face the fact, that you have merely constructed an ego-game around a divine gift within; an example of such could be that you give Shakti to someone, and they actually get all your Shakti and you are drained afterwards and experience neither bliss nor Shakti for many weeks afterwards, while those you gave it to, will have a high period for weeks that eventually fades away. Such experiences serve to show one that the ego is not the master of Shakti. This makes one humble and inspires one to surrender to the higher consciousness that is inseparable from the Shakti unfolding

within. With this surrender it becomes all the more natural to have a deep and intense inner spirituality along with a completely mundane worldly life. Egotrips arise because of sudden intense experiences, but when higher states become stable, humility and simple living become natural.