

THE MYSTIC'S VISION:
SUPPLEMENTAL ARTICLES
OF SWAMI ABHAYANANDA

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Preface

The Articles in this collection are supplemental to the “essential” Articles that make up the three volumes of the “Essential Articles of Swami Abhayananda.” However, each of these Supplemental Articles is important in its own right and constitutes an essential element in the record of my history and my philosophical development.

The first Article pertains to Baba Muktananda. (1908-1982). I lived with him as his student for the nine years between May of 1972 and June of 1981; and although my writing career only began after leaving Muktananda’s organization, my time with him was both formative and informative. The portion of this Article that is authored by Swami Dayananda (Karen Schaefer) is especially revealing of the man and his mission. Included here is my Letter of Resignation, the Article from Co-Evolution Quarterly, and my statement for the “Leaving Siddha Yoga” website.

The second Article, “Introduction To Vedanta,” is a revised version of the Introduction to my 1991 book, *The Wisdom of Vedanta*. I include it here because it represents the philosophy of Nondualism, the philosophy of the mystics. The Article, “Nonduality” is added for clarity.

The third Article, “Thoughts of a Mystic,” is a collection of weekly Thoughts that appeared on my website and were later gathered to form an ebook intended to provide a convenient source of brief messages of inspiration.

The fourth Article, “The Question of Destiny,” makes the case for the role of destiny in my own life and experiences.

The fifth Article, “The Neo-Copernican Revolution,” calls for a universal revolution in spiritual understanding comparable in influence to the scientific revolution instigated by Copernicus.

The sixth Article, “The Astrologer’s Vision,” is a non-technical summary of my perspective on Astrology which attempts to establish a complete mystical philosophy of the substance and nature of astrological correspondence that should prove especially relevant for skeptics and neophytes.

The seventh Article, "Who We Are," is a recent attempt to capsulize my philosophy of the eternal Self in a brief form.

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1. BABA MUKTANANDA

**A Compilation of Articles from The Mystic's Vision
by Swami Abhayananda
Dedicated to the Public Domain 2-25-2020
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1. My Life With Baba Muktananda:

It has been many years since the passing of Baba Muktananda in 1982; and before I join him, I would like to offer this small tribute to the man and his legacy. It is a tale I had resolved not to tell, as it had the potential to be embarrassing to both Baba and to me, and for many years I have kept it to myself. But now, at this late age, and with the prompting of the Guru, I feel that its telling might just have a beneficial effect after all. Time alone will tell:

I.

From 1966 to 1972 I lived in a little cabin in the Santa Cruz mountains, where I had experienced intimate union with God in what is usually referred to as a 'mystical' experience. In 1970, I met Swami Muktananda when he was giving a lecture at Stevenson College at the University of California at Santa Cruz. At the time, it had been my custom to pass out a little booklet containing two songs, or Psalms, in downtown Santa Cruz in front of the main bookstore. I was standing at my usual post in front of the bookstore, when a kindly-faced man stopped to read my little booklet of Psalms. I asked if he lived in Santa Cruz, and he replied, "No, I'm just passing through." We exchanged a warm smile at the deeper meaning of his words, and he put two dollars in my little money box and then moved on. Later, I learned his name was Baba Ram Das, and he was in town to introduce Swami Muktananda, a Swami from India, at the College that night.

A young man, named Stephen, who frequently visited my cabin, brought tickets for the lecture early in the evening, and I paid for mine with the two dollars I had been given earlier by Baba Ram Das. It was a magical night; the sky was filled with stars, and I felt strangely exhilarated to be seeing this Swami from India. During the lecture, I paid less attention to his words than to his presence. I was mesmerized by his totally unexpected appearance and mannerisms. He played with the microphone cord nervously as he spoke and seemed almost bursting with joyous energy. I was in the balcony, and I kept losing his form in a blue haze into which he seemed to keep dissolving. I was totally enthralled by him.

When he was finished speaking, and left the stage, I rushed down the balcony stairs, and made my way up the aisle toward him. Baba Ram Das was leading the chanting from the stage, and Muktananda was heading down the aisle right toward me. I held both my hands out to him, and he tipped up his sunglasses, which he wore even in the relative darkness, to get a better look at me. Then he slapped my outstretched hands in greeting and went on out to his waiting car. I followed him out, and stood outside the window of his car, waving to him, intoxicated with the sight and presence of him as I had never been before with any person. And then his driver drove him away. I assumed at the time that I would never see him again.

It was several months later that a friend brought me a copy of Muktananda's spiritual autobiography, called "Guru" (later retitled *Chitshakti Vilas*, "The Play of Consciousness"); and I read it with great amazement and awe. I learned that Swami Muktananda (1908-1982) had been a wandering *sadhu* in India since his early teens, had lived in the ashrams of various teachers and had met many saints and holy men, but he had not met his spiritual master until he was initiated by Bhagavan Nityananda in 1947. Nityananda, I learned, was a great and powerful yogi who had wandered naked most of his life, meditating for long periods of time in caves and wildernesses, and who had finally settled in Ganeshpuri, about 30 miles north of Bombay, where a small village and the Ashram of Swami Muktananda now exists.

Nityananda had been known as an *avadhut*, a renunciant who had no more worldly attachments, and who was free as the wind, wandering with no home, no clothes, taking food as it came to him. He was recognized as having enormous yogic powers; and prior to the time of his death in 1961, he had transmitted his immense power to Muktananda, and Muktananda carried on the tradition in the lineage of Siddhas—perfect masters. Earlier, Muktananda had been sent by his guru into a prolonged period of *sadhana*, or spiritual retreat, and after years of solitary meditation—during which time he went through many amazing and wonderful inner experiences as a result of the awakening of his *kundalini*—he eventually became Self-realized at the age of forty-nine, by the grace of God, the Guru.

It was late in the evening when I finished reading *Guru*, Baba's spiritual autobiography, and when I held it to my forehead by way of reverence, a great eye appeared before my mind's eye. It was large and as clear as

anything I had ever seen; and I stared at it wonderingly for quite a while before it disappeared. I had not previously thought I was in need of a *guru*, but after reading his book, I decided that such a teacher could help me to progress in the spiritual life and learn to retain the experience of my eternal Self. And so, I wrote to him in India, to whence he had returned, asking if I could come there as his disciple. When I received his welcoming reply, I was overjoyed.

Sadly, but gratefully, I said goodbye to my wonderful cabin, where I had experienced such joy and revelation, and went off, half-way across the country, to work my way to India, as, at the time, I hadn't a dime. I met many hardships on the way; but, unexpectedly, my dear friend, Marc Savage (Dharmananda), who was the one who had given me Muktananda's book, wrote to me, asking me to come back to California, saying that he would give me the money to purchase an airline ticket to India. And that is how I made my way to the Ashram of Swami Muktananda in Ganeshpuri, India.

The Ashram was nestled on the outskirts of a small village, and as the local bus approached it, I could see a large castle-shaped building with orange flags flying from its highest pinnacles. It was breathtaking. Muktananda was unexpectedly sitting on a tree-planter at the entrance when I arrived. I removed my shoes, bowed to him clumsily, and then entered the Ashram proper, which consisted of a large courtyard paved with multi-colored stones, surrounded by several buildings, including the meditation hall, the dormitories, and Muktananda's living quarters. There were about forty other Westerners there at the time, both men and women, from the U.S., Europe, and Australia.

The atmosphere of the place was very serene and holy, while at the same time charged with an unfamiliar electric spiritual energy. We arose at 3:30 AM for meditation, then chanting of holy scriptures from 6:30 to 8:30. Meditation was held in various places: one could sit in the space around Baba's residence, or one could go below to 'the meditation cave', a dark, unventilated, mosquito-infested place that had been enlivened by Baba's energetic presence during his early stay at this location. Having heard rumors of this austere meditation cave, I was reluctant to go there, preferring to sit in the upper part of the hall. But one morning I decided to give it a try, and so I made my way down the dark passage to the meditation cave. The moment I entered the cave doorway, everything went blue—a rich deep, effervescent blue. But it was not in the outer lighting; the blue was in my head. My inner consciousness had suddenly become imbued with blue.

This experience lasted for the whole time of my first visit to the meditation cave. But I never felt comfortable in there, and I returned only a few times.

After the morning chanting session of *the Guru Gita*, we were given a breakfast of chai and chapattis or runny cereal, after which we worked in the gardens or cleaned the toilets. More chanting, lunch, more work, dinner and then the evening chants. In between, there were the frequent *darshans* (appearances) of Baba Muktananda, for which all the ashramites lived. When he sat on his little perch, just outside his quarters, all of us would gather around just to gaze on his form. Sometimes he would receive visitors; sometimes he would just sit there quietly. He appeared to be more of a god than a man. His lightly chocolate form shone more brightly than burnished gold, and his divine presence filled the courtyard with a blissful serenity.

We, the ashramites, would stand and look at him for as long as we were allowed to. He lived in a state of quietude so profound that we were drawn into deep meditation just by standing in his presence. At other times, he was quite animated, directing the many activities of the large Ashram. There was no mistaking that he was a uniquely great and noble being. I was to learn, much later, that he was flawed like all men; but he was as close to a perfected being as I have ever known.

I was aware that I was very fortunate to be a disciple of the great Kundalini master, Swami Muktananda, known by his devotees more familiarly as Baba. He was a Guru, in the true sense of the word. 'The Guru' is just another name for the Divine as He manifests within and through a perfectly surrendered individual. It is God, the Guru, who gives grace, though it may manifest *through* an individual. In the Kashmir Shaivite tradition to which Baba belonged, this transmission of Grace is called *shaktipat*, the gift of Shakti, or divine energy. The transmission of *shaktipat* was such a common experience around Baba that nearly everyone who spent any time around him received his blessing of Grace in one manner or another.

Shakti is a subtle form of energy that manifests at several levels of the human organism: At the spiritual level, it manifests as an increase in conscious awareness and bliss and is centered at the crown of the head. At the mental level it manifests as an increase in intelligence, metaphysical understanding, and creativity and is centered between the eyebrows. At the physical level it manifests as an increase in sexual sensitivity and desire and is centered in the genitalia. It is often this baser, physical increase that is

experienced most predominantly, and which must be suppressed or otherwise transcended in order to manifest and utilize the shakti at subtler levels.

Baba emanated shakti; it was palpably felt whenever he entered a room. He could direct it willfully, or project it simply by thinking of someone. He could impart his shakti by a thought, a word, a touch, or simply by his proximity. Even his clothes or items in his environment emanated that shakti. I remember once, when Baba was asked to address a Transpersonal Psychology conference in Boston, the entire auditorium full of doctors of Psychiatry and scholars was electrified with his spiritual energy, and one person in the back of the room asked him, “What are you doing to us?” and everyone knew what the questioner was talking about. Baba just smiled.

An individual, such as Baba, who embodies the Guru and who is able to transmit divine energy in this manner is extremely rare. In Muktananda’s case, this ability was imparted to him by another rare being, his Guru, Bhagavan Nityananda. Nityananda left his body in 1961, so I never met him, but I visited his old residence in 1972, and the shakti permeating the place was still palpable years after his passing. The direct transmission of shakti from Sri Nityananda to Baba Muktananda is reminiscent of that from John the Baptist to Jesus of Nazareth. John had the power of shaktipat, as did Jesus after him. You may recall that when John baptized Jesus and initiated him into the spiritual life, Jesus experienced a white dove flying into his breast. We know of this experience because Jesus later told his disciples of his inner vision at that time. Such an inner visual image sometimes accompanies the transmission of shakti from a genuine Guru. The countries and the religious traditions are different in these two cases, but the gift of divine energy is the same. It is a divine energy accumulated by holy men through austerity, through ascetic devotion. Both John the Baptist and Nityananda were virtual *avadhuts*, souls whose lives were solely devoted to the contemplation of God, while living alone in remote locations under the most austere privations imaginable—whereby they experienced the blessing of God.

I had not realized or understood the meaning of this biblical imagery of the white dove until I experienced it myself by the Grace of God imparted to me by Baba Muktananda. Following is the story of how that transmission of Grace came about:

II.

After I had spent a year and a half at the ashram in Ganeshpuri, Baba notified all the Western ashramites that he had received a loan of \$25,000 from Werner Erhardt, the founder of Est, which he was planning to use that money to finance a 2nd World Tour to the U.S., and that all of us should make plans to return to our homes and prepare for his visitation. Later, it was revealed that Baba was planning to begin his World Tour at a Meditation Center at the home of one of his devotees, Don Harrison, who lived in Piedmont, California. And so, I, along with a few others, left India, and made my way to the affluent community of Piedmont, California, where I and a few other young men were pressed into service, completely repainting the exterior of Don's house, and working at the local Flea Market selling items from Don's import business to support our keep.

Finally, the day of Baba's arrival came. How wonderful it was to see him again! He was, to me and to all his disciples, the very manifestation of God. After he was able to rest and settle in for a day or so, he held a chanting session in the small meditation hall of the Meditation Center. To me, his face seemed unusually gaunt and hollow, very ethereal, as he stood at the front of the hall chanting 'Rama Raghava'. His face called up in me the image of Jesus in his suffering, as Baba intoned the baleful chant of "Rama, protect me; Rama, deliver me." I was standing at the back of the hall, directly opposite and facing him. Tears began coursing down my cheeks as I stood there, feeling so much love and compassion for him. It was clear that Baba was also aware of me, as he stared intently at me while he chanted.

When the chanting was over, and Baba had returned to his rooms upstairs, Baba's attendant, Noni, approached me, saying Baba wanted to see me in his quarters. I was shocked and surprised, but I followed Noni upstairs and into Baba's presence. He spoke to me in Hindi as he stepped out of his slippers, while Noni translated: "Take these." I could think of nothing to say, as I was keenly aware that this was precisely how the great Bhagavan Nityananda himself had originally initiated Baba. I went to my knees and placed my forehead on his sandals, as Baba continued speaking while Noni translated: "Go back to your home and prepare for my coming," he said. I could only manage to reply, "Ji, Baba." And then Baba said something else as he waved me away. Later, when I was able to ask Noni what he had said, he told me that Baba was only complaining that he had only just broken in that pair of slippers, and now he would have to break in another pair.

I flew back to Indianapolis that next day. Though I did not relish the prospect of returning to my boyhood home, I was eager to do whatever Baba asked, certain that it was in my very best interests; and I was filled with wonder and anticipation for whatever was to come. I was ill prepared, however, for the tragedy that was to ensue.

Baba had put one of his recently acquired devotees in the position of overseeing and taking charge of the events of his Tour. This individual's name was David P. He had obtained his managerial experience as the head of the department of Waste Management in Oakland, California; and Baba had entrusted this relative newcomer to manage the schedule of his appearances on the Tour as he moved from the West Coast eastward. Indianapolis was scheduled to occur right after the Chicago event. But it seems that David P. was not happy with Indianapolis being on the schedule, and he tried to cancel that appearance, but Baba insisted. It was then that David apparently hatched the plan to sabotage the Indianapolis event from his end. He sent a young Indianapolis native whom I had known in Ganeshpuri ostensibly to assist me in setting up the Indianapolis event, but in actuality he was there to act as David's informant and saboteur.

Plans moved along, and a Civic Center appearance was scheduled along with a weekend Meditation Retreat at a picturesque Franciscan monastery on the edge of town. When Baba arrived with his entourage, Baba's staff, under David's supervision, took over the implementation and record-keeping of the event. Everything went smoothly, drawing moderate crowds. All in all, it was a success, and at the end of the Meditation Retreat, I had a brief moment with Baba, who told me to "Stay here." That was the extent of his instructions. And then the circus left town. David P., acting as Baba's manager, had made sure that I received no names of the event's participants and was left with no means whatsoever of contacting the Retreat participants or of forming a community of devotees in Indianapolis. Nonetheless, that was exactly what Baba had expected of me.

I had the assistance of two sisters in their fifties, both of whom had attended the Meditation Retreat and met Baba. They had been devotees of Roy Eugene Davis, a direct disciple of Yogananda Paramahansa, but were now enthusiastic to help me build a Baba Muktananda Meditation Center in Indianapolis. A dentist who owned a large house in an old section of Indianapolis was willing to sell it to me at a ridiculously low price as a

residential Meditation Center. The problem was that I had no way to contact those who had already shown their interest by coming to see Baba during his visit to the city. I tried advertising in the newspaper, with no results. I wrote to Baba asking for the records of attendance from the Civic Center appearance and the Meditation Retreat. But no reply. My phone calls to the California ashram where Baba was now residing were answered only by David P. Unknown to me, he had given orders to the other ashram phone operators that he alone was to take my calls, and that all my letters were to go to him. When I called, he would say that he would talk to Baba, and get back to me. This unkind game continued on and on, for months, but I never heard from him.

There was a limit to how long my dentist friend would wait for a reply to his offer to buy the house. But without Baba's word, I could not make a move. I called Baba repeatedly, but I was never able to reach him. Whatever power of meditation I possessed also failed me; I had no idea what he intended me to do. Even the two sisters who were so supportive in the beginning were now losing faith that Baba had any interest in supporting my efforts. I held chanting sessions, but in the end, no one came. Not even my parents. I would have bought the house anyway, if Baba had told me to. But it was too late. He hadn't called; and it was time to give up my option on the house.

I was totally confused. What was Baba's lesson in all of this? Why did he put me here? To teach me how helpless I was? Was there some hidden reason for his refusal to send me some word when I had so deliberately explained in my letters the urgency of my predicament and so poignantly pleaded with him to contact me? I was at a total loss to explain his treatment of me. But I still believed in him; I was still utterly devoted to him. There was nothing left to do but return to him. That was the only way I would learn the lesson of this entire fiasco. And so, I left Indianapolis, and went back to Oakland, California where, I had heard, Baba was going to establish a new ashram. In the meantime, Baba was still on tour in Santa Monica, California.

III.

The building that he had chosen for his new ashram was an old hotel that had become a whore house and was now shuttered up. It was in a previously all-black neighborhood, and there had been no buyers, though it had been on the market for some time. When I first saw it, it was ankle deep in dog feces. Two angry and emaciated Saint Bernards had been housed in the old

hotel as guard dogs with a free run of the place. It was going to take a great deal of work to transform it into Baba's ashram. But Baba had a crew of devotees—carpenters, laborers, cooks, and painters who all descended on the old hotel—I among them. And within months, a sparkling beautiful ashram with a huge, carpeted meditation hall, and freshly painted, well-appointed rooms for the ashramites awaited Baba's arrival.

When he finally came, there was a great celebration; people attended from all over. And on that first night's darshan in the meditation hall, when the lights went down, and everyone entered deep into meditation, I was intently awake to Baba's presence, with a keen hope for some indication from him as to what that whole Indianapolis adventure had been all about. It was not long before he found me in the crowd and entered into me. "Go back!" he shrieked from within me. But my heart rebelled, my emotional frustration exploded, thrusting him forcefully from his place in my heart. Months had passed since I had left Indianapolis. Couldn't he have given me that message back then? But my heart's rebellious response wasn't a reasoned one; it was my soul's response born of his "Go back!" and was entirely beyond my control.

Immediately after the meditation period, Baba left the hall, and I caught a glimpse of his infuriated glare focused on me. I regretted my instinctual response, but I could not take it back; nor did I feel that I initiated it. It had only been a natural response to the cruel degradation of a tortured soul, which had come so unexpectedly. If only he had called me aside for a chat! But I had no time to rationalize my response. Quickly, word came that Baba had suffered a stroke, and I was outside, watching, as he was taken on a gurney to the ambulance and on to the hospital.

When at last some ashramites were allowed to visit him where he was recovering, I was included among those who were first to see him. As soon as he saw me, he turned away from me, and I fell with my head on his belly while sobbing his name. When eventually he returned to the ashram, I received the same treatment: if he was out walking, and saw me, he would cross the street to be on the opposite side. Whenever I was around, he would avoid even looking at me. Only a true lover can know what this treatment did to me, how devastating it was to me to experience this rejection and contempt from one who was so beloved. And never a word of explanation.

After some time, Baba flew back to India, leaving me there in the Oakland ashram. He left instructions with the ashram director that I should be given a position in the ashram, and I was assigned to be the Food Buyer, which required me to get up early, drive to the Farmer's Market, and purchase whatever fruits and vegetables were required by the kitchen and by the recently built Amrit snack bar. I also served as the *pujari*, performing the evening worship ceremony, and as the ashram librarian. I was still tormented, however, by the unexplained events in Indianapolis; and in early 1977 I decided to write to Baba at his ashram in Ganeshpuri to apologize for my egregious response to his command and to seek an explanation for what transpired in Indianapolis. I informed him of my inability to obtain any contact information about the attendees to the speaking engagement and the Retreat, I explained my attempts to get a reply from him while he was on the road, my dependence on his reply for the purchase of the house, and my various efforts to establish a Meditation Center in Indianapolis without benefit of any contacts or instructions. Again, I hoped for some explanation from him, but received none.

I can only infer that when Baba received that letter, he learned for the first time what had happened in Indianapolis. When he originally sent me to Indianapolis from Piedmont, it was, I am sure, out of the highest motives. He had not been responsible for any of the plotting against me and he had known nothing of it. That had been the sole doing of David P. I can only imagine the wrath Baba expressed to David when he confronted him after receiving my letter. David was apparently banished thereafter from seeing Baba and from all the ashrams. Baba then determined to make right his unfair treatment of me. It was still 1977, less than a month after I had sent my letter of explanation, when we suddenly got word that Baba was flying from India to Oakland, California, for an impromptu visit to our ashram. Though it had been unanticipated, we were all naturally excited by the prospect of his visit.

On the first night of his arrival many people came to the evening program for Baba's darshan and the celebration of his return to Oakland. And later that night, after everyone had settled into bed, I took up my usual post in the meditation hall, where I often spent the night, serving as overnight watchman while enjoying the enhanced spiritual atmosphere of the hall where Baba had earlier appeared. As was my custom, I lay with my head on Baba's slippers which had been permanently placed there before his seat as objects of worship and devotion. Sometime in the night I awoke to the sense

of Baba's presence in the form of a white dove visibly perched at the portal to the kitchen where ashramites gathered daily to receive their meals. I was able to see this in spiritual vision, although that portal was separated from me by a wall. I watched as the dove left its perch, flew straight for me, and entered my chest with a great flurry of beating wings. I knew it was Baba, but I wasn't cognizant of the meaning of this event at the time it was occurring. Only later, I realized that I had received the gift of the Guru's grace.

During the course of that year, 1977, following Baba's gracious visitation, many wonderful events came to pass. One evening, as I was making my rounds, doing puja to all of the images of the saints decorating the ashram walls, I was stunned to hear a voice from the painting of the medieval saint, Jnaneshvar as I stopped to do puja before it. The voice said, "You have translated the *Haripatha* of Ecknath Maharaj; why not translate my *amritanubhav*." I said, "Of course," though I hadn't even read that work at the time. But I was able to quickly translate the works of Jnaneshvar, though I know nothing of the Marathi language; and shortly thereafter I translated the *avadhut gita* in just a few days, though I had no training in Sanskrit. I then wrote to Baba, telling him that the twelve years was now up since my vow to become a Swami, and that I would like to be a part of the upcoming *sannyas* initiation. I was enabled to work part-time outside the ashram for another ashramite who managed a fruit-stand, whereby I saved enough money to afford a round-trip ticket to India in early 1978 where, to everyone else's surprise, Baba initiated me into *sannyas*, and I became thereafter one of Baba's teaching Swamis.

The Guru's grace is real. Do not doubt it. And be certain as well that it flows from the divine Source, from God Himself. The human instrument is fallible to be sure; but divine Grace is God's unfailing energy at work in you to enable you to attain all that you are destined to become in this life. If you are fortunate enough to live in the presence of such an embodiment of the Guru, by all means seek his Grace, and rely upon him. Only if he betrays the trust he has been given by God, will he fall from God's Grace, and you will have no choice but to leave his service. Sadly, however, there are very few true representatives of the Guru in these current days.

After the *sannyas* initiation, Baba gave me the name, Swami Abhayananda ("the bliss of fearlessness"), and I was sent to the New York Meditation Center and ashram to train as a teacher and ashram director. At the same time, Baba okayed the purchase of a large hotel in Fallsburg, New York in

the Catskill mountains to serve as the main ashram and headquarters for his organization. Many ashramites from the New York Center and other Centers, including myself, pitched in to help transform another hotel into a gleaming and glorious ashram, where Baba was to hold many Intensives and give frequent darshans in the following few years.

In early 1979, while I was living in a New York apartment across from the ashram where I taught as a swami, I awoke in the night with the distinct sense that someone was in the bedroom with me; an invisible someone who was very angry and threatening. I sat up and sternly ordered this presence to get out of my room. By the power of my own soul-force, I forcefully commanded it to go, and it left. Shortly thereafter, I was again awakened with a call from the ashram across the street, telling me that there was a phone call for me over there. I went over, and spoke to my father on the phone, who informed me that my mother had just died. When I returned to my apartment, the thought came to me that it had been my mother who had come to me earlier, and her anger was because I had not come to be with her during her illness. Somehow, I was able to call her back to me, and a touching reconciliation occurred between mother and son, whereby I was able to assure her of my love. An additional glowing presence, whom I was sure was Baba, was also there, and I watched as he lifted her on high and guided her, now free, to her “heavenly” destination. There was a great sense of gratification that all resentment had been assuaged between us, and that she had been guided to a “higher” place. This was no small gift. To this day I am gratefully beholden to Baba for enabling this visitation with my departed mother and our loving reconciliation.

Once the renovation of the Catskill Hotel in Fallsburg, New York, was completed, it had become the Siddha Yoga Ashram and Headquarters, and many of the Swamis spent a great deal of time there close to Baba. It was there, on the evening of August 14, 1979, I waited my turn in the darshan line, and offered to Baba Muktananda the following letter of devotion:

August 14, 1979

Dearest Babaji,
Please accept this small token of my affection on the occasion of this, my
41st birthday:

Gurudev, I have been a fool all my life.
What is worthy of loving, I have hated;
What is worthy of running away from, I have sought to embrace.
I seem to have earned in my past births
Nothing more than this perverse understanding.
Having spent so many years in foolishness,
Falling prey over and over again to lust, anger and pride,
I am now celebrating the addition
Of one more year to this wasted life.
Gurudev, who could even feel pity for such a fool?
Yet you have covered me with your wings,
And cradled me in the compassion of your heart.
You have nursed me in my sorrows—
Consoled me with your loving words,
And forgiven all my unforgivable errors.
You have stood as a father beside me,
Even though I had turned my back to you.
There are no words to express your greatness,
Or to express my unworthiness of your grace;
Yet you have bent to me your ear and saved me in my distress.
Dear Lord, what can I offer you who have inspired
Even the gods to look compassionately upon me?
I have nothing worthy of offering to you.
Even this trickle of love that I am able to squeeze from this dry heart
Already belongs to you—is, in fact, your gift.
So, you see, I have nothing but myself to offer.
Worthless rag that I am, I am yours.
Please do with me as you will.
Make of me your perfect slave.
My dear Gurudev, please grant this request.

I am forever your own,
Swami Abhayananda

I then took my seat and watched as the young Swami Nityananda (still known as Subash at that time) translated the letter to Baba, and I could see that Baba was pleased.

Some months later, I was given the directorship of a small Ashram in Philadelphia, and after a year in that position, I was sent to Chicago to run the fledgling Ashram in that city. After another year, I was sent to Oklahoma City to establish an Ashram there. It was there, in June of 1981, I learned of Muktananda's long history of sexual indiscretions with some of his young female devotees, and the threats and intimidations used to silence those whom he had engaged and those who knew of these activities. Naturally, I was devastated by this revelation. With a feeling of confusion and betrayal, I immediately left Muktananda's service, feeling that I could no longer represent him in good conscience.

My life had seemed, up to that point, a perfect one. My greatest ambitions had been fulfilled: I had realized God and had become a Swami in the glorious Siddha tradition. But now, all had been discredited; I was without a home, without a tradition, and rejected as an infidel by my former companions. I had written an open letter to Baba's devotees detailing what I knew; but naturally, most refused to believe their beloved guru capable of the acts of which I had accused him. Those accusations were later proven to be true, but, at the time, I was regarded by all my old friends as a liar and an apostate. Baba never either acknowledged or denied his guilt.

I ended up in a farmhouse owned by a generous ex-devotee in Fallsburg, New York, not far from Muktananda's main Siddha Yoga Ashram, and remained in hiding, fearful for my life, until Muktananda's death in October of 1982, at the age of 74. For seven years I stayed in that isolated farmhouse, until 1988, living as a recluse, attempting to make sense of the unfortunate turn of events which had brought me to my present situation. It was there I began writing *The Supreme Self* and several other books, including *History of Mysticism*; and I published them myself under the imprint of Atma Books. If I could no longer teach, at least I could tell my story of God-realization in hopes of benefiting others. When I reflect on my life, I see that it has unfolded and is unfolding just as it was ordained by God to do: my freedom from organizational duties, though painfully acquired, allowed me to finally do what my destiny required me to do: by the grace of

God and Guru, I was enabled to give all my time to speaking out in praise of God, for the benefit of all His children.

It is good to remember that the Guru and the individual who is His instrument are not the same. Baba Muktananda often made mention in my presence of his identity in a previous life as the Raja, Ramachandra, ruler of the Yadava kingdom in Maharashtra from 1271 to 1296, and one can learn some interesting facts about king Ramachandra in the book I wrote on Jnaneshvar (*Jnaneshvar: The Life and Works of The Celebrated Thirteenth Century Indian Mystic-Poet*, Olympia, Wash., Atma Books, 1989). Ramachandra's rule was coincident with the life of Jnaneshvar, and his previous life as a king explains much about his subsequent life and personality as Swami Muktananda.

The Guru remains eternally, though a man (or woman) can always go astray. After many years, I have learned to accept the fallibility of the man I had once regarded as infallible; yet I honor him still. During my years with Baba, I came to know of his godlike powers, and received his generous and amazing grace. To this day, I still hold Swami Muktananda in the highest esteem, with great respect and love, despite his inexplicable behavior. He will be remembered by all who knew him as a great, though contradictory, soul. He was a uniquely gifted yogi and an unfathomable personality, who blessed the lives of thousands of devoted students throughout the world. His most familiar message, delivered at the end of his many lectures, was "Honor yourself, love yourself, worship yourself; for your beloved God lives within you as you."

* * *

What Is A Swami?

It's a question that comes up from time to time, and I've learned that I cannot really say what being a Swami means for all Swamis, but I can at least try to say what it means to me. I was living in a secluded cabin in the Santa Cruz mountains when it first dawned on me that I wanted to be a Swami. I had gone to live in that cabin in my spiritual quest for enlightenment, and I had been reading many books on Indian philosophy as well as books on Western religious philosophy. I was impressed by what Sri

Ramakrishna's disciple, Swami Vivekananda, said about *sannyasa*, and also by these words of Sarvepali Radhakrishnan:

“A *sannyasin* [monk, or swami] renounces all possessions, distinctions of caste, and practices of religion. As he has perfected himself, he is able to give his soul the largest scope, throw all his powers into the free movement of the world and compel its transfiguration. He does not merely formulate the conception of high living but lives it, adhering to the famous rule, ‘The world is my country; to do good my religion’. Regarding all with an equal eye he must be friendly to all living beings. And being devoted, he must not injure any living creature, human or animal, either in act, word, or thought, and renounce all attachments. A freedom and fearlessness of spirit, an immensity of courage, which no defeat or obstacle can touch, a faith in the power that works in the universe, a love that lavishes itself without demand of return and makes life a free servitude to the universal spirit, are the signs of the perfected man.”¹

Well, who wouldn't want to be such a person? It was during this same period of time that I was given to experience a profound illumination from God, revealing the spiritual depth of my true being. And shortly thereafter, I made myself and God a promise: that I would first give myself a twelve-year period of spiritual study and growth, then I would become a Swami. That was in 1966, and in 1978 I was able to fulfill that promise. After a paradisaical five years in my cabin in the woods, I traveled to Ganeshpuri, India and became a disciple of the famous Kundalini master, Swami Muktananda.

Muktananda (affectionately known by his disciples as “Baba”) is known by many today as a man who made a tragic mistake in his later years, just prior to his death in 1982, by inappropriately sharing his physical affections with a number of his young female disciples. Many of us will also make great mistakes in our lives, especially as we age; and it is a terrible shame that Muktananda's great legacy of loving wisdom should be so tarnished by the memory of a few misdeeds in the latter period of his life. I was one of those who left his organization in protest and who spoke out condemning those misdeeds, and they needed to be condemned. But, because of those unfortunate events, few of the public today know of the greatness that was Swami Muktananda. His was a spiritual presence that touched the lives of hundreds, even thousands, of souls and lifted them to an experience of God in their lives through the generous gift of his own heart's immense compassion and love. Those who sat in his presence know, as no others can,

that despite his human imperfections, he was indeed a great saint, possessing immense compassion and awesome power.

In 1978, I was working in Muktananda's Oakland ashram, when I wrote to Baba in India informing him that the 12 years of my apprenticeship had expired and that it was time for me to become a Swami. He then invited me to Ganeshpuri to take part in the *sannyasin* initiations that were to take place in May at the time of his birthday. There were about a dozen of us, both Indians and Westerners to be initiated, and an appointed *Mahamandaleshvar* (ceremonial official) named Swami Brahmananda Sarasvati of the Shringeri Math was on hand to direct the proceedings. After performing the Vedic rituals of offering rice balls to our ancestors, and after having the last remaining 'brahmin's tuft of hair' shorn from our heads, signifying the transcendence of all castes, we performed the culminating ceremony of discarding our old clothes while standing waist deep in a cold raging river at midnight, and the receiving of the Swami's ochre robes. After that, we were Swamis, monks of the prestigious Sarasvati Order.

But, of course, it is not the ritual ceremony that makes a Swami; it is the heart's desire, the commitment to a spiritually dedicated life, and the favor of God and one's Guru. I was to know the awesome power of Muktananda's grace to his Swamis, a grace that enlivened the world and my soul with a brightness that revealed God's sparkling beauty within and without. Through no merit of my own, I experienced a divine blue light that would indicate to me advanced godly souls by dancing over their heads; I would experience Muktananda's grace being emitted from my own body to sincere devotees; I was even able to experience the transference of spiritual energy to others when someone inadvertently brushed my clothes. It was all his amazing and gracious power, transmitted from him through me, even though he was not present. His loving regard of me, even from far away, was a tangible energy that drew me in awed devotion to know him as the very image of God and distributor of God's grace on this earth.

In Muktananda's organization, SYDA Yoga, Swamis were honored, not so much for their holiness, but for their position in the hierarchy of the Guru's favor. Muktananda, in the tradition of the rajas of India, ruled as king over an orange silk-robed aristocracy or nobility, who always sat in the front nearest the king when he gave audience. Further back were the members of the functional bureaucracy, and behind them the peasants, the visiting mob. The Swamis shared in the teaching role, giving authorized courses and operating the regional Meditation Centers and Ashrams. In the absence of

the Guru, they were the connection with the Guru and his teachings. In a way very similar to the monks and priests of the Catholic Church, the Swamis of SYDA Yoga made up an organizational hierarchy of representatives of the Siddha line.

But just as in the Catholic Church there were, and still are to some degree, lone contemplative hermits and anchorites who live among the people, in India there are many *sannyasins* who wander freely and independently, living the worshipful and contemplative life or teaching and lecturing and living by the charity of the citizenry. One can easily see, however, that such a class of religious itinerant beggars would not be feasible in Western countries. What, then, is a Western Swami to do? How is he (or she) to carry on his or her chosen vocation?

We must understand at the outset that a Swami transcends not only all Hindu caste designations, but all sectarian religious designations as well. A Swami is not (necessarily) a Hindu. The ideal Swami is learned in *all* religious traditions, and he is familiar as well with current science and literature. He is an enlightened and learned soul, and he is solely dedicated to God and the well-being of all God's children. After I had left Muktananda's organization, I was faced with the question of how to continue my "mission" as a Swami. My immediate instinct was to share my acquired experience and understanding in the form of writing, and I went on to produce a number of books, all concerned with the "mystical experience" and the Self-knowledge obtained thereby.

There was also, of course, the necessity of meeting the expenses of living in this world; and this I managed to do by obtaining a license as a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) and working primarily as a Home Health Aide for elderly and infirm patients in their homes. For the twenty-five years since I left Siddha Yoga, I have written my books, seen to their publication, and daily served the many patients I was assigned to: victims of stroke, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease, and senile dementia with hands-on care. I no longer parade about in orange silk robes; rather, I live a simple solitary life as a servant; I promote my books, presenting them and offering them as free downloadable ebooks at my online website: www.themysticsvision.com; and I spend a good deal of time in reflection and inward communion with God. According to our brother, Socrates:

This is that life above all others which man should live, ... holding converse with the true Beauty,

simple and divine. In that communion only beholding Beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but Reality [Itself]; ...and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue, to become the friend of God and be immortal if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?

— Plato, *Symposium*

* * *

I am including here three articles that were written and published just after I left Muktananda's organization. The first is my Open Letter of Resignation that was sent to Muktananda as well as to the Ashrams and Meditation Centers of Siddha Yoga; the second is the article that appeared in Co-Evolution Quarterly in 1983, entitled "The Secret Life of Swami Muktananda, by William Rodarmor," to which I appended some remarks as Stan Trout. The third article consists of some remarks which appeared on the website "Leaving Siddha Yoga" in 1999. I had been asked to write these remarks about my time with Muktananda by Pendragon, who was then director of the "Leaving Siddha Yoga" website.

3. An Open Letter of Resignation from Swami Abhayananda to Muktananda, dated June, 1981.

Dear Muktananda,

The time has come, I feel, to make a testament for you and for all my friends in Siddha Yoga: The events which led up to my leaving Siddha Yoga began in South Fallsburg in the summer of 1980, when I was called to the nearby home of a lady devotee of yours who told me of a teenage girl who had confided to her that you, Muktananda, had called her into your apartments, had asked her to disrobe, and had taken liberties with her on the pretext of examining her virginity. I was, of course, shocked; but I thought to myself, 'the girl must be lying! But even if she's not, there must be some good reason behind it; He's a Siddha—he can do whatever he likes.' I did not investigate further; I did not talk to the girl. The incident ended.

The lady then returned to her home in Europe, and shortly after, Swami Tejomayananda mysteriously vanished. You learned from an informant that the lady was talking about the young girl's story, and you suspected her involvement in the Swami's disappearance. It was then that you began your campaign to discredit the lady as well as the Swami so that no one would listen to what they might say. The Swami, you told me, was a "turd" who left only because he needed a woman, and the lady, you told me, was a dope-smuggler, a spy, a sex maniac who had given birth to twins, proving that she had had sexual intercourse with a number of men consecutively.

You learned that I was on friendly terms with this lady and her family, and so, you enlisted me in your harassment and defamation campaign, calling me in Chicago [by phone] sometimes twice a week to instruct me to call this lady collect and tell her that "Baba is very powerful," that she should be careful of what she says because you had spies everywhere who were watching her every move. You became maniacal, Muktananda, whenever you spoke of her. You pressed me to soak her for all the money I could get out of her, which I declined to do; and finally, you urged me to insult her and sever our relationship, which I did, to your apparent satisfaction.

Still, I knew too much. I also had to be made to look like an incompetent fool who could be easily discredited, should I begin to speak about these things. So, in January of this year, I was sent to live in a two-room apartment with three working girls in Oklahoma City with no explanation. Nonetheless, I went unquestioningly, established an ashram there, and kept it going despite your apparent disinterest and frequent insults. Then, on Sunday, June 7, the "rumors" finally reached me.

Two well-respected, long-time devotees of yours came to visit me at the ashram and told me some very astonishing stories which they had heard by phone from some ex-devotees of yours in Oakland, California. According to their caller, you, Muktananda, sent two men, Shreepati and Joe Don Looney, to Oakland at the time you returned from California to New York, to harass and threaten two couples living there who had recently withdrawn from your service. These couples were told by your men to stop talking about your bedroom escapades with young girls or they would be 'taken care of.' The couples then went to the District Attorney in Oakland and filed a

statement of complaint. They also hired a lawyer who informed you that if you did not cease harassing the people, a suit would be filed. The couples then received further threats of disfigurement before your two men left town.

This was the “gossip” I listened to on that Sunday in June. I told my friends that I could not believe all these accusations without proof. I requested them to arrange for their Oakland informant to contact me; I wanted to hear these rumors from their source.

The following day, I received a call from a person in Oakland whom I had known very well since our early days together in Ganeshpuri. He told me very convincingly that all these previously mentioned events had actually occurred. There were scores of stories, he said, from a number of girls, reputable and well-known to me, who reported having been led into your quarters and sexually enjoyed by You, Muktananda, in the name of Tantra initiation. He [my caller] and his friends had spoken of these things and had subsequently been visited, harassed, and threatened by your men.

I was in a quandary. What was I to do? I could not share this with anyone, and I knew what your response would be if I were to ask you about it. My only real choice seemed to be to investigate these stories for myself. So, I decided to take a vacation, go to Oakland and enquire further in an attempt to determine the truth of the matter.

I withdrew from the ashram funds the back pay and clothing allowance owed to me and bought a ticket to Oakland. I visited and stayed with the people who had supposedly been threatened. I listened to their accounts of numerous girls whom I had known over the years who had reported to them their stories of sexual service to you, and I heard for myself from one girl who described her own experience of [involuntary] sexual intercourse with you. I also heard from others who corroborated the stories of harassment and threats from your two men. After thorough questioning, I could not help feeling that their stories were true. I could not help feeling that there was too much agreement, too much outrage, and too many people saying the same to imagine that they were all making this up.

The capper to all this came when, finally, I heard from Swami Tejomayananda. He had known about your “sex leela,” as he called it, from 1977. You discovered that he knew about it, and thereafter, you relegated him to a background position from which it was apparent that he was no longer in favor. This way, he could easily be accused of ‘sour grapes’ if ever he said anything. Still, he remained—though sullenly, until he learned of your attempted seduction of his teenage daughter; then he left in the middle of the night in silent outrage.

Previously, I had found it possible to rationalize most of your behavior, Muktananda, and to simply suspend judgement on the remainder. But I could find no way to rationalize such deceit, such duplicity, as you have apparently practiced on your faithful disciples over the years. I could find no way to make it fit my conception of “human perfection.” I believe that, when a Guru begins to lose sight of moral values—whether because of senility, madness, illness, or whatever reason--, and regards others as objects to manipulate and use for his own ends, and when he begins to resort to threats of violence to hide the lie of his personal life, it is a disciple’s *duty* to leave that Guru. It is therefore with much regret and deep anguish that I feel forced to terminate my discipleship to you. May God protect you and guide you.

Sincerely,

Stan Trout

Aka Swami Abhayananda

4. Article from Co-Evolution Quarterly, 1983:

There are few things sadder than a good guru gone bad. The cynics among us may object that a "good guru" is a contradiction in terms and certainly the spectacle of corrupt and authoritarian cults in recent years has cast a pall over the role of spiritual teachers. Nevertheless,

I'm willing to maintain that a significant amount of wisdom and compassionate works have proceeded from various gurus and their followers, and I resist the impulse to write off the whole bunch as charlatans and power-trippers.

From all indication Swami Muktananda helped thousands of people in his day - a fact that even disillusioned ex-devotees don't dispute. However, the last few years of his life saw a proliferation of abuses which are only now coming to light William Rodarmor; a former lawyer, park ranger, wilderness trip leader and presently a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley journalism school has spent months interviewing former and current followers of Muktananda for this investigative article. CQ independently contacted his major sources and confirmed the authenticity of their quotes and allegations. -Jay Kinney

The Secret Life of Swami Muktananda

by William Rodarmor

Illustrated by Matthew Wuerker

"There is no deity superior to the Guru, no gain better than the Guru's grace ... no state higher than meditation on the Guru." -Muktananda

On the American consciousness circuit, Baba Muktananda was known as the "guru's guru," one of the most respected meditation masters ever to come out of India. Respected, that is, until now.

When Baba Ram Das introduced him to the U.S. in 1970. Muktananda was still largely unknown. Thanks to Muktananda's spiritual power, his Siddha meditation movement quickly took root in the fertile soil of the American growth movement. By the time he died of heart failure in October 1982, Muktananda's followers had built him 31 ashrams, or meditation centers, around the world. When crowds saw Muktananda step from a black limousine to a waiting Lear jet, it was clear that the diminutive, orange-robed Indian was an American-style success.

At various times, Jerry Brown, Werner Erhard, John Denver, Marsha Mason; James Taylor, Carry Simon, astronaut Edgar Mitchell, and

Meg Christian have all been interested in Muktananda's movement. The media coordinator at the large Oakland, California, ashram is former Black Panther leader Erika Huggins.

Baba Muktananda said he was a Siddha, the representative of a centuries-old Hindu lineage. According to his official biography, he wandered across India as a young man, going from teacher to teacher, living the chaste, austere life of a monk. In Ganeshpuri, near Bombay, he became the disciple of Nityananda, a Siddha guru of awesome yogic powers. After years of meditation, Muktananda experienced enlightenment. When Nityananda died in 1960, Muktananda said the guru passed the Siddha mantle to him on his deathbed, though some of Nityananda's followers in India dispute the claim. When Muktananda himself died, a sympathetic press still saw him as a spiritual Mr. Clean, and his two successors, a brother-sister team of swamis, continue to draw thousands of people searching for higher consciousness.

To most of his followers, Muktananda was a great master. But to others, he was a man unable to live up to the high principles of his own teachings. "When we first approach a Guru," Muktananda wrote, "we should carefully examine his qualities and his actions. He should have conquered desire and anger and banished infatuation from his heart." For many, that was a warning that was understood too late.

Some of Muktananda's most important former followers now charge that the guru repeatedly violated his vow of chastity, made millions of dollars from his followers' labors: and allowed guns and violence in his ashrams. The accusations have been denied by the swamis who took over his movement after the master died.

In the course of preparing this story, I talked with 25 present and former devotees; most of the interviews are on tape. Some people would only talk to me if promised anonymity, and some are bitter at what they feel was Muktananda's betrayal of their trust. All agree that Muktananda was a man of unusual power. They differ over the ways he used it.

"I don't have sex for the same reason you do: because it feels so good." -Muktananda

In his teachings, Muktananda put a lot of emphasis on sex - most of it negative. Curbing the sex drive released the kundalini energy that led to enlightenment, he said. The swami himself claimed to be completely celibate.

Members of the guru's inner circle, however, say Muktananda regularly had sex with his female devotees. Michael Dinga, an Oakland contractor who was head of construction for the ashram and a trustee of the foundation, said the guru's sexual exploits were common knowledge in the ashram. "It was supposed to be Muktananda's big secret," said Dinga, "but since many of the girls were in their early to middle teens, it was hard to keep it secret."

A young woman I am calling "Mary" said the guru seduced her at the main American ashram at South Fallsburg, New York, in 1981. Mary was in her early twenties at the time. Muktananda was 73.

At South Fallsburg, Muktananda used to stand behind a curtain in the evening, watching the girls coming back to the dormitory. He asked Mary to come to his bedroom several times, and he gave her gifts of money and jewelry. Finally, she did. When he then told her to undress, she was shocked, but she obeyed.

"He had a special area which I assume he used for his sexual affairs. It was similar to a gynecologist's table, but without the stirrups." (To his later chagrin, Michael Dinga realized he had built the table himself.) "He didn't have an erection," Mary said, "but he inserted about as much as he could. He was standing up, and his eyes were rolled up to the ceiling. He looked as if he was in some sort of ecstasy." When the session was over, Muktananda ordered the girl to come back the next day, and added, "Don't wear underwear."

On the first night, Muktananda had tried to convince Mary she was being initiated into tantric yoga - the yoga of sex. The next night, he didn't bother. "It was like 'Okay, you're here, take off your clothes. get on the table and let's do it.' Just very straight, hard, cold sex."

Mary told two people about what had happened to her. Neither was exactly surprised.

Michael's wife Chandra was disturbed. Chandra was probably the most important American in the movement. As head of food services, she saw Muktananda daily, and knew what was going on. "Whoever was in his kitchen was in some way molested," she said. A girl I'll call "Nina" used to work for Chandra. One day, the guru remarked to her in Hindi, "Sex with Nina is very good." Nina's mother was later made a swami.

Chandra said she had rationalized the guru's having sex in the past, but she was dismayed to learn it had happened to her young friend Mary. Aware of Muktananda's power over people who were devoted to him, she saw it as a form of rape.

The other person Mary confided in was Malti, Muktananda's longtime translator.

Mary said Malti wasn't surprised when she told her about being seduced by the aged guru. "She told me people had been coming to her with this for years and years," Mary said. "She was caught in the middle." Malti and her brother, who have taken the names Chidvilasananda and Nityananda, are the movement's new leaders.

Another of Muktananda's victims was a woman I'll call "Jennifer." She says Muktananda raped her at the main Indian ashram at Ganeshpuri in the spring of 1978. He ordered Jennifer to come to his bedroom late one night and told her to take her clothes off. "I was in shock," she said, "but over the years, I had learned you never say no to anything that he asked you to do...."

Muktananda had intercourse with Jennifer for an hour, she said, and was quite proud of the fact. "He kept saying, 'Sixty minutes,'" she said. "He claimed he was using the real Indian positions, not the westernized ones used in America." While he had sex, the guru felt like conversing, but Jennifer found she couldn't say a word. "The main thing he wanted to know was how old I was when I first got my period. I answered something, and he said, 'That's good, you're a pure girl.'" Devastated by the event, Jennifer made plans to leave the ashram as soon as possible, but Muktananda continued to be interested in her. "He used to watch me getting undressed through the keyhole," she said. She would open the door and see the guru

outside "I became rather scared of him, because he kept coming to my room at night."

Both women said the Ganeshpuri ashram was arranged to suit Muktananda's convenience.

"He had a secret passageway from his house to the young girls' dormitory," Mary said. "Whoever he was carrying on with, he had switched to that dorm." The guru often visited the girls' dormitory while they were undressing. "He would come up anytime he wanted to" Jennifer said, "and we would just giggle. In the early days, I never thought of him as having sexual desires. He was the guru..." Mary knew otherwise: she talked with at least eight other young girls who had sex with Muktananda. "I knew that he had girls marching in and out of his bedroom all night long," she said.

While his followers were renovating a Miami hotel in 1979, Muktananda slept on the women's floor, and ordered that the youngest be put in the rooms closest to his, and the older ones down the hall.

"You always knew who he was carrying on with," said Chandra. "They came down the next day with a new gold bracelet or a new pair of earrings." Around the ashram, said Mary, people knew that "anyone who had jewelry was going to his room a lot."

For a time, Muktananda's followers found ways to rationalize his behavior. He wasn't really penetrating his victims, they said. Or he wasn't ejaculating - an important distinction to some, since retaining the semen was supposed to be a way of conserving the kundalini energy.

Ultimately, Chandra felt it didn't make any difference. "If you're going to be celibate, and you're going to preach celibacy, you don't put it in halfway, and then pull it out. You live what you preach..."

After years of repressing their growing doubts about Muktananda, Michael and Chandra finally drew the line when they learned he was molesting a 13-year-old girl. She had been entrusted to the ashram by her parents and was being cared for by Muktananda's laundress and chauffeur. The laundress "told me Baba was doing things to her,"

said Chandra. "I think he was probing around in her." The laundress suggested it was only "Baba's way of loving her," but Chandra was appalled.

Charges of sex against Muktananda continued. In 1981, one of Muktananda's swamis, Stan Trout, wrote an open letter accusing his guru of molesting little girls on the pretext of checking their virginity. The letter caused a stir, but word didn't go beyond the ashram. In a "Memo from Baba," Muktananda merely answered that "devotees should know the truth by their own experience, not by the letters that they receive... You should be happy that I'm still alive and healthy and that they haven't tried to hang me."

"Wretched is he who cannot observe discipline and restraint even in an ashram." -Muktananda

In the first of his eight years with Muktananda, Yale dropout Richard Grimes said he was "in a funny kind of grace period, where you're so involved with the beginning of inner Life that you don't really notice what is going on." But then he started seeing things that didn't jibe with his idea of a meditation retreat.

"Muktananda had a ferocious temper," said Grimes, "and would scream or yell at someone for no seeming reason." He saw the guru beating people on many occasions. "In India, if peasants were caught stealing a coconut from his ashram, Muktananda would often beat them," Grimes said. The people in the ashram thought it was a great honor to be beaten by the guru. No one asked the peasants' opinion.

Muktananda's ubiquitous valet, Noni Patel, was a regular target of his master's wrath. While on tour in Denver, Noni came down to the kitchen to be treated for a strange wound in his side. "At first, he wouldn't say how he had gotten it," Grimes' wife Lotte recalled. "Later it came out that Baba had stabbed him with a fork."

When ex-devotees talked about strong-arm tactics against devotees, the names of two people close to Muktananda kept coming up. One was David Lynn, known as Sripati, an ex-Marine Vietnam vet. The other was Joe Don Looney, an ex-football player with a reputation for troublemaking on the five NFL teams he played for, and a criminal

record. They were known as the "enforcers"; Muktananda used them to keep people in line.

On the guru's orders, Sripati once picked a public fight with then-swami Stan Trout at the South Fallsburg ashram. He came down from Boston, where Muktananda was staying, and punched Trout to the ground without provocation. Long-time devotee Abed Simli saw the attack, but he figured Sripati had just flipped out. Michael Dinga knew otherwise. Muktananda had phoned him the morning before the beating, and told him Trout's ego was getting too big, and that he was sending Sripati to set him straight. Dinga, a big man, was instructed not to interfere.

In India, Dinga and a man called Peter Polivka witnessed Muktananda's valet Noni Patel give a particularly brutal beating to a young follower: A German boy in his twenties, whom Dinga described as "obviously in a disturbed state" had started flailing around during a meditation intensive. The German was hauled outside, put under a cold shower, stripped naked, and laid out on a concrete slab behind the ashram. Dinga said the German just sat in a full lotus position and tried to steel himself against what happened next.

Noni Patel took a rubber hose, a foot-and-a-half long, and beat and questioned the boy for thirty minutes while a large black man called Hanuman held him. "They were full-strength blows," said Dinga, "and they raised horrible welts on the boy's body."

There exists a long tradition in the East of masters beating their students. Tibetan and Zen Buddhist stories are full of sharp blows that stop the students' rational minds long enough for them to become enlightened. Couldn't that have been what Muktananda was doing?

"It could be seen that way," said Richard Grimes. "For years we thought that every discrepancy was because he lived outside the laws of morality. He could do anything he wanted. That in itself is the biggest danger of having a perfect master lead any kind of group - there's no safeguard."

Chandra Dinga said that as Muktananda's power grew, he ignored normal standards of behavior. "He felt he was above and beyond the

law," she said. "It went from roughing people up who didn't do what he wanted, to eventually, at the end, having firearms."

Though the ashrams were meditation centers, a surprising number of people in them had guns. Chandra saw Noni's gun, Muktananda's successor Subash's gun, and the shotgun Muktananda kept in his bedroom. Others saw guns in the hands of "enforcer" Sripati and ashram manager Yogi Ram. The manager of the Indian ashram showed Richard Grimes a pistol that had been smuggled into India for his use. One devotee opened a paper bag in an ashram vehicle in Santa Monica and found ammunition in it.

A woman who ran the ashram bakery for many years said she knew some people had guns, but that it never bothered her. The Santa Monica ashram, for example, was in a very rough neighborhood, she said, and the guns were strictly for protection.

"In an ashram, one should not fritter one's precious time in a precious place on eating and drinking, sleeping, gossiping and talking idly." - Muktananda

By all accounts, devotees in the ashrams worked hard under trying conditions. In India, they were isolated from their culture. Even in the American ashrams, close friendships were frowned on, and Muktananda strongly discouraged devotees from visiting their families. A woman I'm calling "Sally" used to get up for work at 3:30 a.m. She said her day was spent in work, chanting, meditation, and silence. "Some days, you couldn't talk to anyone all day long. I would get very lonely." Recorded chants were often played over loudspeakers. Even a woman who is still close to the movement admitted that "the long hours were a drag."

Though he was Muktananda's right-hand man for construction, Michael Dinga worked "under incredible schedules with ridiculous budgets," putting in the same hours as his crew. In the six-and-a-half years he was with the ashram, he said he had a total of two weeks off.

As time went on, Dinga came to be bothered by what he saw as exploitation: "I saw the way people were manipulated, how they

would work in all sincerity and all devotion [with] no idea that they were being laughed at and taken advantage of."

"Even a penny coming as a gift should be regarded as belonging to God and religion." -Muktananda

Muktananda's movement was both a spiritual and a financial success. Once Siddha meditation caught on, said Chandra Dinga, "money poured into the ashram." Particularly lucrative were the two-day "meditation intensives" given by Muktananda, and now by his successors. Today, an intensive led by the two new gurus costs \$200. (Money orders or cashier's checks only, please. No credit cards or personal checks.) An intensive given in Oakland in May 1983 drew 1200 participants, and people had to be turned away. At \$200 a head, Chidvilasananda and Nityananda's labors earned the ashram nearly a quarter of a million dollars in a single weekend.

There was always a lot of secrecy around ashram affairs, Lotte Grimes remarked. During Muktananda's lifetime, that secrecy applied to money matters with a vengeance.

The number of people who came to intensives, for example, was a secret even from the devotees. Simple multiplication would tell anyone how much money was coming in. And when Richard Grimes set up a restaurant at the Oakland ashram, he said Muktananda "had a fit" when he found out that Grimes had been keeping his own records of the take.

Food services head Chandra Dinga said the restaurants in the various ashrams were always big money-makers, where devotees worked long hours for free. On tour during the summer, she said, they would feed over a thousand people, and bring in three thousand dollars in cash a day. Sally said that a breakfast that sold for two dollars actually cost the ashram about three cents.

Donations further fattened the coffers. if somebody important was coming to the ashram, Chandra's job was to try and get them to give a feast and to make a large donation. \$1500 to \$3000 was considered appropriate. "There was just a constant flow of money into his pockets," said Chandra, "it let him get whatever he wanted to get and let him buy people."

Muktananda himself was said to have been very attached to money. "For years, he catered only to those who were wealthy," said Richard Grimes. "He spent all the time outside of his public performances seeing privately anyone who had a lot of money."

A parade of Mercedes-Benzes used to drive up to the Ganeshpuri ashram with rich visitors, said Grimes. In Oakland, Lotte Grimes saw Malti order a list drawn up of everybody in the ashram who had money, to arrange private interviews with Muktananda, by his orders.

Devotees, on the other hand, had to get by on small stipends, if they got anything. Chandra Dinga, despite her status as head of food services, never got more than \$100 a month. Devotees with less prestige were completely dependent on the guru's generosity. Sally once cried for two days when she broke her glasses, knowing she would have to beg Muktananda for another pair.

How much money did Muktananda amass from his efforts? Even the officers of the foundation that ostensibly ran Muktananda's affairs never knew for sure.

Michael Dinga was a foundation trustee, and he used to cosign for deposits to the ashram's Swiss bank accounts, but the amounts on the papers were always left blank. In 1977, however, he got a hint. Ron Friedland, the president of the foundation, told Dinga that Muktananda had 1.3 million dollars in Switzerland. Three years later, Muktananda told Chandra it was more like five million. "And then he laughed, and said, 'There's more than that.'"

A woman called Amma, who was Muktananda's companion for more than twenty years, told the Dingas that all the accounts were in the names of Muktananda's eventual successors, Chidvilasananda and Nityananda.

Michael and Chandra Dinga finally quit the ashram in December 1980. They had served Muktananda for a combined total of sixteen-and-a-half years and had risen to positions of real importance. Both knew exactly how the ashram operated.

Together, they went to Muktananda to tell him why they wanted to leave. The guru wasn't pleased. To get the Dingas to stay,

Muktananda called on everything he thought would stir them. He offered them a car, a house, and money. When that failed, he started to weep. "You're my blood, my family," he said. Then Muktananda abruptly changed tack. "You've come on an inauspicious day," he said. "I can't give you my blessing." Next morning, he called Chandra on the public intercom and said she could leave immediately.

After they left, the Dingas say they were denounced by the guru, and their lives threatened.

"Muktananda claimed he had thrown us out because Chandra was a whore" said Dinga, "that she was having sex with the young boys who worked in the restaurant. Later he said I had a harem. In other words, he was accusing us of all the things he was doing himself." Muktananda also claimed that none of the buildings Michael had built were any good. When one of Michael's crew stood up for him, he was threatened physically.

Leaving all their friends behind in the ashram, the Dingas moved to the San Francisco area, but Muktananda's enmity followed them. Their doorbell and telephone started ringing at odd hours, and Michael saw the "enforcers" running away from their door one night. A cruel hoax was played on Chandra. Someone followed her when she took her cat to the vet, then phoned the vet's office with a message that her husband had been in a bad accident. Chandra waited frantically at Berkeley's Alta Bates Hospital for three quarters of an hour, only to learn that Michael was at work, unhurt.

Death threats started to reach the Dingas toward the end of April 1981, six months after they had left the ashram. On May 7, Sripati and Joe Don Looney visited Lotte Grimes at her job in Emeryville with a frightening piece of information: "Tell Chandra this is a message from Baba: Chandra only has two months to live." Another ex-follower said he got a similar message: If the Dingas didn't keep quiet, acid would be thrown in Chandra's face; Michael would be castrated.

The Grimeses and the Dingas reported the threats to the police. The Dingas hired a lawyer.

The threats stopped soon after Berkeley police officer Clarick Brown called on the Oakland ashram, but Chandra was badly frightened. Some ex-followers still are.

Michael and Chandra's departure sparked a small exodus from the ashram. Some of the ex-followers began to meet and compare notes on their experiences in the ashram. "We were amazed and rejuvenated," said Richard Grimes. "We got more energy from learning he was a con man than we ever did thinking he was a real person."

Just the same, the devotees who left the ashram are still dealing with the damage done to their lives. Michael and Chandra's marriage broke up, as did Sally's. Michael is only now coming out of a period of depression and emptiness. Richard and Lotte Grimes are bitter at having wasted years of their lives in the ashram. Stan Trout still considers Muktananda a great yogi, but a tragically flawed man.

Chandra Dinga has taken years to come to terms with her experience with Muktananda; "Your whole frame of reference becomes askew," she said. "What you would normally think to be right or wrong no longer has any place. The underlying premise is that everything the guru does is for your own good. The guru does no wrong. When I finally realized that everything he did was not for our own good, I had to leave."

Muktananda's two successors were at the Oakland ashram in May end I asked Swami Chidvilasananda about the accusations against her guru.

To her knowledge, did Muktananda have sex with women in the ashram? "Not as far as I saw," she said carefully. What about the charge that Muktananda had sex with young girls? "Those girls never came to us," Chidvilasananda said. "And we never saw it, we only heard it when Chandra talked to everybody else."

Chidvilasananda also denied that there was a bank account in Switzerland. When asked about the ashram's finances, she said that all income was put back into facilities. "We are a break-even proposition," the new leader said.

As for the alleged beatings, she said that Americans had their own ways of doing things. She said, "You can't blame the guru, because the guru doesn't teach that."

Why then, I asked, do the other ex-devotees I talked with support the Dingas in their charges?

Chidvilasananda replied, "I'm very glad they gave you a very nice story to cover themselves up and I want to tell you I don't want to get into this story because I know their story, too, and I do not want to say anything about it." When I said, "You have a chance to tell us whether or not you think these are accurate charges, falsehoods, or delusions," Malti's answer was: "I'm not going to probe into people's minds and try to find out what the truth is."

Two swamis and a number of present followers also said the charges were not true. Others say they simply don't believe them.

On the subject of money, foundation chief Ed Oliver conceded in an October 1, 1983, interview with the **Los Angeles Times** that there is a Swiss account with 1.5 million dollars in it. And when I repeated Swami Chidvilasananda's denials about women complaining to her, Mary, the woman who says the guru seduced her in South Fallsburg, said, "Well, that's an out-and-out lie."

"The sins committed at any other place are destroyed at a holy center, but those committed at a holy center stick tenaciously - it is difficult to wash them away." -Muktananda

This is a story of serious accusations made against a spiritual leader who is still prayed to and revered by thousands. Even his detractors say Muktananda gave them a great deal in the beginning. "He put out a force field around him," said Michael Dinga. "You could palpably feel the force coming off him. It gave me the feeling I had latched onto something that would answer my questions." Former devotees say Muktananda's eyes had a kind of light; when they first met the guru, he radiated love and benevolence. He also had a way of making his devotees feel special.

"I think he liked me so much because I wasn't taken by all the visions and the sounds," said Chandra, "that I understood that having an

experience of God was something much more substantial and more ordinary." Chandra still feels that spirituality is the most important thing in her life. She says the gradual unfolding of the dark side of her guru's personality chipped away at her love and respect. "When you have a loved one you never dream that he might hurt you. At the end, I was devastated." Yet despite the unsavory conclusion to her ten years with the swami, Chandra still notes, "if I had it to do over again, I still wouldn't trade the experience for anything in the world."

In a way, the sex, the violence, and the corruption aren't the real point. Muktananda's personal shortcomings were bad enough, explained Michael Dinga, but "the worst of it was that he wasn't who he said he was."

A person can make spiritual progress under a corrupt master, just as placebos can actually make you feel better. But how far can a person really grow spiritually under a master who doesn't himself live the truth? There was a tremendous split between what Muktananda preached and what he did, and his hypocrisy only made it worse. His successors are now in a dilemma: If they admit their guru's sins, Chidvilasananda and Nityananda lose their god-figure, and weaken their claim to a lineage of perfect masters. But if they don't, people who come to them looking for truth are courting disappointment.

Stan Trout, formerly Swami Abhayananda, served Muktananda for ten years as a teacher and ashram director. He left in 1981. "My summary withdrawal from Muktananda's organization was also a withdrawal from what I had considered my fraternal family, my friends, and above all, my life's work," he wrote us. He sent this open letter after reading a draft of "The Secret Life of Swami Muktananda," in which he is quoted. - Art Kleiner

Letter From a Former Swami

by Stan Trout (Swami Abhayananda)

I'd like to add this letter, if possible, as an appendix to the article on Muktananda by William Rodarmor. It is a statement of my thoughts and opinions of Muktananda after two years of deep deliberation following my discovery of his 'secret life'.

When I left Muktananda's service, I did so because I had just learned of the threatening action he had taken against some of his long-time devotees who had recently left his service. He had sent two of his bodyguards to deliver threats to two young married women who had been speaking to other women who had been speaking to others of Muktananda's sexual liaisons with a number of young girls in his ashram. It was immediately clear to me that I could not represent a guru who was not only taking sexual advantage of his female devotees but was threatening with bodily harm those who revealed the truth about him. However, after I had left Muktananda and had make the reasons for my departure known to others still in his service, another issue came to light for me, teaching me something not only about Muktananda's [nature], but about the nature of the organization and all other such organizations in which the leader is regarded as infallible by his followers, and is therefore obeyed implicitly.

When Chandra and Michael Dinga and later I, myself, realized the truth about Muktananda and his secret sex life, there was absolutely no means available to present the evidence for a fair hearing or judgment. There was no recourse but to leave, for the guru was the sole appeal, and he was as accustomed to lying as he was to breathing. Yet his word was regarded by followers as so absolutely final that when each of us left and were branded "demons" by him, not a single soul among those who had been our brother and sister devotees for ten years questioned or objected, but unamimously rejected us outright as the demented infidels he said we were. One has only to observe the way each of us who discovered the guru's secret life were treated by our former comrades to understand the power for evil inherent in any relationship based on the infallibility of the leader and the unquestioned obedience of the subjects...

It is clear to me that not only had the girls with whom Muktananda practiced his sexual diversions committed acts to which they had given no moral or rational consent, but so had the men who were ordered to threaten them with violence, and so had I myself when I had followed Muktananda's orders to express to others opinions which I did not sincerely hold. It is a sad but perennial phenomenon: Out of a love for truth and for those who teach it and appear to embody it, we unwittingly set ourselves up for exploitation and

betrayal. Our mistake is to deify another being and attribute perfection to him. From that point on everything is admissible.

I think the lesson to be learned is that we simply cannot afford to relinquish our individual sovereignty - whether it be in a socio-political setting or in a religious congregation. Those who willingly put aside their own autonomy, their own moral judgment, to obey even a Christ, a Buddha, or a Krishna, do so at risk of losing a great deal more than they can hope to gain.

About Muktananda himself I have thought a great deal. There is no doubt in my mind that he was an extraordinarily enlightened, learned, and articulate man who possessed a singular power, a dynamic personal radiance and charisma that drew people to him and inspired them to lay their lives at his feet. Surely such a power is divine; yet there is no way to justify the way in which he used this power. If God himself were to behave in this way, we would have to find him guilty of flagrant disregard for the law of love.

Some may say, 'He did no worse than any of us have done or would do if we could.' And I would answer, 'No; he did worse than any of us have done or would have done in his place. For, though he was only human like the rest of us, he staged a deliberate campaign of deceit to convince gentle souls that he had transcended the limitations of mankind, that through realizing the eternal Self, he had attained holy "perfection." He planted and nourished false, impossible dreams in the hearts of innocent, faithful souls and sacrificed them to his sport. With malicious glee, he cunningly stole from hundreds of trusting souls their hearts and wills, their self-trust, their very sanity, their very lives. No ordinary, good person could do this, no matter how he tried; his heart and conscience would not allow it.

Like all of us, Muktananda was only human. And, like all men who worship power, he was inevitably corrupted and destroyed by it. His power could not save him from the weakness of the flesh, nor from the wickedness and depravity that servitude to it brings. He ended as a feeble-minded sadistic tyrant, luring devout little girls to his bed every night with promises of grace and self-realization.

Muktananda's claim of "perfection" (*Siddha-hood*) was based on the notion that a person who has become enlightened has thereby also become "perfect" and absolutely free of human weakness. This is nonsense; it is a myth perpetrated by dishonest men who wish to receive the reverence and adoration due God alone. There is no absolute assurance that enlightenment necessitates the moral virtue of a person. There is no guarantee against the weakness of anger, lust, and greed in the human soul. The enlightened are on an equal footing with the ignorant in the struggle against their own evil - the only difference being that the enlightened person *knows* the truth and has no excuse for betraying it.

Throughout history there have been many enlightened souls who have been thought great, who, in the pride of their perfection and freedom, have imagined themselves to be beyond the constraints of God's laws, and who have thus fallen from love and lost the glory they once had. Those glorious Babas and Bhagwans, thinking to build their kingdom here on earth upon the ruins of the young souls devoted to them, often succeed for a time in fooling many and in gathering a large and festive following, but their deeds also follow them and proclaim their truth long after the paeans of praise have been sung and wafted away on the air. "God is not mocked"; there is no freedom, no liberation, from His law of love, nor from His inescapable justice. It is indeed often those very persons who have thought themselves most perfect, most free and ungoverned, who have fallen most grievously; and their piteous fall is an occasion for great sadness and should serve as a clear reminder of caution to us all.

5. Article Appearing in “Leaving Siddha Yoga, 1999:

The first article published that exposed Muktananda's abuse was called “The Secret Life of Swami Muktananda”_article by William Rodarmor, **The CoEvolution Quarterly**; Winter 1983. Swami Abhayananda AKA Stan Trout is quoted there. Here is what he has to say 16 years later.

Dear Pendragon,

Thank you for the friendly reply. I had just about determined I would not speak with you, as you seemed a bit too suspicious and combative, but now I feel a little more comfortable with speaking with you, and I will try to answer most of your questions. First, I have never thought of myself as a "former-Swami," as I was described by the editors of the 1983 Rodarmor article that appeared in the Co-Evolution Quarterly. In 1984, I published my first book, *The Supreme Self*, under the name "S. Abhayananda," and have continued to use that name as author in all subsequent books. The term "Swami" had taken on such negative connotations for so many by then that I felt it would be best to simply use "S." in my name rather than "Swami." In that first book, and in several subsequent books, I made no mention of Muktananda; I was concerned to speak of my own spiritual experience and my own knowledge and felt that no good would be served by my bringing up a lot of sordid details which would only confuse people and serve to obfuscate my message. I continued over the years to avoid mention of Muktananda--partly because I am not interested in gossip or criticism but am dedicated to sharing my spiritual knowledge in order to truly benefit others. I wished to put that tragic period of my life behind me, and to continue to do as I had originally set out to do. There was also the fact that I was committed to protecting the identity of those who had made clear to me that they did not wish to be identified. Eventually, however, due to questions that repeatedly came up, I included in my bio in the back of my books the information that I had been a disciple of Muktananda's, and had

left his organization when, "unwilling to condone what I saw as abuses of power, I left his organization in 1981."

Aside from my "Open Letter" and my contribution to Rodarmor's '83 article, that's as much as I have said publicly up to this time. It's been 18 years since I walked out on Muktananda, and I am now an old man of sixty-one. I still feel no great need to talk about the past--in fact, it's of very little interest to me; but so long as there are questions, I'm willing to answer them. I feel that enough time has passed that no one will be harmed by my speaking out at this time. So, here's a little rundown on what happened way back then:

Prior to meeting Baba, I had spent 5 years in a little isolated cabin in the forested mountains of Santa Cruz, California, seeking to know God. It was there that I experienced Unity. One night in November of 1966, I entered a deep stillness and knew my eternal Self. This experience was the highlight of my life and influenced everything that followed. At that time, I vowed to give my life to the praise of God. I would become a Swami; but I knew I needed to learn a great deal, and so I gave myself 12 years to become worthy of teaching what I had come to know. I was not looking for a guru, but one night in 1970 I met Muktananda when he spoke at the University of California at Santa Cruz. I was mesmerized by him, and when he came off the stage and down the aisle, I stood in front of him holding out my hands for him to touch me. He took my hand, and I followed him out to where his car was awaiting him. We waved goodbye to each other, and I was in an excited state of bliss. Later, when I read his book, *Guru* (which was later published as *Chitshakti Vilas*), I decided to go to him in India. I felt that he could help me to retain the state I had experienced in my cabin. I wrote to him, asking if I could come, and he said, "Come to India." I had no money, but through some miraculous circumstances, I managed to get to Ganeshpuri in 1972.

I was not disappointed. I loved the ashram, and I worshipped Baba. I was utterly convinced that he was God incarnate. Malti (Chidvilasananda) was only seventeen, and she seemed an extraordinarily pure and beautiful soul. Baba's translator was

Professor Jain, a young Indian man who would later fall in love and marry in the U.S. There were young men and women from many countries: France, Italy, Spain, Australia, as well as the U.S.; and of course, a number of Indian devotees. At that time, there were only 50 or 60 Westerners staying there: these were the young men and women who were later to become the Swamis and administrators of SYDA. We worked in the garden and made quilts during the monsoon; we chanted and meditated and stood before Baba on his courtyard perch like angels before the throne of God, absorbing the beauty of his radiance, drawn into the stillness of his peace.

I spent two very happy years in Ganeshpuri, and then returned to the U.S. to help with Muktananda's Second World Tour. In Piedmont, California we had prepared a house for him, and shortly after his arrival there, while he was leading a chant, I was filled with emotion and tears were running down my face. When the chanting was over, he called me upstairs to his room and gave me the sandals off his feet. He told me to go to Indianapolis (my hometown), and to prepare for him to visit there. I went and prepared a place for him there, and when he came, he held an intensive and darshan for a large group of people. But there was some petty jealousy from one of Baba's staff who made it impossible for me to establish a permanent center there. I was baffled by what I thought was Baba's withdrawal of support, but was unable to communicate with Baba, due to the intercession of that staff-member; and, seeing no other choice, I returned to Oakland, Calif., where Baba was to end his Tour. At the time, Baba seemed to know nothing of the enmity that had been aimed at me, for later, when he discovered it, he banned that staff-member from any connection with SYDA.

In Oakland, I helped with the renovation of the old warehouse which became the Oakland ashram. And I remained there, living in the ashram, serving as the pujari, food-buyer, and librarian for several years. In 1978, I wrote to Baba, who had returned to India, and told him my twelve years were up, and it was time for me to become a Swami. He replied, "Come to India and take initiation." So, in May of 1978, I returned to India and took *sannyas* along with a small group of others. Thereafter, Baba

sent me to the New York ashram on 86th street to train as a teacher under Swami Paramananda. Like many of the other Swamis, I experienced a great increase of Shakti as a result of Baba's grace. I began to become an instrument of his energy; pulses of blue energy would dart from my eyes into whoever was receptive, and if someone touched me, I would feel the energy flow from me into that person.

The increased energy made me a magnetic attraction for the opposite sex, and on at least one occasion I foolishly encouraged that attraction and acted on it. Baba did not rebuke me openly, but he made me know his displeasure, and I learned to restrain my affections, though I felt them often, and continued to remain celibate throughout the time I was associated with Siddha Yoga.

After my apprenticeship in New York, Baba sent me to run the Philadelphia ashram, but I was regarded as an interloper by those already established in authority there, and did not have an especially happy time there. My manager, Jim McMahan (who later became a Swami also) and I were continually at odds; and on one occasion, I slugged him. I apologized and insisted that I should call Baba and confess this outrageous behavior; but Jim implored me not to, and it was not reported. (Much later, he himself would inform Baba that I struck him, for which offence Baba would instruct one of his henchmen, Sripati, to give me a beating.) At about this time, the South Fallsburg ashram was being bought and refurbished, and much of my time was spent there helping with the clean-up and readying of the ashram. One incident during this period that stands out in my mind was when I came down with a case of Shingles. Large red blisters developed on my tailbone area and I was in great pain. Excusing myself from the ashram programs, I remained in my room. One evening Baba came into my room--which I shared with Swami Vivekananda (now Master Charles) --and Baba was carrying a thick walking-stick with which to give me a beating. My Hindi was almost non-existent, and so Vivekananda translated to Baba that I really was afflicted. Brandishing his walking stick, Baba made me pull down my shorts to show him the blisters, and satisfied, he left. It was an experience that made me doubt the guru's omniscience as well as his understanding of me. When the time came for me to go

back to Philadelphia, I told Baba I would not return there. He then sent me to Chicago to run the ashram there.

I was in Chicago during all of 1980, and I loved my time there. The ashram was always full, and the people with whom I worked were excellent. I had a very loving and compatible relationship with the ashramites there--especially with Gargi, who served as the manager, and the atmosphere in the ashram reflected that harmony. However, during that time, Baba would make phone calls to me regarding a woman devotee from Australia named Ma Yoga Shakti (Anne Hamilton-Byrne) who had begun spreading rumors about Baba's indiscretions with some of the young girls of Siddha Yoga. As he knew I was a friend of her and her family, he sought to gain information about her from me, and instructed me to give her not-so-subtle warnings that he was all-seeing and all-powerful, and that she should watch what she said. He would shout furiously over the phone, seeming like a madman, causing me much confusion and stirring in my subconscious a doubt about his benevolence. I had heard from Ma Yoga Shakti of a young Indian girl who had come to her for advice, telling of how Muktananda had fondled her and inserted his finger into her vagina, ostensibly to check "her nadis." I had been somewhat shocked, but I was so mentally programmed to reject any criticism of the guru that I dismissed it as something I just did not have the ability to understand. And so, what if the guru found some pleasure in touching girls! Who was I to find fault with him? But his fanatic, almost despotic, anger and threats eroded the unassailability of my trust and slowly undermined my love for him.

At the beginning of 1981, Muktananda called me in Chicago to tell me that "they want you in Oklahoma City." The Chicago ashram was thriving, and I could not understand his pulling me out of there to send me to a city where there was no ashram. But, of course, I went, only to find myself living in a sparsely furnished apartment with two working girls who had had no part in asking for a Swami or even a Meditation Center. To this day, I don't really know what his real motive was for sending me there. Baba had visited Oklahoma City several times, and the person he had set up as the leader of his Meditation Center had gone off on his own,

rejecting Baba, and Baba told me he wanted me to take away this man's devotees and draw them back to Siddha Yoga. There was also an Indian chief there who was a rival guru whom I was instructed to intimidate and undermine. I was flabbergasted, but I made the most of an impossible situation. We rented a large house and established an ashram, and I met with these rival gurus in an attempt to infiltrate their organizations. By this time, I was feeling a little lost. I remember thinking that I'd like to maybe work in an ice-cream store or something simple like that. Nonetheless, the ashram work went on and prospered in a modest way.

Then, one Sunday afternoon, a man and wife in their fifties, who had hosted Baba in that city in the early days came to me and told me some shocking news: Several of Baba's closest long-time devotees had left the organization and had disclosed to them some disconcerting tales of Baba's sexual dalliances with a number of young females. They would not tell me who these people were who had left SYDA, but I asked to speak with them on the phone to determine for myself the truth of these accusations. But even as I was told these things about Baba, I knew in my heart that they were true. So much of what I had seen for myself and had sensed intuitively in Baba's words and behavior had now been brought to the surface of my conscious mind, and I knew that what they said was true. A phone call was arranged, and I spoke with the people who had made these accusations and had withdrawn from Baba's service. They were people whom I had known and with whom I had lived for a long time: Chandra and Michael Dinga along with Chandra's friend, Leela, and Rick and Lotte Grimes. These were people who had been extremely close to the center of Baba's organization and had held highly responsible positions in the organization. They were also in a position to know what went on in the girl's quarters and among the highly segregated female population of SYDA. I was told names and dates, and all the sordid details of Muktananda's long-time sexcapades dating back to the time I first met him. My heart sank; many curious circumstances over the years now became clear, and I realized that my devotion had

veiled my mind from acknowledging what had been right before my eyes all along.

But still I was not satisfied that I had been deluded for these many years; I was determined to return to South Fallsburg and confront Baba with what I had learned and hear what he had to say. But, as I waited with my packed suitcase outside the bus station for the bus, I recalled in my mind how Baba consistently treated any hint of criticism; how he made his critics the butt of ridicule and obfuscated all rationality; how he invoked his Siddhahood when challenged in any way, and how from his bully-pulpit he reduced his adversaries to mush before his assembly of devotees. And so, I decided instead to go to California where these "apostates" were living, and to satisfy myself in their presence as to the truth of their accusations. And that's what I did. I went to Oakland and stayed with Rick and Lotte, and with Michael and Chandra, and listened to what they had to say. They had recently been visited by two of Baba's henchmen-- Shripati and Joe Don Looney-- and had been harassed and threatened with bodily harm if they continued to repeat their stories. They had been visited on their jobs, and repeatedly threatened with disfigurement and even death. They had filed a suit with the District Attorney, who had issued a restraining order against Muktananda and his people. Michael kept a loaded shotgun in his home and carried a .357 magnum revolver with him whenever he went out--even to take out the garbage. They were clearly terrified of these men who followed unquestioningly whatever orders were given to them by their guru.

During those days that I stayed with them, I heard about another Baba than the one I had thought him to be. I was told about many of the girls who, over the years, had simply disappeared overnight, and about whom I had wondered. They had been enlisted for sex, and, freaking out, had left in the middle of the night. Many were Baba's cooks--the girls he had picked to be close to his quarters; but others were naive girls of thirteen and fourteen who had surrendered themselves to him and would do whatever he asked. Both Chandra and Lotte affirmed that this had been going on since the earliest times in Ganeshpuri but had escalated in recent times. In Ganeshpuri, he had a mattress

under his bed which he would pull out for sex so as not dirty his bed. At first, the girls told me, he didn't even know how to do it, and frequently sought help from his doctors for his "floppiness." But these were, of course, pre-Viagra times, and there was nothing they could do for him. At South Fallsburg, it was a nightly occurrence--with a different girl each time, and sometimes two together. It was not all hearsay; I heard the first-hand description from one girl of her own sexual exploitation by Baba and found her story to be clearly and undeniably true.

I was angry at the cowardice of the many girls who had been exploited over the years and failed to speak out. But, of course, they were frightened and confused, and simply wished to put it behind them. Still, they had perpetuated this abuse by their silence, and put other girls in jeopardy. I felt impelled to speak about it to those still under delusion, and to do what I could to warn other young women about the danger--many of whom I had been responsible for leading to Baba. We Swamis had unknowingly been his pimps; and I knew I had to speak out. In September of 1981, I wrote the "Open Letter" which you have subsequently published on your website, and I sent it to all the SYDA Meditation Centers on their published list. In May of 1982, I did another mailing of the letter, with this additional note appended at the end:

"Since that letter was written, I have talked with many people and have learned a great deal more of Muktananda's secret activities over the past years. Sad to say, he has been deceiving the sincere aspirants who believed in his holiness for many years. It seems to have begun at least as far back as 1976, and today he scarcely bothers to conceal the fact that he is having sex with many of his female devotees--most of whom are mere children in their early teens.

"It is a bitter revelation indeed to those who trusted him as a spiritual guide; and it is as much a sorrow for me to tell you these things as it is for you to hear them. Nevertheless, I feel I must warn you of what's coming so that you can begin to rebuild your bridges back to sanity. SYDA is going to collapse; the papers and magazines are going to have a field-day with stories of the

atrocities this man is committing; young girls are going to sue in court, and we will all begin to wonder how on earth we could have been involved with such a madman. It will be best if you can get out quietly and begin to regain your lives. And one other warning: do not be naive; do not underestimate this man's perfidy. He is inhumanly treacherous. He is capable of anything. I would like to tell you many details, but naturally I must protect the names of those whom he has violated. But talk with your friends; you will discover much for yourselves.

"I sincerely regret that I must be the bearer of this news, and I wish like you that it could all be proven false. I have learned, and I think you will too, that although they are hard, these sad tidings are the key to a future of freedom. And though it's a frightening and lonely vista at first, the initial anger at having been deceived for so long will subside, and you will realize that life is still great, God is still kind, and you have become somehow stronger and more trusting in the innate goodness of yourself. You will suffer, as I have, the lingering ghosts of a nightmare from which you've awakened, and, like me, you will feel very bad for some time; but every transition in this life is ordained by God's will, and at every turning He is still there, leading us infallibly to greatness.

"I send you my love and sincere regrets.

Your devoted friend,
Stan Trout"

A couple of weeks later, Baba issued a printed Bulletin, dated June 4, 1982, which stated:

MESSAGE FROM BABA

"The devotees should know the truth by their own experience, not by the letters they receive. Still, this is nothing new. It is a part of the lineage that I belong to. Mansur Mastana was hanged, Jesus was crucified, and all of Tukaram's books were thrown into the river. The lineage of people who did these things to these great beings is still with us. Just as I am established in my lineage,

these people are established in their lineage. So, what is the big deal? This is just the way of the world. You should be happy that I am still alive and healthy and that they haven't tried to hang me.

"... However, the thing that surprises me the most is that you have suddenly forgotten all the experiences that you have had. You must have heard me refer to the great saint, Kabir, very often. He said, 'The elephant strides at his own gait, but the dogs do trail behind and bark. ... People write on white paper with black ink. Let them write. Kabir says, if someone wants to eat hellish things, let them do so. But you should always stay established in the Lord.

Your own,
Swami Muktananda"

He was very slick, and most of his people were mollified by this evasive and manipulative style of his. He was identified with the Christ's of the world, and those who spoke against him were "dogs."

In the winter of 1981, Anne Hamilton-Byrne (Ma Yoga Shakti), a former devotee who had bought an old resort property near the South Fallsburg ashram to be near Baba, generously offered it to me as a hideout. I had grown a beard and learned to dodge recognized ashramites in grocery stores and department stores; and, though it was less than a mile from the ashram, I managed to live in that place undiscovered until after Baba's death, when I revealed my presence to some ashramites walking past the house. Chidvilasananda then sent several women to investigate, but I convinced them that I was harmless and was no threat to SYDA, and they left me alone. I remained in that place for the next seven years, minding the property, and walking the roads trying to understand how it was possible for someone to be both a saint and a devil at the same time, and trying to comprehend why God had perpetrated this apparent "trick" on me, first leading me to this man, and then destroying everything I had sought attain in

His name. I never found an answer to the first of these questions. Muktananda remains an enigma to me. He was without doubt an extraordinarily advanced soul, with incredible powers; but he was also a demon in his abuse of that power. How is this possible? I don't know.

This period was a very unhappy one for me; but I revived, and came to realize that, however difficult, the trials God puts before us are all for our own growth; and though they lead us down roads we would not have chosen, they lead us to the fulfillment of potentials which we would not even have dreamed possible. At this time, I began writing and publishing my books, in order to share my own vision. First was *The Supreme Self*, which told of my early experiences in my solitary cabin in Santa Cruz, and my present understanding.

Next came *History of Mysticism*, a monumental study of the lives and teachings of the mystics of various Eastern and Western traditions. I believed strongly in the necessity of understanding the history of mystical thought in all its expressions in order to see with the widest possible vision the unanimity of their message. All, regardless of religious affiliation, had experienced the same eternal Self; and the weight of their combined testimony was overwhelming. I had researched this book at the library of the SUNY at New Paltz, a 30-mile ride from South Fallsburg, and also found there the books which helped me write the biography of Jnaneshvar which I appended to the translations I had earlier done of some of his written works. This was published as *Jnaneshvar: The Life and Works of The Celebrated Thirteenth Century Indian Mystic-Poet*.

Eventually I determined to forge for myself a new life, and, in 1988, I moved to Naples, Florida. Along with a woman I met there, I founded "The Vedanta Temple," and held regular services and lectures as Swami Abhayananda. I also enjoyed a rich life, combing the beaches, frolicking in the surf, and enjoying the sun. There I published a book called, *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, a collection of thirty-five of my best lectures delivered over the years. And, in 1991, I left Florida and journeyed to Washington state at the furthest diagonal point of the continent. There, I re-

established "The Vedanta Temple," and published a few more books: *Dattatreya: The Song of The Avadhut*, which consisted of a translation from the Sanskrit text of *The Avadhut Gita*, which I had done back in Oakland in 1977; *Thomas á Kempis: On The Love of God*, a revised edition of a 15th century English translation of *The Imitation of Christ*; and later, a revised edition of *History of Mysticism*, which became a selection in the Book-of-the-Month Club, and has become a textbook in half-a-dozen University graduate courses around the country. My most recent book is a celebration of Plotinus, the 3rd century Roman mystic-sage, entitled, *Plotinus: The Origin of Western Mysticism*. In addition to my publishing enterprise, I support myself by caring for elderly patients in their homes. I live a quiet existence in a lakeside cabin surrounded by pines, where I read, write, and continue to endeavor to unite my soul with God. I invite anyone interested in learning more about my books to check out my website at: www.atmabooks.com (now, in 2021: www.themysticsvision.com), or to send an enquiry to me by email at: atmabks@aol.com or abhayanand@aol.com (now, in 2021: abhayananda@bellsouth.net).

Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story.

Yours sincerely,
Swami Abhayananda

7 Oct 99

www.LeavingSiddhaYoga.net

* * *

6. Another Perspective On Baba Muktananda:

Dear readers, as many of you know, in June of 1981, I resigned and left my position as a teacher with Baba Muktananda's Siddha Yoga organization in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. And, shortly thereafter, I mailed a letter to many of my comrades in the various Ashrams and Meditation Centers of that organization, sharing with them the information that I had left my position in that organization upon discovering that our Guru, Baba Muktananda, was concealing the fact that he was having sexual relations with a number of his young female disciples, and threatening them with violence if they continued to speak of it. With the intention of warning those vulnerable women still remaining under his influence, I told of the evidence I had uncovered, and of his threats of violence toward those who had spoken to others of his secret life.

For the next thirty years, I was regarded by those who remained in the Siddha Yoga organization as a traitor, a Judas; and I continued to lead my own private life of service to God, having heard nothing in all that time from my old friends and previous comrades in Siddha Yoga. Then, on May 5, 2011, I received an email from one of my previous brother-Swamis, Swami Shankarananda, and we had a prolonged and vigorous interchange of opposing views. Now, once again, three years later, on Friday, August 1, 2014, I received an email letter from another of my previous fellow-Swamis, Swami Dayananda (Karen Schaefer) whom I had known as Kalyani, accompanied by an article written by her. In her letter, she expressed the wish that somehow it would be possible for me to withdraw my "criticisms of Baba from the 80's that still have such a damaging effect on people."

She said, "People read those articles that you wrote then and lose their faith and will not even come close to anything to do with Baba. It's very sad. But still all of us who received so much and have so many reasons to be grateful and want to repay what he gave to us, continue to attempt to help people put things into a perspective." And in her accompanying article, she attempts to do just that.

Following is a faithful reproduction of Swami Dayananda's article. Except for my Comments at the end, it is written entirely by Swami Dayananda (Karen Schaefer). It is a remarkable and important testament, shedding much light on the events surrounding Baba that I only vaguely understood at the time that I wrote about him in the 80's due to the cloak of secrecy that had been cast over them. While Swami Dayananda's article is admittedly a one-sided and somewhat rosy picture of those events, it very much deserves to be widely read and shared, not only by those who had some association with Baba Muktananda, but by every spiritual aspirant for its wonderful inspiration.

—Swami Abhayananda

Note: *This article does not represent the views of the current administration of the Siddha Yoga organization, whose official stance is that none of this ever happened:*

How An Accomplished Yogi Faces Old Age, Sickness, And Death

Observations On My Life With Baba

by Dayananda, also known as Kalyani (Karen Schaefer).

Introduction

This was one of the most inspiring aspects of my years living close to such an accomplished yogi. I was able to observe him as he aged through the years of his very arduous and wholehearted dedication to the awakening of spiritual energy in tens of thousands of people as he traveled throughout a large part of the world and the tolls that work took on his physical body. I witnessed the extraordinary ways in which he responded to physical illness and at the time was aware that this was one evident sign of his yogic power over his body and mind.

As I myself am aging and facing challenges of health, I am able to draw inspiration from his example and hope this helps to inspire others as well.

When you live close to a Guru there are many methods through which he/she can teach, guide and inspire us. Those include through the discipline he may require as part of living near him; formal teachings and answering the questions put to him about the spiritual journey; and very personal situations where the Guru finds the opportunity to give very direct teaching, usually to fast-track our development in meditation and also to break through stubborn negative habits.

All of these are valuable means. But what I absorbed most directly living with Baba were his own attitudes and behaviors in living his life, day in and day out. From those examples I came to understand his ability to bring his meditative and yogic states of transcendent consciousness into daily life. The way he handled certain situations and many of the challenges that arose over the period of years I lived with him, clearly illustrated to me that his relationship with his physical body was not like that of most of us. His yogic lifestyle and practices awarded him extraordinary equanimity that enabled him to overcome conditions that are generally debilitating and overwhelming for most of us as we age.

Part One

When I met him in San Francisco in 1970 he was 60 years old. He had an extraordinary amount of life force, joyful enthusiasm and seemed tireless in approaching his work. Through the 12 years I lived with him he faced multiple health challenges from being diabetic and having an enlarged heart, heart attacks, and eventually he succumbed to a heart attack in October 1982.

Initially when I went to India in 1971 he was celebrating his 62nd birthday in the ashram. During those celebrations with thousands of people visiting him he was indefatigable, it seemed to take several young attendants through the day to keep up with him, assisting him in various activities. He was like a lion, filled with yogic vitality, joy and gusto meeting each person and situation with direct dynamic engagement. He seemed to be much younger than his years.

I lived in the ashram with him for three years from 1971-1973, prior to his second World Tour. During the weekdays in the ashram life was relatively quiet, with the gentle flow of the daily routine he had set for all residents. There were between 20-30 westerners living there during those periods, and approximately the same amount of Indians, some young boys whom he was educating, retired Indians who came to spend their *vanaprashtra*¹ phase of life in the ashram, and Indian and foreign people who would come and stay for periods of school breaks or work holidays.

Ashram life had a rhythm punctuated by the unique characteristics of the different seasons: monsoon rains with the glorious fragrant blossoms that came to life with the rains; the stultifying heat of summer days where the earth cracked open from dryness; and cool winter mornings where a hot cup of chai helped to warm hand and tummy.

Without fail, Baba rose early for his own meditations and visited the temple where he paid respects to his Guru by doing a full-length prostration. During the morning Guru Gita chant he generally participated, often correcting the postures and inattentiveness of the chanters with flying objects, or sharp words. Nothing seemed to escape his attention, as throughout the day he oversaw work in the kitchen, in the gardens, on-going construction projects, fed and trained his elephant Viju and played with his dogs.

Then there was the greeting of visitors who came in endless queues for his darshan —the Indians have a strong faith that just the sight or glance of one of their great saints can sanctify their lives, no matter how dismal their conditions. The poor villagers, powerful politicians, office clerks, film stars, all lined up to see Baba. Those exchanges were often very personal and engaging. Each individual departed feeling blessed through their contact. Baba in no way filled any stereotype ideal one could have about how a saint behaved. His language could at times be rough, harsh if the occasion called for it, often loving, lively and humorous and his behavior always unpredictable and spontaneous.

There was never a dull moment around him, it sometimes felt like a three-ring circus where multiple events were happening simultaneously, and he was orchestrating them all. He could take different roles as required— one minute, disciplining an errant young boy with a stick; the next caressing and blessing a new-born brought by his parents; teasing one of the local village women who daily brought vegetables from her garden, or giving warm hearted words of encouragement and upliftment to a man who having lost his legs came into the courtyard on a wooden platform with wheels.

On Saturday afternoons, the buses from Bombay arrived, with devotees laden with baskets of food carried into the kitchen and lining up to greet Baba with colorful flower garlands and offerings of fruit.

At different times of the year daily life was enhanced with extraordinary activities: 7-day 24-hour chants, sometimes with ecstatic dancing; celebrations of Guru Purnima and Baba's Birthday and *Divya Diksha* days, where thousands of people came by the busloads. They were accommodated on the roof tops of the buildings and even in large tents. Huge *bandharas*— delicious feasts— were prepared and distributed for hours. Brahmin priests came to perform yajnas, fire pujas, often for seven days. For these occasions Baba manifested his kingly manner as he officiated and orchestrated each one of these activities with his extraordinary level of enthusiasm and vigor. Every participant was uplifted by his magnificent generosity of spirit and joyful nature.

Life as an ashramite with him in those years had several constant themes. First, a mandatory and intense level of discipline which entailed participating in every chant throughout the day and doing our *seva*— assigned work chores. Secondly, being trained in various aspects of yogic life including an ayurvedic approach to diet and living with the seasons. And individually, each ashramite received very personal on-going attention to their progress in meditation practice.

He emphasized the discipline for seemingly different reasons: firstly, it eliminated ambivalent visitors to the ashram, only the truly committed could bear the intense heat (*tapasya* as they call it in the Yoga Sutras) of the rigorous lifestyle he demanded. He would occasionally roar through the courtyard with a stick in hand, shouting in a most terrifying manner. We tended to call it his “*Rudra Bhav*”.²

Later during the afternoon question and answer session which was translated for the westerners he would giggle and say, “Did you see, it worked, those hippies rolled up their sleeping bags and sneaked out the gate.” Ganeshpuri ashram in those days was not a place for spiritual dilettantes or those just looking for a comfortable place to hang out. He also told us that if a serious meditator committed themselves to a daily routine, as one went on into deeper states of meditation, that routine required much less mental effort, one did not have to think about what to do. It was evident that he himself maintained an unvarying daily routine of practices.

Regarding diet and food, he also always emphasized the health benefits of eating only what and how much the body required according to the season and one’s ayurvedic constitution; and, again, it was obvious that he himself followed a very strict dietary discipline in spite of the fact that visitors were always bringing food offerings to him. In every aspect of his lifestyle Baba was an exemplary yogi—his example was truly inspiring and his energy levels were such that anyone observing him could only feel admiration and awe.

He also took great care in watching over the spiritual development of each individual who had made the commitment to live in his Guru Kula. This activity generally was centered in the meditation verandah adjacent to his room. In the center of this verandah was the locked small room which was his original residence when the land was given to him by his Guru Bhagawan Nityananda. He had lived and meditated in that room for many years before the ashram developed, and occasionally he would place a meditator in that room for a very special initiation. (A very poignant point that cannot be overlooked is that ultimately the earth below that one small

room became the chamber for his samadhi shrine. Prior to his death he emphasized that room was his one sole property, everything else belonged to the trustees of the ashram.)

Ashramites and regular visitors would sit for meditation in that verandah, and Baba would come out of his room and observe people meditating. He spontaneously gave *shaktipat*, a transmission of meditative experience, in a very individual manner on those occasions. At other times, he would speak with someone in the darshan line, give them the mantra or a pat on the head or cheeks and tell them to go sit for meditation. The transmission of shaktipat, or awakening of meditation, in his tradition was informal and unstructured, according to the individual. The volumes of the GurudeVani Magazine edited by Amma (Swami Prajnananda) were filled with the accounts of the extraordinary experiences people had on such occasions.

Baba had the remarkable capacity to transmit a direct experience of the highest consciousness to individuals who were ready for it. It was then up to the student to honor and preserve that awakened energy through leading a pure lifestyle and doing sadhana practices until such time as it could be stabilized through meditation. He said that one was ready for spiritual awakening when one's positive and negative karmas had become equally balanced. One can find a description of this experience given by Krishna to Arjuna in Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita.

He said that even sometimes this transmission would occur spontaneously; he would feel a certain vibration in his heart, look around and could see by the expression on some seeker's face that they were experiencing an awakening of the powerful Kundalini energy that had flowed from him into them. He also observed our health and lifestyle habits quite carefully. He was very opposed to us taking food from outside of the ashram or loading up on sweets when we visited Bombay for any reason as such food was likely to disturb our health. If one approached him with any kind of ailment or injury one had to be brave and accept his favorite remedies, which included drinking cows' urine or peeing on a wound.

When I arrived in the ashram he wanted to know all about my previous lifestyle. I had been living a yogic lifestyle for about one year, being vegetarian and practicing the *asanas* and *shatkarmas*, cleansing practices of classical hatha yoga. One day in conversation in Amma's room he pointed out, "You must have had many boyfriends, I can see you have lost your vital fluids, your cheeks are sunken and your skin pallid." This was quite embarrassing to say the least, but I was a product of the sexual revolution of the late sixties in California!

"This girl has had eighty boyfriends," he said, pointing to another American woman from New York who was working nearby. "You will get your radiance back soon living here with this pure environment, pure food, maintaining celibacy, and chanting and meditating."

He seemed to be quite fascinated by the histories of the western girls who came there, as sexual freedom was not at all an acceptable behavior in India at that time. Women's purity was protected and preserved until the time of marriage. At that time in India, unfortunately, western women were portrayed in Indian films as being extremely promiscuous to the point of being depicted as sexual predators. It's no wonder that western women found themselves the target of sexual harassment when they traveled through India. But then they themselves were not conscious to observe the modest dress codes that were observed by Indian women. In their hot pants and halter tops, they led men to feel they were just asking for sex and [the men] were more than eager to oblige. This dichotomy between cultural attitudes towards sexual behavior provoked many misunderstandings in interactions between western women and men, including some of the spiritual teachers.³

As part of the emphasis on discipline and health, Baba very much emphasized the preservation of sexual energy as being the fuel for spiritual practice. It was not a question of morality generally in spite of the different cultural attitudes. In the same way that he emphasized purity in vegetarian food for the effects it had on the energies of the body and mind, he emphasized preservation of sexual fluids as essential for developing the subtle strength necessary for the more refined practices of yoga and meditation.

We were encouraged to read various texts that had been translated into English. One particularly interesting one was *Devatma Shakti*, which described the subtle and intricate process whereby the sexual fluids of a meditator are refined through pure diet, yogic lifestyle, pranayama and meditation practices. In the case of the Siddha yogis such as Baba and his Guru, who were described as *urdhvaretas*,⁴ that fluid became a conscious dynamic force that was able to be controlled by concentration and will as a vehicle for the transmission of Kundalini energy, known as shaktipat. That transmission could be given in the form of a physical touch; a word, usually a mantra whispered in the ear; or a look, whereby the force of the energy radiated out of the eyes of the master into the eyes of the ready disciple.

Baba was invited to tour the world again in 1974, invited by Werner Erhard to participate in a series of EST Presents seminars. I left earlier from India to assist with preparations and met him and his party when he arrived in Oakland. I had some trepidations about this tour, as I knew that Ganeshpuri ashram would never be the same pristine sanctuary of meditation once people met Baba and received the spiritual awakening that was so uniquely his work. I also wondered in my mind how people would understand what kind of yogi he was and what he was doing when he gave shaktipat, with such vastly different cultural conditioning.

Part Two: The Meditation Revolution

His visit seemed to correspond with a burgeoning area of research into the field of “consciousness”. Baba was recognized by many influential people in areas of science, psychology and physics as a realized master yogi of an exceptional and rare level. Each day there were lines of people coming to meet him for private meetings. Actually, [they were] not private; there would be a group of people scheduled for each morning or afternoon session, and they would discuss their concerns or interests in the company of another 10-15 people.⁵ These groups were always very lively as they included well known personalities such as Alan Ginsberg, Carlos Castaneda, Werner Erhardt, politicians, film personalities, journalists, astronauts, and

physicists. Each session was filled with dynamic interactions where Baba was influential in his efforts to get the individuals to turn within for their own experience of higher reality. Whatever people came to him with professional curiosity, or personal dissatisfaction in their lives, it was clear that Baba had one agenda: to facilitate a direct awakening of the higher consciousness within each individual.

The scientists came with their kirilian cameras, and various high-tech equipment in an effort to somehow measure or gauge Baba's heightened level of spiritual energy. He would always have a good joke with them saying, "Ultimately, these instruments are created by the human mind, and beyond that mind is the supreme universal consciousness. You should try to discover that directly."

Initially, when Baba undertook this Second World Tour, he was simply responding to the requests and invitations that came to him. He told reporters who enquired that he planned to be there about a year and then return to India. But he began to see the level of interest in spiritual awakening, alongside a very pervasive sense of dissatisfaction that people expressed about their lives. To his surprise, it seemed, in the America that he was observing, no matter how wealthy, how successful or how famous the people were, somehow genuine happiness was eluding them. As he listened to the tales of unhappiness, or lack of self-worth, and general sense of despair expressed by the people who came to meet him, he began to emphasize the practice of meditation as a source of extraordinary limitless happiness and fulfillment in life. He described meditation as being universal, like sleep— one did not need to hold any particular religious belief; [one] simply [needed] to discover their own innate consciousness or (as it was translated) the higher Self. As he responded to the needs of the people, his Meditation Revolution began to take shape.

After spending time in Oakland and Los Angeles, we set off on a tour across the USA via Route 66. It was Baba's Meditation Revolution on the road. We had several cars, a school bus which carried all the recording equipment,

cooking pots and a pickup towing Baba's Kitchen in a small trailer. Baba was extremely particular about his own diet and it was essential that wherever he went he could control his food to protect his own health.

Baba would often fly from one place to the next destination, and our road crew would drive all night to arrive at the next house or retreat spot, unload, unpack, prepare the hall setup, Baba's quarters, kitchen, and then be bright and with faces shining with joy to greet Baba as he arrived. From that time onward, our role was to assist him with his work, to offer service so that others could experience their own inner awakening.

Baba did several of the EST Present seminars which were usually packed with up to a thousand students. As Baba and his translator and organizers began to interact more with Werner's students they came up with the idea to hold meditation Intensives in which Baba could teach and transmit meditation via shaktipat to people on a large scale. These began to be scheduled across the country, with the first Intensive held in Aspen. The program included sessions of chanting *Om Namah Shivaya*, the initiation mantra that Baba gave to people on a printed card, talks by Baba about various aspects of yogic lifestyle and an experience talk by someone who had had a profound inner awakening.

During the meditation sessions Baba began to go around the room with a wand of peacock feathers and hit people on the head, tweak them above the nose, or gently kick them at the base of the spine. Sometimes the room would erupt with sounds of laughter, weeping, or rapid breathing. Clearly the awakening of the inner energy was occurring in many of the participants. Later during sharing sessions people would describe extraordinary experiences of energy moving through their bodies, spontaneous movements, feelings of ecstasy or supernatural joy.

This introduction of shaktipat on a mass scale was a very radical departure from the way it was classically given and the way in which Baba himself had always given it. Some years later he described this to some center leaders:

“I could not give shaktipat to so many people without the grace of my Guru. I never gave shaktipat like this in India. The people from India are wondering how I am doing this, and some of them are even coming to receive it in these intensives. Previously I would ask people to do austerities in the ashram for at least one year and ask them to purify themselves for a long time, before I could give the touch of shaktipat to them. That is the way it should be done. Otherwise all of their negative karmas come into me. At the time of shaktipat the sins of the seeker are burnt and at the same time all those negative effects come to me. I have to meditate and through the process of meditation I am able to burn up those negative karmas.”

Working closely with Baba during these events, we could see him come out of the meditation hall. Sometimes he would say, “My whole body pains from giving shaktipat to so many people. Still I will feel the effects for maybe one day, with some fever, and [I’ll] just rest and do my *japa* and meditation and it will go away.” This was said with his characteristic joy and good humour. Clearly this work of bringing about the awakening of so many people was a source of great joy for him, despite whatever ill effects there were on his body.

These events went on as we traveled across the southern US, through New Mexico, Colorado, Georgia, and finally ended up in New York City. An old school was rented on the upper West Side as temporary accommodation for our mobile Ashram. There we stayed for some time with daily programs of Guru Gita, chanting, seva, and the never-ending stream of visitors. Somehow the energy in Manhattan and the people seemed to be particularly heavy as we held several Intensives on the premises. I recall that at the time Baba was affected severely after the Intensives and [he] undertook a fast for some days, along with his unflagging daily meditation and practice routine, to restore his health and vitality.

An old hotel was purchased in Oakland that was to be renovated as the first American ashram. It was in a rough part of town and had been a derelict hotel filled with drug addicts and prostitutes. A dedicated crew of workers

worked for months to refurbish it into a sparkling clean ashram premises fit for Baba's arrival. I had gone there early after the purchase to assist with preparations, but I was not able to stay there more than one night. I had dreadful nightmares of violence and horrific pains in my body throughout the night as I was affected by the vibrations of the place. But after the renovation work, painting, and a lot of chanting, the new Oakland Ashram had a sparkling, clean atmosphere and was suitable as an ashram. The whole process reminded me of what happens to us during the process of spiritual practice, we come with lots of scars and bruises from our mishaps in life, or wrong choices and actions, and the Guru goes to work with his crew of skillful practices: chanting, meditation, pure food, preservation of the vital energies, and one comes out sparkling clean and able to live a good, wholesome, useful life.

During the time in Oakland Baba continued meeting many distinguished visitors and maintained friendships and dialogues with interesting characters. One such was a psychologist who was a regular visitor and had many extraordinary experiences in his time meditating with Baba.

In one conversation with him Baba told him, "Only after coming to America I started touching people. Before that, my Guru Nityananda Baba was very severe. Shaktipat was given only in a certain way. The person receiving [it] had to have a bath, be pure, done much tapasya and austerities. Then only was shaktipat given. And before my Baba, Gurus were very strict about whom they would accept food from. But my Baba used to tell us, 'Now you should not discriminate between caste and creed and if anyone prepares food with purity and a good heart, then you can eat it.'

"Shaktipat Diksha was also given in a certain way, behind closed doors in solitude, and the Guru would touch the disciple in certain places while reciting mantras. Often the Guru would touch the base of the spine at the area of the sexual organs as a way of awaking the Kundalini energy.

"Though I am quite an old man, because of the retention of the sexual fluid inside the body I feel tremendous youth inside. In fact, I feel like a child inside. I get up at 3:00 am, and tonight because there is a lecture I won't be

returning until after midnight. And it is because of this sexual fluid that you have any vigor, energy, or radiance. So, one should conserve that. Just as you like to lay by your savings in the bank, likewise you should save your sexual fluid.”

Psychologist: “Isn’t it true that the body ejects sexual fluid every so often, to clean itself?”

Baba: “No the body won’t eject it. A yogi’s body will digest it, assimilate it. The body ejects it through a dream when we have violated dietary or lifestyle rules. If you overeat, the body will generate more sexual fluid than it needs, and the body will eject the fluids. But a meditator has to go further. The sexual fluid not only needs to be conserved, but it should be moved upwards through meditation, whereas in ordinary life it moves downwards. Through meditation it flows upwards. You can feel it move upwards and it goes into the cerebral center. From there it purifies the nerves, and this process become more and more subtle. This is the source of great joy for a meditator. I’m not saying you should not have children. All I am saying is that you should value the sexual fluid and you shouldn’t waste it. You should be aware of its great value for health and spiritual development.”

Psychologist: “Can you say something about the fear of death that all of us have at some time or another or perhaps as we grow older it becomes more intense.”

Baba: “As you move closer and closer to your inner Self through meditation, the fear of death loses its hold over you progressively. Why should you fear death when death is inevitable? If something is inevitable there is no point in fearing it. Anyone who is a pure and noble soul will be able to die peacefully; he doesn’t feel the slightest pain or hardship at the time of death. It is the fear of death which results in agony at the time of death; if you meditate that fear will dissipate.”

Psychologist: “Could you say something about your belief in after life or reincarnation?”

Baba: “Yes, birth is followed by death and death is followed by rebirth. One who is born is bound to die, and one who dies is bound to be reborn and this cycle goes on until one can become liberated from it through the grace of God. A good meditator is able to see the world of the departed and the world where he will go after his death.”

A reporter also questioned Baba on his feelings about death. Q: “Do you feel as much joy in contemplating your passage from this life as you feel in your life?”

Baba: “Once you experience the inner bliss of meditation it fills you completely. Just as when you cry and lament you feel great agony and pain inside; when there is an upsurge of bliss within you feel intoxicated on it and still this bliss is not just a brief episode, it stays with you continually and it also lasts as you leave your body. Contemplation of leaving this body is as joyful as anything else and in fact the essence of yoga is not physical exercises; the essence of yoga is conscious death. Real yoga is to experience your own death directly through meditation while you are still alive. Through this genuine yoga your sense of individuality dies and the self, the innate consciousness, survives.

“In meditation you can look at your own death with a serene mind. When a saint dies, he dies laughing. There is a photo of a great saint who was like a Guru to me (Zipruanna). He sent me to my guru. He wandered around naked everywhere, but he was a perfect celibate. We call such a being *urdhvareta*, one whose sexual fluid moves upward, not downward. He had unusual powers, If any time I would set out to visit him he would tell people around him that this boy is coming to see me. His behavior was quite strange; in this country if you were to see him you might lock him up in a mental hospital. I will describe to you how he died. There was a woman in his village who was a teacher. He would occasionally go to her place to

have coffee. One morning he landed at her place around 10:00 am and said, 'I must have a bath.' This surprised the teacher and her family very much, but they felt delight that they were blessed with this opportunity to give this holy man a bath. Such an opportunity is cherished in our country. He had a bath, then he asked the woman to cook some noodles for him, she did so and offered it to him. He ate it, and then he said, "Zipru is leaving, you can cry to your hearts' content." He made a certain sound and then he passed away.

"What is the use of practicing yoga if it doesn't give you power over your own death? Before you see the highest truth in meditation, you must see your own death. That can be a terrifying experience. But after you have survived that experience through the inner transformation of meditation, death loses its sting. Then it is nothing more than deep sleep. In the *Yoga Vashishta*, which is a great philosophical work, death is described as a profound sleep."

Psychologist: "I have read in some philosophies that there is a world where people go after death, a kind of mental world and they are in the same state in this world, but without a body. They exist in the mind and have to overcome the craving and desires that they had in the body."

Baba: "What happens is that you leave the body in the same casual body in which you enjoy profound sleep when you are alive, and after your death you pass into a definite world which is the world of the dead or the ancestors. Just as a seed contains the whole tree in a potential form, when the soul leaves a physical body it carries all its desires and attachments in the seed form and they don't disappear. When one is reborn the impressions of those desires, karmas and attachments are carried forth into the next life."

Q: "Does the mind review the life it has had?"

Baba: "For quite a while after death one remains in a state of unconsciousness and then the spirit wakes up and passes into the world of ancestors or the dead and then once it surveys its past life, and that memory

seems to fade away and just a part of it remains, and then it is in that world where it is decided where the consciousness is going to be born next. There is a central nerve in this body and it is there that the Kundalini Shakti resides and there you also have the impressions of your past lives. When you are reborn those impressions are still there in a subtle form and once your inner Shakti is awakened during meditation, it is possible to see your past seven lives very clearly. I have seen that.

“There is a certain fort in a part of Maharashtra state that I used to visit in my younger days and whenever I went there I felt a strange fascination for it. I would start crying and that fort would draw me over again and again and I used to wonder why I had such a strong attachment for it, and it was after I saw my past life in meditation that I saw that once in my past life I was a king and lived in that fort. However, after full knowledge awakens within, then you don’t feel attachment for any of your past lives. Now I don’t feel any attachment for that fort. The science of Kundalini is a great science, it is a great yoga. Most people don’t understand it.”

Part Three: Illness Strikes – Oakland, 1975

During his stay at the new Oakland Ashram in late July of 1975 Baba underwent his first major health challenge. During the night he began to have a series of powerful seizures. His attendants later said they were terrified themselves as they had never seen Baba in such a condition, and they did not know what was happening. As he was undergoing these terrible convulsions he was quietly and calmly directing them on what to do, and who to call.

“Don’t be frightened. I am just experiencing the fruits of my own karmas....” he said, reassuring them.

Baba was taken to the hospital where he remained for some time. It seemed his blood sugar levels had gotten seriously out of balance and the seizures

were connected to his diabetes. All over the world devotees began to express their concern and devotion with ongoing *Guru Gita* chanting. The doctors were intent upon Baba taking complete rest and restricted visitors. But soon Baba was himself calling people on the telephone and telling them to come see him at the hospital. The waiting room on that floor turned into a kind of reception room as people came with gifts of flowers and fruit. Clearly the hospital staff, doctors and nurses had never seen such a patient who generated such an atmosphere of caring for all around him.

He described his experiences to one visitor: “My Guru’s grace is great, and I feel that the sickness has left me now. As soon as I was admitted they gave me an injection (IV) and the strokes stopped. During this time, I have had a real test of my inner state, and now I am happy. As these seizures were coming my attendants had to hold me down. The photo of my Baba was in front and I kept looking at the pictures with love and smiling. My attendant said, ‘How is it that you are smiling and laughing?’ I said, ‘Should I cry or weep? This is my destiny— what should I do?’ “

He went on: ”It’s not a great thing to experience such a disease but the real test is to endure it. There is not even a single saint who was not affected by some disease or another in the last phase of his life. My Baba had something similar, I saw many Siddhas with illness in their later years. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had cancer during his last years. Because of this condition, I have not lost any of my spiritual strength. I am very happy because I have realized that Guru’s grace can nullify the effects of our *parabdha karma*⁶ and make it meaningless.

“After all of this trouble, I feel quite happy and joyful. Perhaps this sickness is the result of giving shaktipat to so many people in such a mass scale.”

At the retreat in Arcata, that had begun even without Baba being there, Malti told a story that was to be repeated numerous times in the coming years:

“There was a seeker by the name of Ramanuja. He received the mantra from his Guru and the Guru told him he must not reveal it or tell it to anyone. He asked the Guru, ‘What will happen to me if I do?’ The Guru replied, ‘You will go to hell.’ ‘And what will happen to the people who receive it?’, Ramanuja enquired. ‘They will go to heaven,’ was the Guru’s reply. With the greatest of intentions, Ramanuja went to the rooftop and shouted the mantra out so that all who heard it could go to heaven. ‘What does it matter if one man goes to hell for the sake of thousands of people?’ he would ask those around him.”

As Baba was speaking to his friend the Psychologist, a very lovely young woman with a bandaged head came into the room. Baba told his visitors, “The doctors used to come to me and say she was going to die. But I told them, ‘She will not die’, then I gave her the mantra and told her, ‘even if you are going to die, it is all right. At least repeat this mantra; it will protect you.’ Now she is all right.” The girl obviously had great love for Baba.

Other relatives of patients came in and asked for Baba’s blessings for their loved ones. Daily Baba made the rounds of the floor of the hospital, greeting and befriending the patients and their families. Nurses, laboratory technicians, as well as old devotees, were collecting outside of Baba’s room to experience Baba’s loving grace, even at such a time. One girl came and offered to pay Baba’s hospital bill. Baba patted her affectionately and told her, “Don’t cry now, I am quite all right. You have such a generous heart; you have offered to pay my hospital bill. Werner and others have also offered. I am thinking about it.”

I went to visit him at the hospital. After waiting outside, my turn came to go in to pay my respects. I bowed at the side of the bed where he was sitting upright greeting visitors. “Poor Baba”, was in my mind, “he’s sick.” I felt a tugging of my hair as he pulled me up to his level and looked me intently in the eyes. Powerful rays of light shone from his eyes which entered into my eyes and immediately flooded my heart. I was a little dazed as I staggered out of the room. The idea ‘poor Baba’ I realized came from my own ignorance, clearly his inner power and vast heart were untouched by the

travails of his physical body. Baba was not like an ordinary person who succumbed to fear and lamentation about his body and health.

He went on to describe the situation to his visitors, “For yogis this is our test. As the strokes were occurring I never once asked my Baba, ‘Save me. Save me.’ I kept looking at his picture. Now I am completely cured, I feel like a newly born young man and I will be able to do a lot more work than before. I can walk around the hospital and I am just waiting for the doctors to tell me I can go home so that I can be with everyone.”

After Baba was released from the hospital, he rested in his room waiting to be able to join his devotees at a month-long retreat that had already started in Arcata, [California]. Chatting with some people over the next few days he related his experiences of his illness. “The nurses used to come and ask me, ‘Aren’t you in pain?’ I said, ‘I don’t feel it.’ They said they had never seen such a patient in the hospital; some of the doctors and nurses came and asked to receive a mantra card from me. “There is great joy in the inner Self. Once established in that joy you won’t feel any pain, there is no suffering in this world. Whatever suffering you might have, you won’t feel it.”

Speaking with a group who had come from Atlanta he said, “There is no greater temple than the heart. There is no greater God than your inner Self. If you know just that...that’s enough. Be peaceful, no matter where you are. Do your work, live your life. You can’t depend on the body; you never know what will happen at what time to your body. You will never know what illness you will go through. I had such a strong body, but still this happened. But I have recovered very well, and there is no lingering effect of any disease because I had the grace of my Guru and he saved me. All the time constantly repeat Guru Om, Guru Om, don’t trust the future; you never know what will come after the next moment. Believe in the present moment which you are living in now and remember God, he is right inside of you. If you do this much, remembering Him every moment, it doesn’t matter where you are or what happens to you. Just live your life, do your work and be happy.”

He gave darshan from his bedroom window to the ashramites who assembled in the courtyard below. “The doctor keeps calling and telling me, ‘Don’t talk to people too much and don’t walk too much.’ I’m very well and very peaceful. Those seizures benefited me a lot...all the time my mind remained very quiet and all the unsteadiness of the mind has disappeared. No matter where I sit, I pass into meditation, and if I am around other people in that state, it will be good for them, too.

“You people have given me so much love. You chanted a lot, chanted *Guru Gita* only for my sake. The doctors keep calling to check with my people, ‘Is he listening to us? Is he talking less? Is he getting good sleep?’”

Baba went on to the Arcata retreat in time for the anniversary of his initiation from his Guru, August 15th. “Still I do not have the permission of the doctors to speak, I was told to wait until the last two days of the retreat. What is the guarantee the body will last, what is the guarantee that I will be able to give you a talk later on.”

After Baba recovered more fully, he resumed his work of meeting people, and actively giving shaktipat in Intensives. The demand from people seemed to be endless. The numbers of people in the Intensives increased to several hundred people and he continued to touch each and every one with his boundless compassion, disregarding the effects on his personal health.

Part Four: Return To India, 1976

When Baba returned to India, the ashram had been enlarged to make space for the many people who would come there to spend time, participate in the Intensives, *yagnas*, chants and many activities that Baba officiated over.

In March 1977 Baba began to experience heart problems, severe angina pains. He was admitted to Nanavati Hospital in Mumbai. From there he sent messages to the ashramites in Ganeshpuri and all over the world. In Ganeshpuri a continuous *Guru Gita* Chant went on for two weeks. Through the medicine of chanting, the anxiety and concern of the devotees was

transformed into one-pointed focus on him, and a deeper recognition that even he was not immune from the inevitable flow of nature.

Baba recorded a video from his hospital bed. He appeared smiling, soft and gentle. “People must be worrying what has happened to Baba. I am completely all right. You needn’t worry about me. Disease has come to the disease, not to me.

“Birth and death follow everyone, you and me. Therefore, a sensible person should not worry about birth and death at all. This is not a disease, it is an experience. All over the world devotees offer flowers to my photo and read the *Guru Gita* for my sake. When they are doing this for me, what can I do? I have to experience their devotion. In the same way, I have to experience this.

“Stop worrying about my body. Instead, think about the path I have shown you. Just as you have a mundane passport, you also have a spiritual passport. When that passport expires you have to leave. Krishna said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, ‘Death is inevitable for a person who has taken birth, and birth is inevitable for a person who has died.’ Therefore, why worry? Now forget about my pain. I am very happy that you have chanted the *Guru Gita* so much for my sake. Perhaps I should get some small pain every now and then, just so you will chant the *Guru Gita* and be so focused.

“I am coming back to the West soon, but it may take some time. Now that I am in India, I have to do some work here also. I am grateful for all your compassion and love. There is great love between Guru and disciple; you have shown so much love to me. You perform so much practice for me, and there is nothing I can do for you. All I can say is that I love you so much. You have given so much to me, the hardship of your bodies, your wealth, your work; you have given everything to me. I don’t have anything to give to you. All that I can give in return is to say, I love you, I love you, I love you.”

Sometime later he gave a darshan to people who gathered on the lawns of the hospital. He sat at his window for about 10 minutes and people were happy to see him looking so well and joyful. The doctors tested Baba after the darshan to determine the effects of the darshan. They found that his condition improved and encouraged him to schedule another gathering the following week. Baba called for the ashramites to come from Ganeshpuri. On the following Sunday afternoon six busloads of devotees came from the ashram. Since it was three weeks since Baba had been away from the Ashram, they were eagerly looking forward to seeing Baba.

The group arrived at the hospital and sat quietly on the lawn chanting Om Namah Shivaya. Taxis and busloads of Bombay devotees arrived until the crowd grew to about one thousand. When Baba came to the window, he raised both hands in greeting to the shouts of “Sat Gurunath Maharaj ki Jaya”. The devotees were thrilled to see he appeared as joyful as ever. He waved to people he saw in the crowd and threw garlands of fragrant mogra into the crowds. Baba sat for a half an hour. There was a television news team from Bombay there shooting him and the crowd. The hospital director came forward and placed a garland around Baba’s neck. There was no doubt that Baba was in his usual humor. He called for his dog, Captain, to come forward and he dropped balloons for him as he had been doing in the ashram courtyard. Captain leaped through the crowds to burst the balloons.

Baba called out that he would return soon, and then called out, “I love you, I love you, I love you.” The devotees called back, “We love you Baba”.

Baba left the hospital, but the doctors insisted that he spend some time resting before returning to the Ashram. A large house was made available on Juhu Beach. The setting was idyllic; a spacious lawn bordered with colorful flowers and bougainvilleas stretched down to the beach. Towering palm trees swayed in the refreshing breeze from the ocean.

During the days Baba would rest, sitting on the beach in the early morning hours and again after sunset. After a couple of days rest, knowing that the devotees were pining for his darshan, Baba called for a silent public darshan every evening. The Bombay devotees came by the hundreds and a special

chartered bus carrying ashramites came from Ganeshpuri nearly every evening. The devotees would take their seats on the grass in a semi-circle facing the ocean. Baba came at six o'clock and sat comfortably on a lawn chair. No one was allowed to go up for darshan. Offerings of fruit and sweets were cut up and distributed as Prasad and fragrant flowers were distributed amongst the ladies. Many well-known musicians and singers such as Surendra Rao, Mahendra Kapoor, and Aziz Naza came to serenade Gurudev and his devotees.

Baba enjoyed the music and often hummed to himself or laughed at the lyrics. The devotional music, the golden hues of the setting sun, and the refreshing ocean breeze provided an exquisite setting for Baba as he sat absorbed in his inner being. Observing his stillness, one's mind also became still.

He had been telling the devotees since the onset of his illness, "I am in bliss. The disease may be there, but I am not affected by it. You should be in bliss also." There was no trace of illness in Baba's countenance. On the contrary, as he sat quietly, his inner state radiated more powerfully than ever. Many devotees remarked that they had never seen Baba looking more glorious, more radiant. Observing Baba at Juhu one could clearly understand that he had, in fact, transcended the limitations of the body. He was obviously dwelling in his inner being and radiating that for all who came and silently partook of his darshan.

In the early morning hours Baba came out to sit on the beach, enjoying the fresh, cool breeze. Devotees living in the area came to know of it, as well as some ashramites who had come to stay at the beach during Baba's stay. For a few mornings Baba sat silently with the devotees as the sun rose. After a couple of days Baba suggested that we sing the *Guru Gita*. Devotees began to line up on the beach as early as 5 a.m. meditating and awaiting Baba's arrival. Baba sat quietly during the recitation, and occasionally motioned for changes in the pace or speed.

One morning, reflecting on the beauty of the ocean, he told the devotees, "The scriptures say that the holy waters are the body of God. Here we are

sitting on the body of God, singing about God. This chanting purifies the heart and all the *nadis*.”

As the birthday celebrations grew nearer, Baba seemed to grow stronger, and he insisted that he should return to the ashram to officiate over the *Maha Rudra Yagna* and the *sanyasa* initiation being held for some of his older students. He promised the doctors that he would continue to rest and would not meet people, but he would not be absent for the celebrations in the Ashram.

During the evening darshan two nights before he was to depart from Bombay he called for the microphone and began to speak to the crowd. “The doctors have forbidden me to talk, so this talk is illegal, and when you do something illegal, you have to pay the penalty. The doctors in America warned me that if I didn’t take rest there would be some problems and this illness came because I broke the rules.

“There is a word in the Bhagavad Gita called *dana*, which means charity, generous giving of gifts. In the *Gita* the Lord says, ‘By giving in charity to the deserving, all sorts of diseases disappear. Dana purifies all sorts of sins also. *Dana* is the staircase to heaven.’

“When I was in Nanavati hospital many heart specialists came to examine me, and prescribed treatment, without charging any fees. It was all done as charity, with good will. I welcome them all heartily. When I was discharged from the hospital the lady who owns this house gave the whole house for my use and shifted to a hotel. How kind of her.

“Nature herself has given everything to us generously, If Mother Earth did not give us all the food grains, what would we eat? If the air didn’t blow, how could we survive without oxygen? If the Lord of fire was not working within us, how could we digest our food? That is why generous giving is the most honorable deed that a man can perform.

“Sheik Nasrudin was a perfect miser. He was so miserly that his wife got absolutely fed up with his stinginess. One day a great lecturer came to their village. A sign was posted announcing he would give a discourse on charity. Nasrudin’s wife was very happy to see that notice. She insisted that Nasrudin attend the discourse and actually took him there. The speaker talked about charity, and the importance of generosity. He stated, ‘Everyone, this Earth, the ocean and the five elements God and those who have realized God are all sustained by charity. There is no greater deed than dana.’ Nasrudin listened to the lecture patiently. When it was over he told his wife, ‘You were so kind to take me to this lecture. I have learned a very good lesson today. How important charity is. From tomorrow I will start begging for alms.’ His wife was aghast. She said, ‘Oh my God, this man is really impossible, I brought him here to learn the importance of giving generously, and he is speaking only of taking from people.’

“This is not charity; charity is when a man works hard for himself and after taking care of his own needs, he gives generously to others. Man should always have a generous heart. And he must not forget that God has been showing his bountiful grace on him all the time.

“When I was in the United States, I met many scientists, who had studied all the sciences, and some had even been to the moon, but now they are investigating consciousness. Similarly, you must investigate God. God is not against your worldly life, He has created this beautiful world for His own convenience, for His own sport. What I want to impress on you is just as you decorate yourself, your wife and family, you should worship and decorate the Lord who dwells in your heart. Just love God as much as you do your wife, your children, your car; and then material life and spiritual life will go hand in hand.

“I want to welcome and thank those *lakhs* (thousands) of people who recited *Guru Gita* for my recovery. Many people also made lots of offerings and sacrifices to God for my recovery. They must have done it with great sincerity since I have recovered from this illness very quickly. This should

have lasted six months, but by people's good wishes, it has finished in one month.

“You should always remember that the universal consciousness which God has given is the greatest gift given to you. Don't deceive yourself in that respect. God has given the greatest gift of all. Don't forget that. God has given us everything. We must also do something in return. People wonder, 'How to love God?' He is residing in every being, so to see Him in every individual is the real worship of God, real meditation, real dharma.

“People recited the *Guru Gita* day and night for my early recovery. God has made their prayers very fruitful, so I have recovered within a month. I welcome you all.”

Baba returned to the ashram after having first gone to Ganeshpuri for darshan of Bade Baba. He was greeted by his elephant Viju at the gate who garlanded him with flowers, and girls waving arati trays. He walked through the courtyard and sat down. He spoke briefly: “I left the ashram with sickness, but I have come back without it. I know for certain that my rapid recovery has not been due to the doctor's treatment, but because of so many people reciting the *Guru Gita* with best wishes for me.

“No one is free from the play of destiny; that is why the Lord has said, 'Mysterious are the ways of karma.' It is said that Lord Rama was Lord of the world; still he was exiled to the forest. It is said that Lord Krishna was Lord of this world, still he had to wander from Gokhul to Mathura and from Mathura to Dwarka. They were powerful beings, yet they had to undergo their destiny. This shows how inscrutable are the ways of karma. Swami Ramakrishna was a great being; still he was afflicted with cancer.

Nityananda was a born Siddha; he was even called an incarnation, still he had arthritis in his knees. So, I also had this heart trouble. But the doctors have praised me saying that usually such patients go away for six months, and I have returned after one month.

“It is through the power of the Self that I am happy. The disease may be there, but I remain beyond it. You should always remember your purpose in coming to the Ashram. Here you should be absorbed only in sadhana, in Guruseva, and devotion for the Guru. Then you will get something, you won’t go away empty handed. I bless you all.”

Part Five: Heart Attack, 1977

Baba had been saying that it was important that he attend the birthday celebrations; no matter what the cost, he had to be there. His presence was vital for the success of the yajna and the yajna had important consequences for his future work. On the morning of his birthday [celebration], May 3rd, 1977, Baba warned his doctors and nurse that this was going to be a very bad day for him. Before he left for the yajna he warned them to have injections and pills ready.

“It was the most tense hour of my life,” Dr. Thakkur said later, describing some of the important episodes in Baba’s illness. “First, he told me that I should watch him carefully, that anything could happen. But then he made me sit up on the yajna platform with my wife and participate in the yajna! This is what a Siddha is like. I have never been so scared! All the time I was sitting there I was listening, afraid that at any moment Baba might collapse.”

Typically, Baba had turned his own crisis into an occasion for one of his devotees to do intense sadhana. Moreover, even though many of the devotees had heard the news that Baba was in danger, we all noticed how good he looked, how strong his voice was, how perfectly he performed all the ceremonies connected with the yajna, even when they involved physical exertion.

“He wouldn’t let us take a cardiogram that morning,” Dr. Thakkur said; “I think it was because he knew that if he let us see what was really going on we would have insisted that he rest. That evening he had some pain. The next morning, at 6:15, we went in to take his pulse and found that it was double the normal rate. The cardiogram showed that he was having a major heart attack.

“But the most serious part of the attack came later in the afternoon when all of a sudden Baba’s heartbeat slowed down to almost nothing. He remained in that state for 15 minutes, and for a while the doctors actually thought we had lost him. Then, quite suddenly Baba opened his eyes and came back to normal consciousness. He looked at us and said, “What are you doing? I went to see my Baba and he told me it is not time for me to go yet. Now go eat your lunch.

“Since then, except for minor complications his heartbeat has been stable. After the morning episode, two eminent doctors were called from Bombay. They came immediately, and have been here ever since, on call for Baba whenever he should need them. Sophisticated heart care machines have also been made available for him.

“Baba really is controlling everything,” Dr. Thakkur said. “He always knows in advance when there will be trouble, and he lets us know what the bad times will be. Today he told us that there would be a minor complication, and there was. But it was definitely minor, and easily controlled. My opinion is that Baba has arranged his heart attack for himself. He said a few weeks ago that if he had one full heart attack, that would be the end of the angina pain. It has happened just like that for the last two nights he has had pain-free sleep for the first time since all this began in February.

“Don’t think that I am taking care of Baba. Baba is taking care of me. For ten days Noni and I sat up all night in the Nanavati hospital watching the screen of the cardiogram machine. I should have been tired, but I had more

energy than I've ever had, and people said they never saw me looking so good. I used to sit there watching the lines on the machine and feeling so much joy. Once Noni said, 'You must be repeating your mantra in rhythm to the lines.' I said, 'No, I'm not repeating it, it's going on automatically.'"

Even in his critical condition Baba continued to give instructions about the business of the Ashram. Moreover, one of his doctors said that sometimes he looks at Baba as he lies on his bed and sees that Baba keeps making gestures of blessing. It seems to him that at those times Baba is feeling the anxiety and concern of his devotees, and that he is reassuring them that really, everything is going to be fine

Part Six: Third World Tour 1980

In spite of his health problems in India, Baba undertook a Third World Tour. Because of his weakened health, there were now many people to assist with his work. There were managers to work in the different ashrams around the world, and Swamis had been initiated and trained to teach and run Intensives and courses. Baba's major work was to meet people and to continue to give shaktipat on a very large scale. During his visit to Miami, he had some heart problems, and the doctors did surgery and put in a pacemaker to assist his heart in functioning.

When we were in Los Angeles for several months, word began spreading that Baba was having sexual encounters with some of the young women students. Several long-term students were leaving the ashram with stories about hypocrisy, and breakage of vows of celibacy. At one point I mentioned to Amma, Swami Prajnananda, with whom I was working closely, [some news about] what was happening and [what was] being said. She relayed this information to Baba, and within a short time he called me into his room for a discussion.

“What are people saying?” he asked. I replied that people were saying that he was not a true celibate, though he advocated celibacy for his students but was behaving differently. There was particular concern as some of the girls in question were very young.

Baba said three things in quick succession. Each statement was like a short pithy sutra, which required a lot of commentary to become clear, or like koans which a seeker had to investigate repeatedly, using the information given to knock against the rigidity and hardness in the mind, until there was some softening of limited conceptual ideas and consequential breakthrough of genuine understanding on the highest level.

Those three statements were:

- 1) “Would I be able to give Shaktipat if I were having sex with those girls?”
- 2) “Siddha Swatantra Bhavaha (simply translated as ‘a Siddha behaves with a freedom that is beyond normal expectation’)”, and
- 3) “A snake charmer is not afraid of a snake.”

After those statements, to which I made very little response at the time, I was dismissed from his room.

Those statements have been a good platform for my probing [his] behaviors that from an ordinary perspective were disturbing and have sadly brought great discredit to Baba’s name via internet posting. My interpretation of them at this time is:

Would I be able to give shaktipat if I was having sex with those girls?

According to the texts it would not be possible to transmit a powerful shaktipat that gave an experience of the highest truth if the sexual fluid of a yogi was not flowing upward. This was a complicated matter, required suspension of limited understanding and an in-depth understanding of the subtleties of higher yoga tantra.

After we received sannyas initiation in 1980, Baba had a meeting with our group of newly initiated swamis and gave us instruction on how to give shaktipat. We were to be sent out to different parts of the world to do his work, giving intensives and giving shaktipat to people in that context. As he was showing us technically where and how to touch people for the best benefit, he also said, *"You must be very careful. If your practice is not strong enough, the bad karmas of the people you give shaktipat to will come in to you...and that will destroy you."*

That warning has stayed with me, even though I did in fact give shaktipat transmission as a swami in Intensives in different parts of the world over the next two years. Each time I would pray intensely to him that I was just a conduit of his grace and feel distinctly that it was his energy flowing through me.

After his death, I did not consider for a moment that it was appropriate to give shaktipat. Over the years, however, I have observed a couple of students who did give shaktipat as a feature of their work as meditation teachers. They seemed to be imitating Baba, yet in close examination it was clear that their motivation was in fact not altruistic. There seemed to be a great deal of self-serving intention accompanied by very little genuine practice. Two of those men I observed came down with very mysterious ailments that debilitated them, and [from which] they have been unable to recover. I doubt that they had received that warning from Baba, or if they had, they chose to ignore it. And who can say if their ailments were a result of giving shaktipat without sincere intent or practice. The ways of karma are mysterious...yet unfailing.

After the traumatic and divisive events that occurred in the Siddha Yoga community in 1985, I chose to disrobe and depart the unfolding chaos and fanatical behavior that had swept through the various ashrams, including the one in Sydney I had been directing for six years. I was also personally subjected to harassment for my support of Swami Nityananda.

Confronting my own Guru brothers and sisters and Swamis on the road to Badrinath in 1994 and feeling the force of their murderous intentions as they attempted to drive Guruji's [Swami Nityananda's] car and our buses off of the steep mountain road brought a huge reckoning into my mind and heart. If they were capable of such horrific intentions and behaviors, how could I be certain that I was immune from such extremist views? I undertook

rigorous therapy and self-analysis for years following. I wanted to dissolve into anonymity and went to study within a Tibetan Buddhist community.

I also wanted to practice with Tibetan Buddhist teachers and focus on the practices that developed the heart and humanity: compassion, humility, loving kindness. I needed to know that I myself had made headway in eradicating the potential for anger, hatred and judgment within my own heart.

I spent considerable time studying and practicing in Nepal, Northern India and Bhutan over the years, choosing to ordain as a nun in Bhutan because I wanted to return to a life dedicated to sadhana and service as Baba had indicated emphatically to me that was my destiny. Naturally, because of my many years at Baba's feet, everything I took in and learned was filtered through my experience and the teachings we had received from Baba. I continually filtered out the cultural superimpositions that were meaningless to me as a Westerner and my in-depth exposure to Indian traditions and culture.

The manner in which initiation (*diksha* or transmission) is given in the Tibetan traditions acknowledges the possible negative effects that can come into the Guru giving the initiations. Students are generally required to purify themselves through extensive preliminary practices, repetitions of hundreds of thousands of mantras. They committed to doing the practice on a daily basis, as well as recite daily a prayer for the master's long life. These precautions were intended to lessen the detrimental effects such transmissions could have on the longevity and health of the Gurus.

Understanding these dynamics, I was able to have a much deeper appreciation of the demand and risk to Baba's health through his giving shaktipat on such a mass scale. By the end of his Third World Tour the numbers in the Intensives were 700-800 and each participant expected to be touched personally by Baba. Baba was 70+, [and] had had serious health conditions related to his diabetes, a massive heart attack and a pacemaker

put in place in Miami. The demand on Baba's life force and physical health was enormous. There was no question of students having purified themselves; whomever paid the price for the tiny space in the packed Intensive halls had the expectation of receiving shaktipat.

The 16th Karmapa, who had visited Baba on two occasions in India and Ann Arbor and with whom Baba had a very loving and warm relationship, was a very high-level master in the Tibetan tradition. He died in a hospital in Chicago in 1982. Prior to his death, it was reported that his body manifested symptoms of a particular life-threatening condition. The doctors would rush to try to reduce the severity of the condition and save his life, and then mysteriously the whole condition would recede. Again, shortly thereafter he would display symptoms of yet another life-threatening illness. According to the reports, this happened several times. The attending doctors and nurses were utterly mystified at this; they had never seen anything like this previously. Some of his close disciples who were attending him closely told them that His Holiness had taken on the karmas of many disciples over the years, and those conditions were manifesting themselves in his body in this manner. Yet it was also observed that the Karmapa seemed to have no concern for his own condition or welfare, but showed great concern for the attending physicians, nurses and staff. *Siddha Swatantra Bhavaha: A Siddha is beyond the conventions of ordinary society.*

Baba used to give examples of his own Guru, Bhagawan Nityananda, and of Zippruanna, and Hari Giri Baba, all of whom behaved at times in ways very difficult to understand, yet the ultimate benefit and outcome to those around them was undeniable.

In Bhutan one of the patron saints is known as Drukpa Kunley. His life stories depict repeated episodes wherein he would interact with women spontaneously, apparently having sex with them as a vehicle of blessings and transmissions. Drukpa Kunley was one of those unorthodox and subversive tantric teachers who constantly broke the rules of convention and "everyday morals" to lead his followers in a sort of shock therapy into the spiritual dimension behind the accepted and fixed rules and religious rituals.

One Bhutanese Rinpoche told a story of this particular yogi, intending to illustrate how such masters acted spontaneously for the benefit of others. He described a scene where the master was walking through a hillside village with one of his disciples. “Wait here one moment,” he said to his student. He then jumped into the window of a nearby house and had sex with a woman inside. When he returned, he said to his student, “One of my disciples was about to incarnate into the body of a cow, and I had to save him.”

This story was told to us as an example of spontaneous compassionate action. However, the western women in the audience immediately erupted and said, “What about the woman? That was rape.” The teacher was very taken aback— consideration of the woman’s experience obviously had never entered his mind. I found consistently within those cultures it was simply assumed the women were quietly complicit and honored to be party to the yogi’s beneficial work. This highlights some of the deep cultural disparities that occur regarding gender inequality and sexual behaviors.

A snake charmer is not afraid of the snake.

As I was living with and often attending some of the tantric masters and Rinpoches of Tibet and Bhutan I observed much that helped me greatly in understanding the tantric influence inherent in the path Baba set forth: awakening of the inner energies of Kundalini. It is the sexual energy that is transmuted and utilized in such initiations, therefore the details about these have always been veiled in secrecy. Great potential for misunderstanding and abuse lay in these areas of tantric initiations and practice. I also began to observe common behaviors towards women that held beliefs that Western practitioners find basically abhorrent. Within most of the Asian cultures, including India, Tibet, Bhutan, Thailand, women are subservient to men; the slightest glint of equality is simply not even allowed to arise. Women are the property of the men, and thus utterly compliant.

Along with this was the prevailing belief that the vital energies of young women are essential for aging masters to help restore their flagging vitality. In the Tibetan tradition, when a master began to experience health problems, even if he was a monk, he would move outside of the monastery itself, taking a young consort. There was a firm belief that this would extend his life. In time those women became recognized as great practitioners themselves through their service to their husbands.

From observing and understanding this I was able to comprehend why Baba had begun to undertake interactions with young women close to him. Technically speaking, for an *urdvareta*, or a tantric master in the Tibetan tradition as well, there should never be emission of semen. That is what constitutes celibacy for such an adept yogi. Interactions with females for the purpose of testing or strengthening the inner transmuted energy did not equate to breaking celibacy. It was in fact how the yogis would increase their stores of the powerful transmuted energy which could then be utilized in their work.

Reports that I personally heard were that Baba did not have any kind of erection, that there was no penetration, and no emission of semen. It was repeatedly described as not sex in a normal sense. Yet for young women who may have not been previously sexually active, there was simply no other way to understand Baba's behavior with them. Had Baba been able to speak English and explain to them that he was seeing them as a living manifestation of the divine shakti, Kundalini energy that he needed to increase in his own system in order to be able to give shaktipat to others, would it have made a difference? Other girls loved every moment of their encounters with Baba as filled with love, blessings and powerful spiritual energy, again describing them as not being sex in any ordinary sense. Several told me that their own sexual energy was purified and refined as a result.

It seemed apparent to all of us ex-swamis and other close disciples of Baba that he undertook these interactions in an attempt to maintain the strength of the energy needed to meet the demands of the students who were intensely

craving for spiritual awakening. He was able to maintain his levels of inner energy, through the contact with the young women, transmute that through his yogic powers and continue to give shaktipat, despite the considerable weakening of his own physical condition.

Despite any ill effects to his health, Baba continued to give shaktipat. He did so with great compassion and belief that only through inner awakening would people come to experience genuine happiness. There was no question of people undergoing any kind of preparation or purification which is known to reduce danger to the teacher's health. Whomever signed up for the Intensive received Baba's touch. There were 800 – 1,000 people in Intensives in Fallsburg the last summer.

Towards the end of the tour and the last summer in the Fallsburg ashram Baba made a shock announcement at the conclusion of his Guru Purnima address. He called Swami Nityananda forward, placed a garland around his neck and declared, "This man will be my successor." That announcement brought reverberations of surprise and recognition that Baba himself was preparing to conclude his work, and his life. As the attention of the large audience turned to Nityananda, Baba quietly walked out of the hall. As he did so he appeared tired and somewhat frail. It dawned upon us all that his life may soon be coming to an end.

Baba returned to India and continued on with preparations for the Pattabhishek, the transferring of the power to Swami Nityananda and Swami Chidvilasananda whom he designated would be co-successors. After that occasion he also began to withdraw from a lot of public interaction, sitting silently in the darshan line. He commented to those close to him, "I am happy to talk to children and the dogs. People are so unkind to each other, they just want to complain and criticize."

In the months prior to his taking mahasamadhi, Baba continued to give shaktipat. The small room in the center of the meditation room adjacent to his quarters had been demolished. Only those close to him knew he had

directed this in order to prepare for his Samadhi shrine. It had been turned into a large meditation room. Somehow the word got out, though it was not public at all that Baba was giving shaktipat in that room during the *Shiva Mahimna* chant. People went in clamoring for the receipt of his grace.

I went in one evening and was overwhelmed by the level of intense emotion on the part of the people who were wanting to receive shaktipat from Baba. The room was thick with emotional fervor. Baba went around in what was a totally dark room and touched people in different ways. Some reported that he was hitting them with his foot at the base of their spine, others that he was blowing into their noses with his own breath or repeating a mantra into their ear. I actually felt a bit uncomfortable in that room. I felt I had received so much from Baba over the years, it was almost indecent for me to be in this atmosphere of intense grasping.

I learned later that Baba had several young girls attending to him during that time; he would go into his adjacent room, have various interactions of an apparent sexual nature, and then return to the seething room to give shaktipat.

I never returned, and shortly thereafter returned to Australia, only to be advised in a couple of months that Baba had taken what is described for a yogi as mahasamadhi; he departed his body as a result of a major heart attack.

Conclusion:

At the conclusion of his visit to each city during his world tours, Baba gave a particularly exalted talk on how life is a play of light and shadows. This was always a sublime teaching, filled with the highest truth, beyond duality of a seeker, a Guru or anything to be attained. I find it a fitting metaphor for us to determine the value of what occurred within our lives, minds and hearts as a result of contact with Baba Muktananda.

If we choose to hold onto the light of what we received from our time with Baba as a treasure that can carry us to the highest realization of our own nature as consciousness, we can fulfill the great aspiration he had for each of

us who had contact with him and practiced sadhana and meditation under his guidance.

Alternatively, if some choose to allow the shadows of his actions to submerge their perceptions into a murky sphere of doubt and disillusionment, then again that is a choice leading to the irrevocable consequences of that perception. What is required is a perspective beyond the two extremes of denial or rationalization. His interactions with young women cannot be excused from conventional standards. However, in order to make a fair assessment, for the purpose of his and our own spiritual legacy, a vast open perspective and deep understanding of the tantric tradition which specifically works with the transmutation of energies of desire, particularly sexual energy, is required .⁷

Through attempting to understand his actions and motivations, throughout the entirety of his life and the impact on the tens of thousands of people whose lives were touched profoundly by him, we can discriminate rather than judge. We can touch forgiveness and generosity within our own hearts towards ourselves and others on the path. In each case we experience the world as we see it,” *Ya drishti, sa shrishti*” was one of Baba’s most frequent teachings.

Excerpts from Baba’s talk “Play of Light and Shadows”:

“If you were to examine your life with an outlook filled with the knowledge of humanity, you would realize that it is nothing but a play of sunlight and shadow, that it is not different from a drama, or from a joyful dream. This play of creation is filled with unique colors and manifestations. Like clouds in the autumn sky which keep forming and dissolving, forming and dissolving, in your life different colors shine and sparkle for a while and then fade away.

“Virtue turns into sin, sin turns into virtue. Joy turns into grief, and grief into Joy... Behind everything there is great Love. There is Consciousness. There is the Guru’s compassion. There is the extraordinary, yet subtle desire to be reunited with the Self. You will be awakened within. Can you be awakened? Can you drink the nectar of your own love? With the knowledge of That, can you recognize your own Self in countless forms? When it arises within you, you will be truly alive.”

This article is written entirely from the original notes and transcripts of notes that I made during my time living with Baba in India and on tour. It is not intended for any kind of publication, nor to represent any kind of official presentation of information. It reflects my own experiences and perception. As such it may or may not be helpful to others in digesting their own ultimate assessment regarding their legacy from Baba. It can be shared with friends for such a purpose.

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Comments by Swami Abhayananda

When we contemplate Baba Muktananda's actions toward the end of his life concerning the young women around him, we have to admit that those actions cast a dark, dense cloud over his previous career, and in fact destroyed what had been shaping up as a glorious legacy. And no matter how much we may wish we could have taken him aside and cautioned him against following the dangerous course upon which he'd embarked, everyone knows that Baba took only his own advice, and was wholly responsible for his own actions—not those who concealed them, nor those who revealed them—but him alone.

No doubt he would have gladly sacrificed all that he'd built and all that had been accomplished for the sake of one more individual awakened to their own divinity; but we can't help wondering if it was necessary to pay so dear a price for that final shaktipat. For not only his own reputation and esteem were irreparably damaged, but so were the reputations and lives of his many trusting followers. It was a heavy toll, accompanied by so much grief and agony, and to many so very regretful.

I long ago transcended my history with Baba Muktananda, and simply stopped thinking about it; but something in me could not quite let go. Deep in my heart, his greatness called out for recognition, and the mystery of his inexplicable behavior toward the end of his life cried out for resolution. And

yet, though we know more now than we once did, nothing seems to be really resolved.

It is now thirty-three years after the death of Baba Muktananda, and we are still deeply preoccupied with his life and legacy. Why? Because this preoccupation is concerned with issues regarding not only our own personal allegiances and histories, but our deep philosophical issues as well—issues of moral ethics, of power, of right and wrong, and of free will. And these are issues that cannot be avoided, even in the face of the very best efforts of some to avoid them. We can't help noting that Baba's Guru, Bhagavan Nityananda, who certainly had the same power and the same prospect in his later years of fortifying his shakti through tantric methods, chose rather to fade away gracefully, peacefully, and without any controversy surrounding him. But these were two different men, with different temperaments, appetites, and tendencies resulting from their individual karmic histories. And there is always the fact of free-will (i.e., God's will) as a factor in the different legacies of the two men.

What would *we* have done in Baba Muktananda's shoes? Would we have done differently? Can we really know? Who is so wise as to know the *correct* behavior of one so infused with divine power? We *can't* know. And, so, we must accept that he was what he was—warts and all. In his lifetime he was such a fearsome presence that no one would have dared to pass judgment on him face to face. And even though he's gone, he remains an awesome presence whom none feels qualified to judge. And rightly so, for the truth is: Baba Muktananda was not a mere man; he was the embodiment of freedom and bliss! Who of us is able to define him? He was this, and he was also that. Yet neither this, nor that. Neither good, nor bad—or maybe some of both. He was beyond our comprehension, beyond our expectations. However, there is agreement by everyone who saw him that he was glorious and incomparable; that not even the legendary Lucifer shone so brilliantly. And, like a shining star, unfading within our hearts, he remains as steadfast as before.

--Swami Abhayananda

SWAMI DAYANANDA'S NOTES:

1. Forest-dweller phase according to the varnas, when one sees their children's children, or their hair turning grey they should retire to the forest and contemplate the highest truths as laid out by the sages.
2. Rudra is the destroyer manifestation of the Trinity Brahma Vishnu Shiva, seen as the creator, sustainer and destroyer functions of the universe.
3. See Alex Berzin, "how to have a healthy guru disciple relationship" available online on the Berzin archives.
4. *urdhvaretas*: One in whom the sexual fluid flows upwards and is not emitted in any sexual encounter.
5. Many of these conversations were transcribed and published in the book "In the Company of a Siddha", edited by Swami Dayananda (Karen Schaefer) Published by SYDA 1980.
6. Parabdha karma - which bears fruit in this lifetime as result of past life actions.
7. Berzin, Alexander. *Relating to a Spiritual Teacher: Building a Healthy Relationship. Part II: The Dynamics of a Healthy Student-Teacher Relationship* This book available through Berzin Archives on the internet provides one of the most thorough and culturally beneficial of many books that have been written on the issue of betrayal between teachers and students.

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2. INTRODUCTION TO VEDANTA

(from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991. Last revised: 6-24-2021)

The Meaning of Nondual Vedanta

All people of intelligence eventually awaken to some degree to the presence of God in their lives, and, depending on what religious or philosophical environment they happen to be in at the time of that awakening, they tend to interpret their spiritual experience in that context. The person living in a Moslem intellectual environment interprets his experience through the Koran, and worships Allah; the Hindu gives his heart to Krishna or Shiva; the person inundated with Buddhist ideas sees his awakening in Buddhist terms; the Jew relates strongly to the religious history of his forefathers and looks to Yahweh; the Christian describes his path in Christian terms, and the Platonist in Platonist terms. But, of course, they are all turning in the same direction. If they reach the object of their yearning, they transcend sectarian interpretations and come to know directly the Source of their attraction, and realize that It is beyond all religious tradition, containing all traditions and yet transcending them all.

We may picture the many spiritual seekers of various traditions as a group of men widely scattered around the base of a peaked mountain; each starts up the mountain from his own place and wends his way along his own mountain path. From their individual perspectives, each appears to be far apart from the other, with different destinations. But each, as he nears the top, draws nearer the others, and eventually all reach the very same mountaintop. It is then they realize that the destination each sought, though each along his own unique pathway, was ultimately the same for all. And once they have reached the pinnacle of their quest, they come to know directly the One they sought, and realize It as the eternal and universal Self of all. As the 16th century mystic, Dadu, said so well: “Ask of those who have attained God; all speak the same word. ... All the enlightened have left one message; ... it is only those in the midst of their journey who hold diverse opinions.”

My aim is to reveal the perspective of the enlightened, those who have reached the pinnacle at the end of their journey, all sharing a common vista. We find today many who have attained that summit of knowledge and who espouse a common perspective based on that universal knowledge; they are

to be found in every religious tradition that exists. However, it is only rarely that we find an acknowledgement that this unitary knowledge was originally expressed in its fullness and perfection in the written scriptures of that most ancient of lands, India, in a tradition known as *Vedanta*, the purest and most concisely expressed understanding of Nonduality. Vedanta is not Hinduism; Hinduism is a religious tradition, with its own rites and customs; but Vedanta is a rational philosophical expression of the direct knowledge of Unity. Vedanta may be expressed in the tradition of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism; but it is none of them. It is the essence and guiding principle of them all. It is the heart of each of them, the string on which the pearls of all religious traditions are strung. Vedanta is a perspective based, not on the teachings of any one particular person, but on the common experience of countless souls since the beginning of time.

Vedanta means “the end of the Veda,” and was originally intended to signify the collection of writings called the *Upanishads*, which were written nearly three thousand years ago by some anonymous Indian sages and appended to the earlier *Vedas* as their final portion. But the word, *Veda*, simply means “knowledge,” or “wisdom”; and so, the real meaning of *Vedanta* is “the end of knowledge,” in other words, it is “the ultimate wisdom.” In this broader interpretation, Vedanta refers, not only to the Upanishads, but covers the whole body of literature which explains, elaborates and comments on the Upanishadic teachings from their conception to the present day. It is synonymous with “the perennial philosophy,” that universal knowledge of Unity possessed by all the mystics and sages of past and present. In this sense, Vedanta is the culmination of all knowledge seeking. It is the final philosophy, recurrently discovered by seekers of Truth in every age.

Because it is the highest knowledge possible to man, the philosophy of Vedanta does not appeal to those without the courage and desire to ferret out the Truth for themselves. But those minds long accustomed to enquiry and Truth-seeking will experience a thrilling surge of joy upon discovering the philosophy of Vedanta. For it provides all the missing pieces to the puzzle of life and makes the total picture puzzle at last intelligible and perfectly clear. What a moment it is for the long-searching intellect when it finally comes across the truths expressed in Vedanta! What excitement it feels on having all its doubts dispelled, like cobwebs swept from the newly lighted corner of a room. How happy it feels on looking out upon a world perceived as for the first time bathed in clarity and light!

What is it then, about Vedanta that infuses the mind with such delight and happiness? Reduced to its elements, the philosophy of Vedanta consists of three propositions: First, that man's real nature is Divine. Second, that the aim of human life is to realize this Divine nature. Third, that those first two propositions constitute what we know as "religion," and that, therefore, all genuine religious traditions are essentially in agreement. It is the teaching of all genuine religion that our separative ego, our vaunted individuality, is but a flimsy charade; and that who we really are beneath the ever-changing tide of thoughts and impressions which flood our minds, is that one, bright, undivided Consciousness whom men call *God*. He is the one supreme Self of all selves, "the One who has become many"; and the realization of our eternal and ever-joyful Self is the realization of the Truth that shall make us free.

It is the aim of Vedanta to show men the way to realize and become established in the awareness of their true, Divine, Self. A thousand years before Jesus asserted, "I and the Father are one," the Upanishads declared: *aham brahmasmi*, "I am Brahman"; and *tat twam asi*, "That thou art." These assertions are not merely high-flown theories or mere suggestions to bolster the ego, but are the confident declarations of those who, in a moment of rare quietude and clarity, have seen through the veil of appearance and come face to face with their eternal Identity.

It is of utmost importance to understand that Vedanta is not a mere speculative *theory* about the nature of Reality; it is the account of Reality by those who have "seen" It and known It—much more clearly than you see these words before you. It must be approached therefore as the sacred knowledge that it is. We must open ourselves to be taught, with an eagerness to look beyond the limitations of language and of our own conceptual framework, in order to understand what the seers of Truth have to say. If their words are true, they will not contradict our own rational judgment. If they are true, they will stir us to new heights of mental clarity and intellectual delight; and they will have the power to inspire us toward the realization of our own Divine Self.

Historical Origins

The *Vedas* may be thought of as the “Old Testament” of Indian religion, insofar as they represent, for the most part, the views of an archaic Indian priesthood who had not the benefit of mystical vision, but who taught men rather to accept a conciliatory relationship to a pantheon of warring, jealous gods. The *Vedas*, which comprised the oral religious tradition imported into India at the time of the Aryan invasion (ca. 2000 B.C.E.), tended to hypostasize various natural elements and forces, attributing to them lurid personalities and histories, much as did the mythologies of ancient Greece. The *Upanishads*, on the other hand, were the esoteric writings of the *rishis*, the seers, the rare sages of ancient times, who had actually realized the unitive Reality through their own contemplative experience.

The *Upanishads*, as well as the *Bhagavad Gita*, may be thought of, therefore, as comprising the “New Testament” of the Indian religious tradition, which, while expanding upon the old Vedic writings, also supplants them by transcending the polytheism and anthropomorphism of the more elementary *Vedas*. However, neither the *Upanishads* nor the *Bhagavad Gita* should be thought of as the “authority” of Vedanta in the same sense as some take the Bible to be the authority of Judaism and Christianity. The authority of Vedanta is one’s own personal experience of enlightenment. But the *Upanishads* are the earliest and clearest expression of the mystical, or unitive, experience and of the knowledge resulting from such an experience; and for that reason, they hold an honored place in the world of religious literature. They stand as testimony and proof of the common perennial knowledge available throughout the history of the world to all who earnestly seek to know their origin and their destination in this life; and all who have come to attain that knowledge have acknowledged the authenticity and purity of these ancient testaments.

Of the many recognized *Upanishads*, twelve are regarded as of primary importance and merit. In philosophical clarity and persuasiveness, these few represent what, for most of us, are to be considered “The Upanishads.” Their names are: *Isha*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Prasna*, *Mundaka*, *Mandukya*, *Chandogya*, *Brihad-aranyaka*, *Aitareya*, *Taitiriya*, *Svetasvatara*, and *Maitri* Upanishads. The authors and exact date of authorship of these individual spiritual treatises are unknown; we know only that they were written, by various anonymous sages who had realized that Truth of which they speak, sometime between 1200 B.C.E. and the first few centuries of the Current

Era. While they vary in length and in style, their one common theme is the inner realization of the identity of the Self (*Atman*) and God (*Brahman*). We may seek to know God, or we may strive to know our Self; but, say the *Upanishads*, when you find the one, you will find the other as well—for they are one. It is this inner discovery, which constitutes enlightenment.

In its long history, Vedanta has had many enlightened sages, many holy saints, to serve as its glorious representatives. Indeed, it may be said that even those enlightened souls of other lands and other religious traditions—such as the 3rd century Roman, Plotinus, or the 13th century Christian, Meister Eckhart, or the Sufi, Ibn Arabi—may be regarded as representatives of Vedanta, insofar as their experiences and their teachings are wholly consistent with the philosophy of Vedanta. But there is one historical figure who played a most prominent role in revitalizing Vedanta by his writings, his teachings and his very life: that man is the medieval Indian *acharya*, or teacher, known as Shankara.

Shankaracharya lived sometime between the 7th and 9th centuries, during a time when Vedanta had become almost forgotten and nearly supplanted throughout the Indian landscape by Buddhism. And even those who clung to the ancient ways tended, for the most part, to make of Vedanta nothing more than a priestly Brahmanism based primarily on the adherence to conventional Vedic ritual and the laws of behavior governing the various castes. It was Shankara who brought, through his single-handed efforts, a return to the unitive philosophy of the *Upanishads* and a reawakening of the Indian spirit to its long-established heritage of spiritual wisdom.

Before his death in the Himalayas at the age of thirty-two, Shankara authored many independent treatises as well as commentaries on ancient Vedantic texts; he re-established the monastic tradition on a firm footing; and he traveled the length and breadth of India on foot, teaching the truth which he had realized in himself, and which corroborated the teachings of the ancient *rishis*. He taught also the means whereby one could realize, as he had done, that eternal Lord of the universe. Here are his own words:

Gain experience directly. Realize God for yourself! Know the Self as the one indivisible Being and become perfect. Free your mind from all unnecessary distractions and dwell in the consciousness of the Self.

This is the final declaration of Vedanta: Brahman is everything; it is this universe and every creature. To be liberated [from ignorance] is to live in the continual awareness of Brahman, the undivided Reality. ¹

Shankara's philosophy, the philosophy of Nondual Vedanta, may be characterized by the use of a simple formula taken from his writings; it is this:

*brahma satyam
jagan mithya
jivo brahmaiva napara*

(God is the Reality;
The world is illusory.
The soul [or self] is, indeed, nothing else but God.)

In the following sections, these three subjects: God, the world, and the Self, will be discussed in the light of the above statement.

God

The beginning student of Vedanta will have to become accustomed to many different names for God, as it has long been recognized in the Indian religious tradition that God cannot be limited to any particular name or form. It was stated in the *Vedas*: "Truth is one; men call It by many different names." The important thing to understand is that beneath the various names—*Brahman, Purusha, Rama, Shiva, Hari, God, Allah*—the Reality is one and the same.

The word most commonly used in the Upanishads for God is *Brahman*. By "Brahman" is meant the limitless Awareness, the universal Consciousness that is experienced in the contemplative state. That universal Consciousness is, of course, beyond names and images, since It is That which exists prior to the manifestation of name and form; but, from another perspective, every name that can be uttered is God's name, as there is no name or form that is not His manifestation.

Brahman, as He/It is manifest as the phenomenal universe, exists as both the

subjective and the objective Reality. He may be intuited in the objective world, but He can only be *directly* known as the *subjective* Reality, i.e., from within yourself as *I*. The objective Reality is that which is perceived, either as subtle form (on the mental, or psychic, level), or as gross form (on the sensual level). The subjective Reality is the perceiver, the Witness. It is that very consciousness which we experience as our very own existence. That is Brahman; and it is That which is to be known. This is clearly explained in the *Upanishads*:

What cannot be spoken with words, but *That* whereby words are spoken: know *That* alone to be Brahman and not what people here adore. What cannot be thought with the mind but *That* whereby the mind can think: know *That* alone to be Brahman and not what people here adore. What cannot be seen with the eye, but *That* whereby the eye can see: know *That* to be Brahman and not what people here adore.²

... It is not speech we should wish to know; we should know the speaker. It is not the things that are seen that we should wish to know; we should know the seer. It is not sounds that we should wish to know; we should know the listener. It is not the thoughts that we should wish to know; we should know the thinker.³

The experience, or “revelation,” of Brahman is an experience, which changes forever the perceived identity of the experiencer. For, having experienced Brahman, he has experienced his real, eternal, Self. In that rare awakening, he experiences his own consciousness as the limitless Consciousness of the universe. It is the background Reality to all that is manifest as universal phenomena. While immersed in that infinite Awareness, one is able to perceive that all the various worlds and galaxies of this vast universe are but the spreading rays of love expanding from one’s own Self. All that we call “the world” is nothing but the Divine projected Light of that one Consciousness, which manifests as the evolving universe and then is withdrawn again, back into that unfathomable Consciousness. Like breaths alternating from inspiration to expiration, this creation-destruction cycle repeats itself eternally. Each “breath,” though momentary from the perspective of that Awareness, contains the millions of ages required to evolve and then dissolve the myriad worlds presently evolving their destinies throughout space.

The ordinarily time-bound consciousness which experiences this glimpse into timeless Awareness is overwhelmed by this experience. While deeply immersed in it, he is God, he is eternal, he is alone—without a second; and there is no limited consciousness to distract his attention by responses of awe and amazement. There is nothing but himself; and nothing could be clearer or more obviously true and natural. But after the absorption of the limited identity into the universal has waned, and the time-bound ego resurfaces, then the reflective mind is struck with bewilderment and awe. With breathless humility and gratitude, it realizes only gradually the immensity of the experience that has come to it. “I am all this!” it exclaims incredulously. “All this universe is only my Self. I am the one Consciousness. There is no one but Me!”

Who is this one supreme Self, which includes all selves? What shall we call It? The ancient *rishis* of India who experienced It called It “Brahman.” But because It is always experienced only as the subject, the I-consciousness, It is commonly referred to in the *Upanishads* also as the *Atman*, which means, “the Self.” *Atman* and *Brahman* refer to the same One. In other words, Vedanta declares that God and the Self are one: God is who *you* are. Whether you know it or not, *you* are That; *tat tuam asi*. This is not merely a pleasant and convenient theory; it is the truth that has been experienced directly by countless souls since the beginning of time.

The World

The mystic who experiences Brahman, the unitive Reality, in the contemplative state, experiences that Unity as himself. In fact, if he were something other than That, it would no longer be a Unity, but a duality. And while experiencing himself to be Brahman, the one pure Consciousness, he experiences also that all the manifested universe is but his own projection, much as a thought-form is the projection of an individual mind within itself. It is his own radiation, his own glory. No matter what words one uses to describe it—whether as a “projection,” an “imaging forth,” a “superimposition,” a “manifestation of Divine Will”—it cannot be adequately described, as we have nothing in our worldly experience with which to compare it.

It is a unique and indescribable experience that the mystic confronts. He

knows that he is the unchanging Ground, the Absolute, pure Consciousness; and yet simultaneously, he is exuding an inconceivably complex universe of evolving worlds in which he himself lives, as one lives within his own dream. This creative expansiveness is similar to the expansion of love, which we, as humans, feel in the heart for all creatures, or like the emanation of a thought-image increased to an infinite degree of power and light. It is quite beyond telling, except to say that within the one Being these two complementary aspects exist: the one infinite and unchanging—an unblinking Consciousness, pure and clear like the vast blue sky; the other, a Power of manifestation which creates the world in which all creatures and things exist. Seers have called these two aspects by many different names, such as “Godhead and Creator,” “*Theos* and *Logos*,” “Light and Darkness,” “*Purusha* and *Prakrti*,” “*Shiva* and *Shakti*.” Vedantists often refer to them as “*Brahman* and *Maya*.”

One who has experienced Brahman and has known this complementarity of aspects within the one Reality knows without a shadow of a doubt that the world is a projected Energy-manifestation of the universal Self. In other words, this world is nothing but God. Indeed, if a “world” is seen, that is an illusion—because what is seen is really nothing but God. To postulate a “world” as a second thing is to postulate an absolute Duality. But duality is merely God’s illusion; there is never anything but the One. The forms perceived by the senses, the forms perceived by the mind; the ideas, the images, the pleasures, the pains—all God’s. It is all His dream-like creation; nothing is separate from Him. All is God and nothing but God.

However, we must understand that, so long as we perceive a “world,” there is an apparent duality; *apparent*, because, while there is always One and One alone, there is the appearance of two-ness. Take, for example, the Sun and its rays: it appears to be two things, but, in fact, it is one thing. Or take the mind and its thoughts: they are apparently two. But no, there is only the mind. Shall we say, then, that the rays are unreal, imaginary? Or that the thoughts are non-existent? No. Nor can we say they are ultimately real. They have no independent reality; that is to say, they do not exist independent of their source. It is like that also with God and the world. The world is a manifestation of God; and from that perspective, the two are one. But God is eternal, while the world has but an ephemeral transient appearance, like a thought. Therefore, like a thought, the world is neither real nor unreal. Vedantists call it “*Maya*.”

Maya is just another name for God's Power of manifestation, His Power of world-projection. That Power is inherent and co-eternal with God—whether there is a creation or not. But *Maya* is both the (eternal) Cause and the (temporal) effect. *Maya* is God's Power (*shakti*); and *Maya* is also the world-illusion produced by that Power.

Anyone who has studied the analysis by modern-day physicists of the sub-atomic world of matter must have come to the realization that all this world of various forms is composed simply of Energy, or "fields of force"; and that every form that exists is merely an "appearance" conjured by this mysterious chimera called "Energy." That Energy is God's Power of illusion, i.e., *Maya*. It is God's *Maya* that creates what we regard as the "objective" universe.

All experience of the world is dependent upon there being both a subject and an object, in other words, a seer and a seen. It should be clear that if you have only the subject, the seer, nothing can be experienced unless you have also the object, the seen. Or, if you have only the object, the seen, but do not have a subject, a seer, still nothing is experienced. We have all heard the conundrum, which asks, "If a tree falls in a forest, and no one hears it fall, was there really a sound?" The question might also be stated as, "If a tree falls in a forest, and no one sees it, did it really fall?" Modern physics has shown quite clearly that the subject, the seer, is an integral ingredient in the existence of an object, that which is seen. For example, the manner in which one observes a quantum particle determines its manner of existence; indeed, without the perceiving subject, the object cannot be said to exist at all. The one exists only so long as the other exists.

This is the view of Vedanta as well. There must be both the subject and the object; otherwise, there is only God, absolute, undivided. God has made Himself into both the subject and the object, the seer and the seen. This is how He has created all this drama within Himself. It is all Himself, of course; but, in order to make for any kind of experience at all, He had to provide out of Himself both sides; He had to become both the subject and the object. Now, keep in mind, there is really nothing else but God; He is playing both these parts. So, you are That also.

When you examine yourself, you find that, in your makeup, there are also these two sides, these two aspects: there is the subject, the "I"; and there is also that which is experienced through the senses as the body, and also as the thoughts, dreams, images that play before the subjective "I". These things

are the objects of your experience. Of course, there is also the world outside of your body and mind; all that too is seen, experienced, as the “object.” So, you can see that everything has this (apparent) two-sidedness. So long as there is a world, there will be “two;” in other words, an *apparent* duality. Only when the objective, thought-producing, mind is merged back into God, are we able to realize directly the truth that there is ultimately only One.

The Self

The Self is Brahman, the universal Consciousness. It is the one “I” that everyone experiences as the Self. In the *Upanishads*, the question is asked, “Who is the Self?” And the reply given is that, “The Self is the witness of the mind.” It is that inconspicuous Witness behind all of our various states of mind, which is our true, everlasting Self, and not those various states of mind themselves, with which most of us identify. The Self is the only Reality; but, since we tend to identify with the separative mind and the transient body, we lose sight of our eternal nature as pure Consciousness. Yet, that pure Consciousness is always there; and It is manifest as our bodies and our minds.

If we reflect, “Who am I? Am I the body? Am I the mind or the intellect?” we quickly realize that who we are eternally is none of these; we are truly the one pure Consciousness that is witnessing all these. For example, in the waking state, who is it that is looking out from behind your eyes reading this? Who is witnessing all the forms around you? Is it only the senses? Only the mind? No. *You* cannot be the mind, because you are witnessing the activity of the mind. Is it not so? And, in the dream state, who watches the dreams and remembers them upon awaking? And, in the deep sleep state, if *you* were really asleep, who was it that experienced that blissful nothingness, and who knows that it was a sound and deep state of peace that was experienced? It is clear to the discriminating mind that, in all three states, there is an unchanging Consciousness which is not involved in the activities of those states, but who witnesses them, and who is the real *you*, the eternal Self, independent of the mind and body. That is our true Identity.

There is a fourth state, which can be experienced in deep meditation. It occurs when the mind becomes entirely pure and still and merges into that universal Consciousness. Then, one becomes aware, “I am everything! All this universe is only my Self! And yet, though all these things and beings

are contained in Me, I am forever One and undifferentiated. Truly, I am Consciousness and Bliss.” Such a state is not just imaginary; it is not just a theory. Many people have experienced such a state. It is the experience of that which underlies all of the great philosophies and religions of the world and constitutes the wisdom of all the saints. Listen to what the seers of the *Upanishads* said:

When a man has seen the truth of the Spirit, he is one with Him; the aim of his life is fulfilled, and he is ever beyond sorrow.⁴

When a man knows God, he is free; his sorrows have an end, and birth and death are no more. When in inner union he is beyond the world of the body, then the world of the Spirit is found where man possesses all—for he is one with the One.⁵

When a sage sees this great Unity, and realizes his Self has become all beings, what delusion and what sorrow could ever approach him?⁶

... When awake to the vision of one’s own Self, when a man in truth can say: “I am He,” what desires could lead him to grieve in fever for the body?

... When a man sees the *Atman*, his own Self, the one God, the Lord of what was and of what shall be, he fears no more.⁷

In the Vedantic tradition, such an awareness is said to be “Liberation.” Jesus of Nazareth also spoke of this freedom that is attained through knowledge of the Truth: “You shall know the Truth,” he said, “and the Truth shall make you free.” Why does the knowledge of Truth make you free? Because, when you become aware that you are all pervading, you no longer suffer under the illusion that you are a limited individual being. You will go on playing your role as a father, a mother, a wife, a doctor, a lawyer, a beggar, or king; in fact, your enjoyment in playing your role will be increased manifold. But you will also be at rest within, in the joyful awareness of your perfect Self, infinite and eternal—like an actor, who earnestly plays his role on stage, but who remains conscious throughout the drama that he is not the character whom he is playing. He does not identify with the fortunes or misfortunes of his *dramatis personae*, but remains free within, happy and secure in the knowledge of his true identity.

It is this truth that we must come to know and understand: Just as waves on the ocean are only water, just as golden ornaments are only gold, so all the various forms in the universe are only your Self. When you know this, and make it a part of your understanding, you will begin to revel in that joy that had been missing in your life before. You will begin to drink the nectar of the love for which you had been thirsting before. And you will begin to take delight in simply being and living and acting in the world in a much more fulfilling way than you had been able to before. Indeed, the knowledge of the Self is the only means to real fulfillment, and enduring happiness. To know the Self is the aim and destiny of all human life.

The question then arises, “How can I attain it?” And the answer is: “The Self is already attained!” The Self has never left you; in fact, It can never go away. You *are* that eternal Self! The body will go; the mind will go. But *you* will always be. This is the truth. This is the liberating knowledge of all the wise seers and sages of every land of every time. It is found in the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Jews, the Muslims, and in the teachings of Jesus. All say the same: You are the eternal Self, the Source and Witness of your thoughts. That is who you really are. But because you are not aware of it, you identify with the mental activity and the transient worldly forms, and, forgetting your real Identity, you become swept away in the agitated currents of the mind. It is just this false identification, which is the source of all your woes and troubles. And if you could become aware of your true, eternal, Self, the various thought-forms that arise would be powerless to affect you one way or the other.

Another question that may arise is that of the relationship of the individualized, transmigrating soul to the ultimate Self, the Divine Unity. This question is also resolved in the teachings of Vedanta. All the seers of the Self have acknowledged the existence of an individualized soul; but, they say, it has no permanent existence. The individualized soul is really nothing more than a congregation of mental tendencies, which, while continuing throughout many lifetimes, must eventually come to an end when its real essence is realized. Listen to what Shankaracharya had to say about it:

The Self is the Witness, beyond all attributes, beyond action. It can be directly realized as pure Consciousness and infinite bliss. Its appearance as an individual soul is caused by the

delusion of our understanding and has no reality. By its very nature, this appearance is unreal. When our delusion has been removed, it ceases to exist.⁸

This is why enlightenment is regarded as “liberation from the round of birth and death.” As Shankaracharya says:

The transmigrating soul is not different from the Lord.⁹ ... Just as the light of the Sun and the Sun itself are not different, so also the soul and the supreme Self are not different.¹⁰

Because all souls are essentially not different, and their apparent difference is due only to ignorance of the Self, the individual soul, after having dispelled that ignorance by true knowledge of the Self, becomes one with the Self.¹¹

This, indeed, is the teaching of all who have truly known the Self. When the Self is experienced, they say, there is no soul. All duality is swallowed up. The seeker and the sought, the seer and the seen, the “I” and the “Thou,” are no longer two in the experience of Unity. Only the Self experiences the Self.

It is this experience, this realization, of the eternal Self, which, according to Vedanta, constitutes salvation, or liberation. We find this stated in every piece of Vedantic literature, including all the Upanishads. It is not a very difficult concept to grasp: The Self is the truth of the universe; It’s the truth of ourselves. It’s who we really are. There’s truly no one here but you! And to know, to really know, this Truth is the attainment of the final knowledge and the ultimate freedom.

How To Know The Self

What, then, is the means to attain this knowledge, according to Vedanta? Those who have known the Self say that there are basically two different paths to the attainment of Self-knowledge: (1) The path of identifying with the soul (also called the path of Devotion); and (2) The path of identifying with the Self (also called the path of Knowledge).

There are times when, as an individual soul, you feel the necessity of approaching God as His child, His devotee, His servant. The love in your

heart bubbles up and expresses itself as devotion to the Lord of the universe. This is the noblest and highest path for the soul, to focus on God within itself with true humility and love in simple prayer and worship. You will joy in the singing of His name, and in serving Him in all His creatures, and in remembering His presence at every moment in every place.

And there are other times, when you become quiet, and your breathing becomes shallow and soft, and you taste something of the certainty of your eternal and limitless Selfhood. Then you rest in that quietude, that solitary joyfulness—without thought, without movement, aware only of your own infinite presence. This is meditation, a glorious practice. It enables one to become centered in the Self, to rise above all the vicissitudes of temporal life, and to remain established in peace and goodwill, attuned to the inner joy, and seeing the one Divinity in all creation.

Both of these practices, the devotional and the meditative, are perfectly valid; they are both firmly based in Truth. For remember, we are both distinguishable from, and at the same time, identical with, the one Consciousness. Just as a ray of sunlight is both distinguishable from and also identical with the sun, or as a thought-image is both distinguishable from and yet identical with the mind, or as a wave is at once distinguishable from and yet identical with the ocean, so we, too, possess this complementarity in our identity.

Whether we turn, as a soul, to our Lord and God, or turn, as the Self, within to our own Identity; in both instances, we are looking toward the one Light. We should come to understand ourselves so well that we can worship God with heart-felt love at one moment and know Him as not different from our inner Self at another moment, and not feel the slightest contradiction in so doing. This whole world of creation is God, and it is also God's. If God in the form of His creature lovingly worships God, the Creator, who is going to object? Remember, He, the One, is both the subject and the object; He is both the worshipper and That which is worshipped; He is the lover and the Beloved; and he is the love as well.

It is only the One who has become many; and there is nothing else but the One in the many. Beneath the differences lies the Undifferentiated. It is that one supreme Self who is spread out everywhere in all these variegated forms—in the drifting cotton-puffs of clouds, and in the moist soil beneath our feet. It is our own Self who is the life-pulse in every form of life—in

trees, crustaceans, amphibians, in every weasel and woodchuck in its burrow. Every yearning human soul you see is you. Every loving heart eager for God is your own. The crystal-clear eyes of every illumined soul are bright with your love. You have cast yourself into the magical forms of man and woman for the sake of delight, for the sake of joy. If we are to live in the Truth, we must learn to expand our vision and our love to embrace all that exists. This is the teaching of Vedanta. Listen, now, to the words of the *Upanishads*:

These three: the soul, the world, and the Lord of all,
Are nothing else but the one Brahman.
It's Brahman alone who exists as everyone and everything;
beyond Brahman, the Self, there is nothing further to know.¹²

That one conscious Self, the smallest of the small, the greatest
of the great,
Conceals Himself in everyone's heart.
The wise, by the grace of God, become free
When they see that majestic and desireless Self within.¹³

When the Lord is known, then a man's soul is freed;
He'll never know sorrow or birth again.
Through devotion, he'll rise to the highest state,
And rest forever in the bliss of God.¹⁴

To that effulgent Lord who's in fire and in seas,
Who lives as this world, who's in plants and in trees,
To that Lord let us sing! Give all glory to Him!
To that Lord let us sing! Give all glory to Him!¹⁵

Meditation

The essence of Vedanta is "Surrender to God!" The essence is "Cling to His feet!" Vedanta means "Remember Him constantly; lift yourself to Him by the strength of your desire!" How can one express the essence of Vedanta? It is a state of the soul when it's buoyed up by grace.

Vedanta's essence is intimacy; "Be dissolved in His Bliss!" The offering of

one's heart, mind and body in service of God is the essence of Vedanta; it is the wisdom of love. It is unshaken confidence in the strength of the soul: "Identify with Him; be as great and as good!"

There is one Life, one Mind, one infinite Ocean of Truth. He is manifest as souls, as the sea manifests waves. Vedanta is the awakening of the wave to its Truth; it is the soul's joyful recognition of its infinite Self.

NOTES:

1. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*; Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1978, pp. 112-113.
2. *Kena Upanishad*, I:4-6.
3. *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, III:8.
4. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, II:14.
5. *Ibid.*, I:11
6. *Isha Upanishad*, I:7
7. *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*,
8. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*; Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1978, p. 64.
9. Badarayana, *The Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana (2 vols.)*; I:1:5, George Thibaut (trans.), 1962, Vol. I, p. 51.
10. *Ibid.*, III:2:37, Thibaut, George (trans.), *The Vedanta Sutras Of Badarayana (2 vols.)*; N.Y., Dover Publications, 1962, Vol. II, p. 174.
11. *Ibid.*, III:2:36, Thibaut, 1962, Vol. II, p. 173.
12. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, I:12
13. *Ibid.*, III:19
14. *Ibid.*, I:11
15. *Ibid.*, II:17

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3. Thoughts of A Mystic

by Swami Abhayananda

**Dedicated to the Public Domain
September 15, 2019; last revised: 6-24-2021**

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Preface

In April of 2013, I began posting some brief mystical observations taken from various books and other writings of my own to a website which I called “The Mystic’s Vision.” Within a few years, I had accumulated a quantity of these observations that filled two ebook volumes of *The Mystic’s Vision*, which were then offered as free downloadable ebooks on my website (www.themysticsvision.com). In 2018, I combined some of those brief observations which pertained to a common topic, and formed thereby twenty-five larger, more comprehensive, topical Articles, which I then offered on my website in two downloadable volumes as *The Essential Articles of Swami Abhayananda*.

I have learned over this period, however, that many people have difficulty reading spiritual texts that consist of more than one or two pages. And so, in June of 2019, I began a new column on my website called “Thought For This Week” in which I posted each week a single brief Thought on a particular subject in a one or two page format. Later, I put all these Thoughts together in this single downloadable ebook, and called it *Thoughts of A Mystic*, for the benefit of those who would like to enjoy the whole series of mystical/metaphysical readings in a single collection. I believe that each of these brief “Thoughts” is valuable in itself as an inspirational reminder, and I believe that many will enjoy the entire Collection as a treasured resource for the truths that each of these Thoughts conveys. May this book, *Thoughts of A Mystic*, inspire and uplift you, and may the Lord grant to you the clear knowledge of your own Divine Self.

—Swami Abhayananda

September 15, 2019

My Awakening

(from *The Supreme Self, 1984*)

In June of 1966, I was fascinated with the symbology of myths, and was reading Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, both of whom were speaking repeatedly about “Vedanta,” the mysterious philosophy of India. And so, when I saw in a local bookstore a copy of a book called *Vedanta For The Western World*, I bought a copy. This book, edited by Christopher Isherwood, consisted of a series of articles by such figures as Swami Prabhavananda and Aldous Huxley, and spelled out in very easy-to-understand terms the philosophy of Vedanta.

Vedanta, I soon learned, refers to the philosophy expressed in the *Upanishads*, considered to be the final appendages to the Vedas. It is a nondualistic philosophy; that is to say, a monistic one. It admits to an *apparent* duality between God and the world, between Consciousness and matter, but this duality, says Vedanta, is apparent only. In the “mystical vision” they are experienced as one.

According to Vedanta, when a person becomes enlightened—in other words, when he realizes the ultimate Truth, or God, in mystical vision—he experiences an absolute Unity, wherein everything is seen to be a manifestation of one universal Self. He knows for certain: “I and the Father are one.” This is not a mere aberration of consciousness, nor an illusory “union” of the soul and God; it is a glimpse into the nature of the underlying Reality of one’s existence. It is the revelation of one’s true and eternal Self. This, says Vedanta, is the perennial teaching of all the sages and saints of all times. For the experience of Unity, whether called *samadhi*, *satori*, or “union with God,” is the same for all, and is the basis for all the various religions.

Reading of this, I suddenly understood what the religious mystics had been talking about. The teachings of Jesus, the Buddha, and all the saints of all religions were seen to be based upon this same experiential knowledge. Everything I had ever puzzled over became clear; everything fell into place. I had scarcely finished with the Introduction to this book, and I knew that I had acquired a new and profound vision, which brought everything together for me and answered all my questions forever. I knew my life would never be the same. I knew I had found the key to an extraordinary wealth of understanding about myself and the nature of reality.

It was as though a veil that I had previously been unaware of had suddenly been drawn away, revealing a world I had heretofore been looking at as through a hazy fog. It was not so much an intellectual revelation as a spiritual one, for suddenly I saw everything bathed in light, and from deep within me there welled up a happiness, a clear, bright joyfulness, that testified to its truth, its rightness, more convincingly than any reason or merely intellectual conviction could do.

As I continued reading this amazing book, I was introduced to the 19th century mystic, Sri Ramakrishna, who was mad with fervor for “the vision of God” from an early age, and who became so one-pointed in mind through devotional love that he became entirely lost to the world of forms, aware only of the all-pervasive Reality. Reading of the life of Sri Ramakrishna and other such saints, I felt I had entered into an elite society of delirious madmen, madmen who called themselves, “the lovers Of God,” who, turning away from the normal transitory pursuits of man, sought to become intimate with the very fountainhead of the universe. Somehow, I had never understood before that such a thing was really possible.

Reading the inspiring words of Sri Ramakrishna, who had clearly known the unitive Reality, I experienced a wave of such happiness that I could scarcely bear it. Sitting on my porch, becoming aware of these things for the first time, I experienced a shower of golden light pouring down upon me, as though raining on the back of my neck, and awaking a deep and delicious chill in my body that ran up my spine and caused my scalp to tingle.

For the first time, I understood what drew men to religion. I had previously attributed it to weakness of mind. How much grander was the heritage of man than I had supposed. I had viewed all this talk of “God” through the ages as the superstitious babbling of fools. But I had been the fool. There *was* a God—but it was not what I had supposed men meant by the term. “God” meant not some ethereal being with a white beard, etc.; God was Being itself—the eternal substratum of Existence. And the proof of it was that God could be experienced, actually realized, seen with the inner eye of unleashed awareness. For the first time, I could fathom it; I understood the method in the madness of the saints. My mind was dazzled, ecstatic.

I was really extraordinarily happy. Of course, all my friends thought I had suddenly gone mad. Their faces betrayed their uneasiness when I began

talking about God and the mystics who had known Him. I began to realize that I had touched on something that not everyone could, or was willing to, understand. I read about “Grace,” the amazing descent of Grace; and it seemed to me that just such a thing was happening to me. By some process of awakening, to which I was an unwitting spectator, I was seeing with an entirely new and different pair of eyes. My old friends were unable to understand or to share in any way the intensity of my fervor, my excitement; and I realized that I would have to go on this journey alone.

* * *

2. Mystical Experience

(from *The Supreme Self*, 1984)

Though the conventional modern reader may be unfamiliar with the mystical experience and its implications, there is a long history of mystical convention that can be found at the core of nearly every religious tradition. And though my experience and my views may seem radically at odds with modern convention, I believe that they fall very comfortably within the esoteric, but historically universal, mystical convention.

Mystical experience, that reveals the nature of the Self and the universe, does not occur to everyone, it seems; and so, it is an unfamiliar subject to many. And, while such experience can be described, it cannot be adequately conveyed except to those who are intuitively receptive to the notion of the divinity of the soul. For the unitive mystical experience is the direct revelation of that divinity. It is an inner revelation of Grace that puts the soul in direct contact with the transcendent Reality. The advanced student of philosophy will recognize the existence of such experience from the writings of Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, and many other “mystics.” However, for the many who have not studied the writings of the famous mystics throughout history, such an experience may be a completely foreign concept.¹

In the ancient religious traditions of India, and especially in the Upanishads, such an experience is widely recognized. It is described as “the realization of the *Paramatman*, or Supreme Self.” The divine Reality is not referred to as “God”, or “Brahman”, but as “the Supreme Self”, because, in the mystical experience, one experiences the Divinity as one’s Self. There is a uniting of the soul and God, so that soul no longer sees as soul, but sees as the eternal God, and knows that Divine to be the true Self it has always been. It knows its own deathless reality beyond the illusory personality it had previously identified with. And ever thereafter it bears with it the unassailable certainty of its eternal and unlimited Identity.

NOTE:

1. Please see my *History of Mysticism* available at my website.

* * *

3. Mystical Experience And Popular Culture (10-2-19)

Mystical experience is the bedrock source of all religion. It is the source of the Upanishads; it is the source of Buddhism; it is the source of the teachings of Abraham and Moses; it is the source of the teachings of Jesus; and it is the source of the teachings of Muhammed in the Quran. Why is it then that there is so little public acknowledgement of the existence of mystical experience and its importance in the lives of the great representatives of human spirituality? Mystical experience has occurred throughout our history to a few extraordinary individuals, who having told of their divine revelations, have deeply affected the course of human religious tradition and the history of human development; and yet our popular societal culture is quite oblivious to the occurrence of mystical experience.

The “news media” may be relied upon to feature daily the latest rap star or movie queen, but when was the last time you heard or saw in the News any mention of mystical experience and its profound implications for an increase in understanding of our true nature and the true nature of our world? Is it possible that we are just in a cultural slump these days? No. It is *not* just the commentators of today; it has always been thus. Reporters of the secular culture have always been deaf and blind to accounts of anything beyond their sensory experience. It is only the mystics themselves who speak of

mystical experience; the subject remains utterly closed to the ignorant majority of people in our popular societal culture. Frustrating as it is, the layered inequality of spiritual understanding among people seems to be an *intended* feature of the Creator's universal scheme of things, and therefore the mystic's vision will continue to remain an inconceivable mystery to all but those blessed few who are privileged to experience it. Only those who are known as "mystics" are able to speak authoritatively about mystical experience, its source, and its content. To all others, it is an unfathomable mystery whose existence is subject to belief or disbelief in accordance with each individual's personal inclination.

On the positive side, however, the academic community is very much engaged recently in discussing 'mystical experience'. We have seen a recent rash of learned academic articles regarding the validity or non-validity of mystical experience by academic professors whose only familiarity with such experience is from what they have read in books. But however beneficial this may be to the general awareness of mystical experience in our society, I would like to point out to these earnest scholars that one of the distinguishing hallmarks of mystical experience is that such an experience, being a divine revelation, occurs beyond the level of normal human consciousness, and is therefore quite beyond any kind of normal psychological evaluation or explication. For that reason, if an admittedly ineffable mystical experience is to be spoken of, it may be done effectively only by one who has actually experienced it. It is only fitting that what we learn of mystical experience we learn from those who claim to have experienced it. Those who are tempted to offer their learned opinion on mystical vision, without any direct experience of it, must be kindly advised to remain silent.

In one's normal, everyday state of consciousness, it is possible to conceive some ideas about the nature of God and His creation, but it is not possible to actually *see* the spiritual nature of things; for that, you must enter into the divine consciousness. You must be drawn by the grace of God into an altered state of rapturous awareness, in which the divine glory is made visible and where all is clearly realized to live in the kingdom of God. I would not call it a trance, but it is definitely other than one's ordinary state of consciousness; it is more concentrated, more focused, more awake, and only in that extraordinary realm of awareness will you be able to see your true nature as divine, as all-pervading. Unfortunately, however, there are no

roads leading to this clarified state of consciousness and no directions for how to find it; it is a place to which only God can take you.

When I was a young man, Almighty God, who fills the universe and commands the elements, who is the Lord and Ruler of all that is, placed in my heart a prayer; and then He fulfilled that prayer by making me one with Himself, filling me with divine knowledge and grace. Is this not a moment to celebrate as one of the very greatest moments in all of human history? To me, of course it is. And, when the Lord casts His gaze upon you and enlightens *your* heart with His divine favor, the greatest moment in human history will occur for *you*. Until then, continue to seek Him with all your heart and soul.

* * *

4. The Greatest Secret (last revised 7-7-19)

Only the Divine Mind is eternally real. The universe, made of His form-producing Energy, appears to be real, but it is only a transient mirage, a colorful illusion. And yet this illusory universe is filled with and enlivened by His Consciousness. He is its Soul, its animating power, and is thereby the life and soul of every being in it. All the forms appearing in this universe are made of His Divine Energy, but, alas, the briefly appearing forms in this phenomenal universe quickly change and vanish; in fact, the entire universe is only an illusory appearance, a fleeting mirage; while *He*, and the Energy He contains, lives forever, undivided, unchanged. He alone, the one eternal Mind, is eternally real. And *that* is who you must one day realize you are. For that eternal One is the origin and substance of your being, the soul of your soul, and your only lasting Identity. It is the one divine Self you have always been and will always be.

* * *

5. Born of His Light (last revised 7-7-19)

Don't you know that we are born of His light—
 That every elementary particle of matter began as a photon of light?
 Every electron, every quark in the interior of every proton
 Or neutron came into being and acquired its properties
 In the transformation of those high-energy photons of light
 Streaming out from the Creator's breath.
 This world and all worlds sparkling throughout the cosmos
 Are made of the radiance of God's power,
 A dancing array of His light's many ephemeral forms.
 And we, evolved from His light, are endowed with
 The presence of His eternal Self, and live by His life,
 And love with His love and know with His wisdom.
 We are conscious by His marvelous all-pervading awareness;
 We see by His loving grace,
 And we sing His praise by His gift of song.

Then sing, ye God-born angels of light!
 Raise up your voices to Him whose fabric forms your being and appearance,
 Whose life-pulse fires your heart and breath.
 Remember Him whose goodness molded you, whose love enfolds you,
 Whose existence is the life-stream of your being,
 And whose out-flowing Bliss provides the everlasting joy of your soul.
 Until we wend our way back into His eternal light, sing forth His praise.

* * *

6. Blessedness

It is evident to everyone that God is adept at concealing Himself; but few people know that He also reveals Himself—and yet He does! He reveals Himself in those who love Him and whose hearts are pure. Since He is in all creatures, He is easily able to reveal His inner presence in those whom He finds worthy. Those to whom He reveals Himself awaken to the knowledge

that they and all things are made of God, that He alone constitutes the being of all things in the universe.

Prior to that awakening, these people had no idea that they were God's manifestations. They thought they were individual beings alone in the universe. They didn't understand that one omnipotent Power fills all creatures and all things; that He alone exists in every form. If He has not yet revealed Himself in you, pray to Him for His merciful Grace. Let Him know your loneliness without Him. For truly, without the knowledge of His eternal presence, you are lost, even if you know it not. To know Him as your essence, to know Him as your very identity and breath, will so fill your heart with joy and wisdom that you will think of Him every moment and see Him in everything and in every event on earth. You will sing His praise in your heart and delight in the divine beauty all around you in His world. This blessing is the true Kingdom of God in which the blessed live forevermore. May He grant this blessing to you.

* * *

7. There Is A Knowledge Beyond Knowledge

There is a Knowledge beyond knowledge, won only by the brave, who soar on wings of love, beyond the knowing mind. The penetrating laser-light of intellect is able to comprehend the spoken truth—but it cannot know the source of its own light. It can form myriads of concepts about the knower, but it cannot turn its light on itself and thereby *know* the knower.

To know that knowing Self, we must set out blindly, without words, without images; even that shining intellect which is our pride and joy must be left behind. With no borrowed or reflected light, with no idea-projecting faculty to cast images on the cave-wall of the conscious mind, we must enter naked, empty-handed, and alone into that dark light.

Without intellect, without a preconceived identity or even existence; unknowing, unseeing, guided only by a faith in Truth and the longing of a pure heart, we may enter into the silence of that all-knowing Light. There, no questions rise to separate the knower from the known. There, the Knower is alone—with a Knowledge beyond knowledge, won only by the brave, who soar on wings of love, beyond the knowing mind.

* * *

8. The Religion of Love (last revised 7-21-19)

The great Sufi mystic and poet, Jalaluddin Rumi, said: “The religion of love is distinct from all others; the lovers of God have a religion and a faith all their own.”

What is this religion of love? It has no name. Neither does it have any nationality. It is beginningless, and without end. It originates in the heart and can only be mimicked in speech. It is the cry of the heart for God’s mercy and grace. Yet even this heartfelt pain is His grace; for this yearning is but the drawing of His comfort and solace.

Love calls, and Love responds. In both instances, that Love is accompanied by tears. Yet, even this calling, though painful, is sweet; for it is *His* Love that burns in the heart. And when He responds, the heart’s cup is filled with much more than it can hold. No eyes have seen this filling; no words have ever told of its taste. Yet, in countless hearts, throughout the universe, this religion lives, and supplies the world with Love.

* * *

9. Thou Art Love (last revised 7-21-19)

Thou art Love, and I shall follow all Thy ways.
 I shall have no care, for Love cares only to love.
 I shall have no fear, for Love is fearless;
 Nor shall I frighten any,
 For Love comes sweetly and meek.
 I shall keep no violence within me,
 Neither in thought nor in deed,
 For Love comes peacefully.
 I shall bear no shield or sword,
 For the defense of Love is love.
 I shall seek Thee in the eyes of men,
 For love seeks Thee always.
 I shall keep silence before Thine enemies,

And lift to them Thy countenance,
 For all are powerless before Thee.
 I shall keep Thee in my heart with precious care,
 Lest Thy light be extinguished by the winds;
 For without Thy light, I am in darkness.
 I shall go free in the world with Thee —
 Free of all bondage to anything but Thee;
 For Thou art my God, the sole Father of my being,
 The sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart;
 And I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee,
 And lean on Thee till the end of my days.

* * *

10. The Unchanging Testament (last revised 7-28-19)

There is a summit of knowledge which has been reached by a few lone souls such as the Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, Ibn Arabi, Ramakrishna, and others. This knowledge came to each of them by the grace of God, revealing the truth that all existence is contained in and consists of the one eternal Self. This being so, there are no separate beings such as the Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, etc., but only the One, knowing Himself in all these various forms. Indeed, it is just this knowledge which constitutes the message of every seer of Truth: 'The One exists as you and me. Realize this truth; know that you are that One and be free of the pain of enmity.'

There is but one religion, not many. It is only the childish and the deluded who think otherwise. There is but one substance which is variously named as *water, pani, jal, agua*; but no matter what it is called, that same substance quenches the thirst of all. There is but one Life, though it takes various forms, such as the tiger, the serpent, or man; all breathe one air, all see one light. Understand too that one all-pervading Intelligence fills all minds, gives conscious Light to all that lives. He alone is, and He lives and breathes as us.

In knowing Him, all purposes of life are fulfilled. In shedding darkness from our minds, by rising high above the clouds of 'me' and 'mine', we come closer to this Light, and merge our awareness in Him. This is the tale which all have told who've seen the Truth. It is neither old nor new, but it is

an unchanging testament that neither time nor place on earth affects. Jesus, Buddha, Ramakrishna—all have reached that same summit, and shown to us the way. Now, we must climb alone and find our way into the Truth which they enjoy and make it finally our own.

* * *

11. The Divine Self **(last revised 7-28-19)**

We do not see the transcendent God, and yet we see His handiwork. It is only natural, therefore, that we think of God as being somewhere else, far above us, as a king is above his subjects. Since ancient times, when primitive men roamed the earth, God has been regarded as a transcendent overlord, separate from this world and its creatures, who dwells in some distant yet ever-present heavenly realm. But what marvelous news! When He finally lifts the veil and reveals Himself to His devotee, God is seen to be all-pervasive! He is seen to be the very fabric of one's being, the sole Identity of everyone. It is this knowledge that illumined Jesus, prompting him to declare 'I and the Father are one!' This illumination was not the result of the unique paternity of Jesus, nor was it some wild fantasy by which Jesus was deluded; it was the realization of the hidden truth by which Jesus became enlightened by the Grace of God!

To a devoted person who calls out lovingly to His God, it is not immediately apparent that he himself is a manifestation of God; but when God reveals Himself within, that person knows his own deathless Self, his own oneness with God, and knows that nothing else exists in this world but that One. God has spread Himself out as this vast universe, and He is immediately present as our own selves, accessible through our own conscious minds. God is the life that lives you; He flows through that life in every breath. He is the joy that thrills your soul, and He is the sweet awareness of being that fills you. Remember Him and praise Him in every thought and word and know every moment that He is manifest as you, that He is truly your own divine Self.

* * *

12. Of One Many (last revised 8-4-19)

The Latin phrase, *E Pluribus Unum*, is the motto of our country. It means, “Of many, one.” But it would be closer to the truth to say, “Of One, many.” This simple formula explains everything we need to know about the Reality in which we live. For, just as the one white light is refracted to appear as the entire spectrum of colors in a rainbow, so does the one undivided Existence appear as a multitude of forms. Just as a sunflower blossom spreads itself out in its many tender petals, so God spreads Himself out into this variously formed creation. Just as the ocean raises up from itself a tossing surface of countless waves, so the ocean of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss raises up from Itself countless individual forms of life from shore to shore.

In every single form the One alone exists; it is He alone who lives in every life. However wise, however foolish, however attractive, however repulsive—the tiger and the scorpion, the spider and the snake—all is His Life, playing in a million fantastic forms. And we, children of His mind, images projected from His light upon Himself, wander here and there upon His screen, playing out our roles, forgetful of the One in whose dance of Light we live. But when we turn within, behold! We discover as our very essence that One who lives as many, the heart and soul of all that lives, the blissful God whose life and breath we are.

* * *

13. Look Around You (last revised 8-4-19)

Without any doubts, this world, this vast universe, is made *by* God, *of* God, and resides *in* God. For there is no other Reality but Him. God is the one all-inclusive Spirit, or Mind, in whom everything and everyone has its being. This truth has been clearly revealed through Grace to countless individual souls in an enlightening inner vision. If there was something else—something other than Him, it is in that divine inner vision that we would learn of it. But it is there, in that divine revelation, that we learn that we are made of God-stuff, that there is nothing else! We learn that it is the one Great Mind who brings all to light, and that it is He in whom everything resides and of whom everything consists. There, by His Grace, we learn our

oneness with Him. There, two-ness cannot even arise as an imagination. You will be happy to know that, by searching for Him within, you too can experience His Grace. You too can know Him as the one and only Reality and solve this great riddle of Nonduality conclusively for yourself.

Look around you! Do you not see that every blade of grass is bursting with Consciousness? Do you not see that every chunk of gravel is alive with Consciousness? Do you not see how perfectly timed the planets move, how the Sun and moon tell the unveiling of the moments in your life?

O what good fortune is this—to see with the eyes of the Divine, to bathe in the bliss of His living presence, to delight in the heavenly breezes wafting in the summer light! Look around you!

* * *

14. This Is The Truth (last revised 8-11-19)

This is the truth: Nowhere is there anything other than God.
 This world is a drama performed by one actor in a multitude of roles.
 We, His distinctly variant roles, are nothing but Him!
 What can we do but dance to His tune?
 He has made Himself into all these worlds and all these beings,
 And we are but His manifold forms.
 Though we appear to be independent entities,
 Our characteristics and our inclinations are all programmed by Him,
 And enacted by Him.
 Everything being done is being done by God!

Whatever is to be done in the future will also be done by Him.
 And so, glory be to God—in the highest and in the lowest!
 Glory be to the One who lives as you and who lives as me!
 Waves on His ocean, we think we're distinctly our own,
 Unaware that we're forever inseparable from Him.
 Calling Himself "I", He lives us, He breathes us.
 Only in the depths of His Grace are we able to know Him.

* * *

15. The Only One **(last revised 8-11-19)**

The false ‘I’—the individual person we think we are—doesn’t really exist! It’s merely a mental phenomenon, an imaginary being. The true ‘I’—the only one who really exists—is the all-pervading Spirit. That is your only true identity. You are That. I am That. We imagine that we have a separate and distinct identity, but it is the one Spirit alone who is living as you and as me. So—can you grasp it? When the sage asks you to inquire “Who am I?” he’s asking you to become aware of the divine Reality who is the true and everlasting identity of everyone.¹

Though you are unable at this time to know your Self as all-pervading, the truth is that you are in the clouds, and you are in the gritty soil. You are the pulse of the turtle; you are the clanging bells of joy that thrill the hearts of all who know joy. It is you that stirs in the heart as a rising song; it is your love that flows throughout the world. Here, there, everywhere, it is you alone who exists.

Whether you objectify that all-pervading Divinity as other—as ‘He’—or know that divine Self as ‘I’ within, the divine Reality is all there is in this world and beyond. ‘He’ and ‘I’ are the same. What Jesus proclaimed is true for all of us: ‘I’ and ‘the Father’ are one. Say it in your heart, and know it is true. Whatever name stirs you to remembrance of the one divine Spirit—sing that name in your heart and let the blissful awareness of His endless presence continually fill your soul.

NOTE:

1. It’s true that we come into this world individualized as separate and distinct souls. But all souls are composed of the one underlying Divinity, the all-pervading Spirit. And, in the unitive experience of the mystic, the veil of separateness is lifted, the distinct individuality of the soul is transcended, and the soul awakens to the clear awareness that its true and everlasting identity is the one all-pervading Divine Reality.

* * *

16. The Real
(5-2-2016)

When I awakened to the One,
All the opposites had vanished.
No I, no Thou, no now, or then.
Sound, silence, living, dead—
None of these remained.
Only a sweet Awareness
Filled the wondrous undivided space.

That eternal Awareness alone is real.
Individual life is but a temporary illusion
That comes and goes, inventing time.
Inconceivably, unimaginably,
The Real alone abides:
No opposites within It.

The one eternal Awareness is absolute.
All the pairs of opposites
Exist only in your mind.
They are dependent upon the existence
Of your individual perspective.

We each comprise an individual perspective
That we call our ego.
All of the opposites—you, me; up, down; left, right,
East, west; hot, cold; true, false; etc.—exist only
Because of that individual perspective.
Even past and future, as well as the now,
Is relative to our individual perspective.
But none of those contraries even exist in the Real.

That eternal Awareness alone is real.
Individual life is but a temporary illusion
That comes and goes, inventing time.

* * *

17. The Two In One

Look, the eternal Source is one alone.
 But It has imaged forth within Itself a cosmic array
 Containing beings such as you and me.
 Eternally the one great Mind exists alone.
 Its transient changing picture-show comes and goes,
 An image on the screen of time.

But even as the stars play out their birth and death,
 The eternal One is undiminished, undivided, undismayed.
 For, since the universal drama exists within the one great Mind,
 There is no separation, no duality at all.
 And yet, while we live and dance in time and space,
 We inhabit an imaginary dream of non-eternity,
 Of transient bodies and volitional activities,
 A secondary world, unreal.
 For “real”, by definition, refers only to the Permanent,
 The Eternal, the Mind unmanifest and clear.
 So, what is this compelling show, this conjured art,
 This fleeting Mind-dreamt castle-in-the-air
 In which we’re sentenced to abide?
 It’s smoke and mirrors, a magic show,
 A dream enactment in which we demonstrate
 The merits of our individual souls,
 And eventually come to know exactly who we are.
 For the fact is you’ve never left your eternal realm.
 You delight there even now.

The timeless Self you’ve always been
 Was never imprisoned in a bodily shell.
 That’s but an illusion, a convincing spell that binds you
 To the dream of separate personality.
 Yet, one by one, we learn the truth of who we are,
 And once you’re freed of duality’s deception,
 You’ll realize you never left eternity’s bliss.
 You’re one unparcelled Self— unbound forever,
 Complete in the unity of the boundless One,
 An eternal “I” that stands forever free,
 Perfect and triumphant beyond imagined time.

* * *

18. The Divine Source
(from *Mystical Theology*, 2012; revised 8-29-2019)

Today, it is common knowledge that all wave-particles of matter were born from the high-frequency Electromagnetic energy released in the ‘Big Bang’ event of fourteen billion years ago; and that it was those wave-particles that evolved into the stars, our world, and all that we know as matter and energy. However, an important question arises: ‘Did the qualities of *life* and *consciousness* exist intrinsically in the light-energy and in the wave-particles that arose from it [as many scientists believe], or was there some kind of *suffusion* of divine consciousness into that primordial matter that served to purposely organize and arrange those wave-particles toward the presently evolved state of life and consciousness that we know and experience today?’ And what should we call such a principle? Anaxagorus called it “Thought”; Heraclitus, and later Philo, called it “Logos”; the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* called it “Sophia”, or “Wisdom”; Plato and Plotinus called it “Psyche”, or “Soul”.

No matter what word we use to denote this principle, it is necessarily a divine, consciously governing and organizing Spirit akin to the “Thought” or “Will” of God, acting in and through all the sensible universe. There are no other alternatives: for either that initial Light itself was and is purposeful, living and conscious, or that purposeful living consciousness acts within and through that light but is distinct from it. And since both light-energy and matter in its pre-organic state seem to be inert and not alive, we must assume that they are also not conscious, nor do they intrinsically contain the seed of consciousness. It would seem, therefore, that we are forced by the evidence to conclude that an invisible living consciousness operates *within* and throughout the material universe, guiding its operations, advancing its evolution, and bringing Its own life and consciousness to light in the living creatures appearing on at least this one planetary body orbiting the star we call the Sun.

That the universe began in a sudden burst of light is unquestioned; but that light did not burst forth from the explosion of a material body, a so-called “singularity” into which all the matter of the universe had been compressed. Rather, that initial abundance of light burst forth from another kind of ‘singularity:’ the energy potential of the eternal Mind, who is both the universe’s Creator and the universal Soul pervading it. Who else could produce an Energy that transforms itself into substantial forms as material

particles along with the purposeful forces required to establish such a universe? Who else could pervade that universe as Mind, and animate each fully evolved form with a living consciousness? Who else could fill the universe with His own Consciousness, imbuing living beings with distinct identities and an individualized self-awareness?

Clearly, that eternal Mind that we call ‘God’ is the source and power of all that is. He has produced all these bodies and their evolutionary developments from His all-powerful light; and He is the inner Soul that permeates all matter and which we identify within ourselves as ‘I’. Indeed, all is He, and all glory is His. What else might we imagine exists? Who else might we imagine ourselves to be?

All the material universe and all the forces operating within it are evolved from His outspreading light, breathed forth nearly fifteen billion years ago. Yet this immense burst of light-energy would have remained but a teeming chaotic mass, random and lifeless, without His conscious direction, without His indwelling Spirit. His manifestation of a material universe is plainly evident to us; but His guiding Spirit is subtle and hidden from our view. We may infer the existence of that subtle Spirit by observing Its effects in the universe and in ourselves; but It is known directly and with certainty only when He reveals Himself within us as our own divine Self and the eternal Self of all.

* * *

19. Where Did Life Come From? (9-15-2016; revised 8-20-19)

Where did life come from, and when did it begin? The simplest and most evident answer is that life comes from God.¹ This vast universe was created by God and exists in God. And when I experienced identity with God, through His gracious revelation, I experienced myself as existing blissfully in everything as both universal Consciousness and universal substance. From that experience, I know clearly that it is that one Existence-Consciousness-Bliss that manifests as all things living. It is the origin and manifestation of Life itself. And yet no one—certainly not any of us human mortals—understands how and when the process of life on earth began.

There are biological scientists who think they know how life evolved from simple to more complex forms, from a simple self-replicating cell to various fully formed animals, including us humans; but these scientists readily admit they don't have any idea where that original simple self-replicating cell came from.

Nor do I. But by the knowledge which God revealed in me, I know that life originates in Him, that He is the ultimate principle of life. I know that He is omnipresent and omnipotent; that He has fashioned this universe of His own substance, and that He is the conscious governor of every movement that takes place within it. I know that every form on earth is His own and lives and moves in accord with His greater will. I know that this universe—its manifestation and its evolution—is one coordinated whole and He is its director. I know that everything is in His hands, finding its eventual fulfillment and salvation in Him. Since He is both the Source and the manifestation of all life, what wonder is it that in His great universal production we live and move, manifesting His own Life, His own divinity, in each of our individual souls?

NOTES: 1. Many believe, as does the respected Biologist, Michael Behe, that the propensity for 'life' was pre-programmed into the evolution of matter from the beginning:

“I am not saying the origin of life was simply an extremely improbable accident. I am saying the origin of life was deliberately, purposely arranged, just as the fundamental laws and constants and many other anthropic features of nature were deliberately, purposefully arranged. But in what I'll call the “extended fine-tuning” view, the origin of life is merely an additional planned feature, culminating in intelligent life. The origin of life is simply closer to the very same goal that the other, more distant anthropic features (laws, chemical properties, and so forth) were also put in place to bring about.” (Michael J. Behe, *The Edge of Evolution*, New York, Free Press, 2008; p. 216.).

* * *

20. The Divine Journey (8-23-19)

The divine journey of the soul is a journey to God-awareness that takes place over numerous lifetimes. It is a journey toward the purification of one's heart. God brings His children through their unique life-experiences to the eventual purification of their hearts through love, and the reward of that purification is "the vision of God." As Jesus has said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." But understand that when you "see" God, you will not see Him as something or someone else standing before you. The divine inner vision reveals that you and all creatures, as well as all things that exist, are made of God, are part of God, and reside in God. "The vision of God" is an opening of your own consciousness to the realization that you are contained in and consist of the one divine Consciousness that is God. To experience that awakening is your sole goal and purpose in this journey of many lives. In reaching this goal, you shall know the Truth, and that Truth will make you truly free.

Your spiritual journey begins when God awakens your heart to His love. That love is His own and has the power to draw your heart to Him, despite all other temporal attractions. So, give Him the one-pointed devotion of your heart and follow wherever He leads. O my friends, do not pass by such good fortune as this! He is in your heart, for He has fashioned you in His own image. Acknowledge His presence and listen to His guidance, and He will lead you to your perfect joy in Him. As the wave is in the ocean and the ocean is in the wave, so you are in God and God is within you. May He, who is the Lord of the entire ocean of existence, guide your wave to a peaceful shore where you may know God's Light within you, and know your identity with Him.

Long ago, in my sense of separation prior to God's revelation, I had prayed to God, "Let me be one with Thee...", but when He was revealed in me, I did not *become* one with God. No; I became *aware* that I already was and had *always* been one with God, that I live in and consist of the one all-pervading Spirit, that my very substance is God and that my consciousness is God's Consciousness. I realized, as Jesus had realized so long ago, 'I am in God and God is in me. I and the Father are one.'

Then, after being graced by God with the knowledge of my own divinity and the divinity of all creation, I began musing on the life and teachings of Jesus

of Nazareth and his legacy. For, like me, Jesus was the recipient of a powerful 'mystical experience' that revealed God's immanent presence. Today, it is widely recognized that mystical experience is a common phenomenon which has occurred to many, but in Jesus' time, such a mystical experience was unheard of among the local population and was not at all understood. According to the Gospels, his disciples learned from the lips of Jesus himself of the mystical experience that occurred during his baptism by John, but they had no intellectual context in which to understand that experience, and they chose to interpret it as the long-expected fulfillment of a Judaic prophecy that told of a coming 'Messiah'. Therefore, after Jesus was slain, those writers of Jewish heritage who were tasked with writing the history of his brief life and career had to rely on their own mistaken assumptions regarding Jesus, regarding who he was, his mystical experience, and his message. It was these well-intentioned, but mistaken, individuals who created the myth of Jesus' supernatural birth, the report of the voice of God from the heavens proclaiming him to be God's son, and the apparently miraculous resurrection of Jesus after his entombment. And it is the continued widespread belief in these false assumptions that constitutes the faith of Christianity today. ¹

The true teachings of Jesus are the same as the teaching of all those others who have directly experienced divine revelation through mystical experience. In all such instances, their message contains the saving truth that God is all, that all is God, and that He reveals Himself to whomever He chooses. Clearly, no one has become enlightened simply by reading the words attributed to Jesus, nor will anyone be enlightened simply by reading the words of any number of other enlightened persons. The words of the enlightened can only awaken others to the necessity of forging an intimate relationship with God Himself within their own souls. For it is God alone who is able to confer enlightenment on His children. It is He alone who holds that Power. Therefore, concentrate on Him, pray to Him, sing your love to Him, give your mind, your soul and all your actions to Him, and He will surely confer on you the blissful awareness of your eternal Divinity.

NOTE: 1. For more on the life and mystical experience of Jesus, see my Article, "The Story of Jesus, The Mystic" at www.themysticsvision.com.

* * *

21. We Are Made of God
(from *Body And Soul*, 2011; revised 9-5-19)

We are made of God and we are never apart from Him. His Consciousness manifests as our own individual consciousness, our soul; and His Energy, sent forth as the ‘Big Bang’, ‘Big Burst’, ‘Great Radiance’, or whatever you wish to call it, constitutes the material universe. That One is the Origin, Source, and *initiator* of the entire field of Consciousness and Energy. All that exists is His. It is His projection, His exuberant radiance. Nothing else exists but that One. Our sense of ‘I’ too is Him. ‘I’ am the one and only ‘I’ that is. My consciousness is His Consciousness. My body, as well as the whole universe, is His manifest form. I and the Father are one.

A personage in a dream is not only permeated with the consciousness of the dreamer, that personage is *made of* the consciousness of the dreamer. He is essentially *identical* with the consciousness of the dreamer. In just the same way, we are not only permeated by God’s Consciousness, we are *made of* His essence; we are projections of His light. And our consciousness is essentially identical with the Consciousness of God.

Our bodies are His light-forms, and we are animated and made conscious by the all-pervading presence of His living Consciousness. When we look within ourselves, we discover that we are Him. For, just as a dream-person looking within to enquire into its ultimate identity would discover that he is in fact the dreamer, so do we, enquiring within, discover that we are the limitless Mind in whom all things and all beings exist.

Jesus said, “I am the Light that is over all things. I am all:
 From me all has come forth, and to me all returns. Split a piece
 of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me
 there.”¹

If you ask a beam of sunlight, “Who are you?” it will answer, “I am the Sun.”
 If you ask a wave on the sea, “Who are you?” it will answer, “I am the ocean.”
 If you ask a soul, “Who are you?” it must answer, “I am the One in all. I am
 He who alone exists now and forever. I am the light of the one Sun; I am a
 wave on the one Sea; I am a living breath of the one Life. I am in all that is
 seen or unseen. I am the One in all.”

Unfortunately, many believe that what Jesus said is a truth that applies only to that one spiritually unique historical figure; but it is a *universal truth*, a truth for all, and a truth to be realized by everyone: *I am not merely this body, not just this spark of consciousness, nor merely the entire manifested universe; I am the Source of the universe, and the universe itself. I am both the subject and the object. There is nothing else here but I AM. This is what the great Shankaracharya said:*

The fool thinks, 'I am the body'. The intelligent man thinks, 'I am an individual soul united with the body'. But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as [the only] reality, and thinks, 'I am Brahman'.²

I am that Brahman, one without a second, the ground of all existences. I make all things manifest. I give form to all things. I am within all things, yet nothing can taint me. I am eternal, pure, unchangeable, absolute.

I am that Brahman, one without a second. Maya, which appears as multiple forms, is merged in me. I am beyond the grasp of thought, the essence of all things. I am the truth. I am knowledge. I am infinite. I am absolute bliss.

I am beyond action; [I am] the reality which cannot change. I have neither part nor form. I am absolute. I am eternal. Nothing sustains me, I stand alone. I am one without a second.

I am the soul of the universe. I am all things, and above all things. I am one without a second. I am pure consciousness, single and universal. I am joy. I am life everlasting.³

You and I—we are alive in God. Become awake and sense Him—within you, around you, constituting your body and your awareness, the earth, the heavens. This ocean of existence is His. Nothing exists outside of God. To know God is to know one's Self. It is to know the originating Mind of the Father, the One. It is to know the Source of all existence, the Source of all consciousness, and the Source of all bliss. What will you do with this knowledge? Praise Him in your thoughts, and in your words and in your actions. Find your delight in Him—seeing only Him, loving only Him, praising only Him.

NOTES:

1. Saying of Jesus, in *The Gospel of Thomas*, 77.
2. Shankaracharya, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 58.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

* * *

22. The Secret of Life (from *Body And Soul*, 2008; rev. 9-4-19)

Biological scientists have celebrated having found “the secret of life” in the information storage and processing factories discovered to reside in the nucleus of every living cell: the tiny strand of genetic material called *deoxyribonucleic acid*—DNA for short. They have discovered that the information that instructs every one of the amazingly complex processes of life is encoded in the DNA molecules located in the nuclei of the cells that make up our bodies. It is the encoded information in this double-helix strand of nucleic material that directs, empowers, and produces the dazzling complexity that is our living body. But the *source* of that intracellular information, the *designer*, the *organizer*, the *programmer* of that information, is hidden from them, and from us.

Clearly, there is some intelligent force bringing about so marvelous a machine as the human body. No one could conceivably imagine that the encoded information in a strand of DNA just randomly arranges itself in such a way without an indwelling intelligence. And if it is conceded that there is some manner of intelligence at work here, what is its source? Science has no answer to this question. But mustn't it be an invisible yet universally pervasive Intelligence similar to what has been described as “Soul” by nearly all of the philosophers of the ancient world?

I think it is entirely possible that we may never fully understand the details of the transformations which gave rise to life on earth, but of this much we may be certain: Matter alone is insentient; life and consciousness did not simply *emerge* as an epiphenomenon in the process of material evolution without an intelligent and supernatural influence. Where, then, do life and consciousness come from? According to the Judaic scriptures, it was God, who breathed His own Life as Soul into man and presumably into all

creatures. In the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*, it is asserted that we and all creation exist *within* that one eternal Consciousness, which permeates us and all things as Soul, constituting our essential substance as well as our conscious awareness. And the Greek mystic-philosopher, Heraclitus (540-480 B.C.E.) declared that “Nature has no inherent power of intelligence; Intelligence is the Divine.¹ Without It, the fairest universe is but a randomly scattered dust-heap.”²

Clearly, that eternal Mind or Spirit that we call ‘God’ is the source and power of all that is. He has produced all these bodies and their evolutionary developments from His all-powerful light; and He is the inner Soul permeating all matter which we identify within ourselves as ‘I’. Indeed, all is He, and all glory is His. What else might we imagine exists? Who else might we imagine ourselves to be?

All the material universe and all the forces operating within it are evolved from His outspreading light, breathed forth nearly fifteen billion years ago. Yet this immense burst of light-energy would have remained but a teeming chaotic mass, random and lifeless, without His conscious direction, without His indwelling Spirit. His manifestation of a material universe is plainly evident to us; but His guiding Spirit is subtle and hidden from our view. We may infer the existence of that subtle Spirit by observing Its effects in the universe and in ourselves; but It is known directly and with certainty only when He reveals Himself as our inner Self. To some, life appears to be a common, ordinary thing. But, in fact, life is an extraordinarily astounding miracle! It is the Divine Intelligence, the Soul of the universe, who is the *Life* in all life-forms. It is God Himself who is the all-pervading Soul of the universe and the substratum of all that lives and breathes, of all that is sentient and aware, and of all that appears in our world. God is the only Awareness filling the entire universe, enlivening, animating, and constituting the consciousness of all beings. Our life—in fact, all existence, including the material entropy we call death—is contained in and supported by the Life and Consciousness of God.

NOTES:

1. Adapted from fragments of Heraclitus found in Freeman, Kathleen, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983; pp. 24-34. fragment nbr. 78.

2. *Ibid.*, fragment nbr. 124.

* * *

23. One Consciousness

There is one Consciousness. It is the Consciousness of the One Being. And all the manifested universe exists within that one Consciousness. The various objects of this manifested universe move and operate, not by individual forces or laws of physics, but in and by that One. When He lifts you up and immerses you in that one Consciousness, unites you with it, you will see that: “all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” Who, then, is doing what? In Him we live and move. In Him one Will operates throughout. And we, mere dust motes dancing in His sunbeam, are swallowed and encompassed in His light. Look within and see the Truth.

* * *

24. Individual Souls

(from *Body And Soul*, 2011; rev. 9-4-19)

The unitive mystical vision reveals to an individual that his own ultimate reality is the one great ocean of Consciousness, an all-pervading continuum of Soul, or Spirit. But in our normal everyday awareness, we are cognizant that each of us is an individual soul-entity that is distinct and unique in its development and experience, and, in the manifest world, has an apparent “identity” of its own, regardless of its common identity with other souls in the One ultimate Spirit, or Oversoul. This simultaneous unity and multiplicity was readily acknowledged by the great third century mystic-philosopher, Plotinus; but neither he nor any other has been able to satisfactorily explain the manner in which the one Soul becomes a multitude of individualized souls; how Soul, though one and indivisible, is also, at the same time, divisible and manifold, becoming separate, individualized and individually responsible, souls. Nevertheless, he does offer his own elaborate explanation:

There is one identical Soul, every separate manifestation being that Soul complete.¹ The differentiated souls ...issue from the unity while still constituting, within certain limits, an association. ...They strike out here and there but are held together at the source much as light is a divided thing upon earth, shining in this house and that, while yet remaining uninterruptedly one identical substance.²

... Diversity within the ONE depends not upon spatial separation, but solely upon differentiation; all Being, despite this plurality, is a Unity still. ³ ... The souls are apart without partition; they are no more hedged off by boundaries than are the multiple items of knowledge in one mind. The one Soul so exists as to include all souls. ⁴

The entity described as "both the undivided soul and the soul divided among bodies," is a Soul which is at once above and below, attached to the Supreme and yet reaching down to this sphere, like a radius from a center. Thus, it is that, entering this [earthly] realm, it possesses still the vision inherent in that superior [indivisible] phase by virtue of which it maintains its integral nature unchanged. Even here [on earth] it is not exclusively the partible soul: it is still the impartible as well...⁵

The nature, at once divisible and indivisible, which we affirm to be Soul has not the unity of an extended thing. It does not consist of separate sections; its divisibility lies in its being present at every point of the recipient, but it is indivisible as dwelling entire in the total, and entire in any part. To have penetrated this idea is to know the greatness of the Soul and its power, the divinity and wonder of its being, as a nature transcending the realm of "things."

Itself devoid of mass, it is present to all mass. It exists here and yet is [still] There, and this not in distinct phases but with unsundered identity. Thus, it is "parted and not parted," or, better, it has never known partition, never become a parted thing, but remains a self-gathered integral, and is "parted among bodies" merely in the sense that bodies, by virtue of their own sundered existence, cannot receive it unless in some partitive mode. The partition, in other words, is an occurrence in body and not in soul.⁶

That we are individualized souls is clearly evident to all of us who know ourselves as separate, individualized, self-governing, units of self-awareness. We may understand that Soul is nothing less than an extension of the Divine Consciousness, and yet, we must also acknowledge that each individualized

soul's perspective is unique due to the differing characteristics and histories of each individual. Differences in perspective seem to arise and persist through the accumulation of individual experience, inference, and willful intent. And so, we must acknowledge that while the multitude of souls are one in the Divine Consciousness, they are at the same time separate in both their bodily manifestation and their individual responsibility.

NOTES:

1. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.2.1: *The Origin And Order of Beings*.
2. *Ibid.*, IV.3.3-4: *Problems of The Soul (I)*.
3. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
4. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
5. Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV.1.1: *On The Essence Of The Soul (I)*
6. *Ibid.*, IV.2.1: *On The Essence Of The Soul (II)*

* * *

25. The Law of Karma

(from *Body And Soul*, 2011; rev. 9-10-19)

We human souls are, undoubtedly, of a two-fold nature: we are essentially identical with the one Divine Consciousness, our Divine Self, which assures us of immortality and a free will; we are only secondarily individualized souls, with our accompanying karmic tendencies, by virtue of our embodiment in time and space. We are a combination, a duality, of identities existing together in the one spectrum of Consciousness: the one Divine Self is our eternal identity, but we are also an individual soul existing in the manifest world. Our essence, the one Divine Consciousness, is the only true 'I' in all the universe and beyond; It is everyone's eternal Identity. But, by God's mysterious Power of illusion, everyone born into this world takes on a limited set of characteristics as well, constituting the limited temporal identity of each, what we refer to as 'the individualized soul'. According to that soul's previous history and its corresponding mental tendencies, the characteristics of each soul are in time made manifest. As the ancient sage Heraclitus remarked, "character is destiny."

The ‘soul’ is essentially the Divine, but as it appears within the material universe, it manifests both the Divine and the illusory—just as in a dream, we partake of both our true conscious selves and an illusory dream-self. The analogy is exceedingly apt, as in both instances, we retain our fundamental identity, while operating as an illusory identity in an illusory ‘imaged’ reality. The individual soul is, to a great degree, who we experience ourselves to be in this world; and we operate in this life not only from characteristics acquired in this life, but from the past karmic tendencies we embody as well. However, at a more fundamental level, we are identical with the Divine Self, which comprises, not only our freedom to will and act from a level of consciousness beyond our soul properties and characteristics, but It comprises the very consciousness by which we, as souls, exist.

It appears that there is a good reason that souls are individualized; it is for the allotment of justice, in accordance with “the law of *karma* (actions).” The law of karma is the divine law of Providence as it pertains to each individual’s actions in this life. It is this ‘law of karma’ that provides an inescapable justice which continually operates throughout every soul’s evolutionary journey. As Saint Paul warned, “Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”¹ Plotinus, acknowledging this same universal law of justice, known in his time as *adrasteia* (named for a Greek goddess associated with the dispensation of rewards and punishments), and today known as “the law of actions, or *karma*”, says:

No one can ever escape the suffering entailed by ill deeds done. The divine law is ineluctable, carrying bound up, as one with it, the fore-ordained execution of its doom. The sufferer, all unaware, is swept onward towards his due, hurried always by the restless driving of his errors, until at last, wearied out by that against which he struggled, he falls into his fit place and, by self-chosen movement, is brought to the lot he never chose. And the law decrees, also, the intensity and the duration of the suffering while it carries with it, too, the lifting of chastisement and the faculty of rising from those places of pain—all by power of the harmony that maintains the universal scheme.²

Thus, a man, once a ruler, will be made a slave because he abused his power and because the fall is to his future good. Those who have misused money will be made poor—and to the good poverty is no hindrance. Those who have unjustly killed, are killed in turn, unjustly as regards the murderer but justly as regards the victim, and those who are to suffer are thrown into the path of those who administer the merited treatment.

It is not an accident that makes a man a slave; no one is prisoner by chance. Every bodily outrage has its due cause. The man once did what he now suffers. A man who murders his mother will become a woman and be murdered by a son. A man who wrongs a woman will become a woman, to be wronged.

Hence arises that awesome word, “Adrasteia” [the Inevadable Retribution], for in very truth, this ordinance is an Adrasteia, justice itself and a wonderful wisdom.³

NOTES:

1. *Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians, 6:7.* The full passage reads: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”
2. Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV.3.24: Problems Of The Soul (I)
3. *Ibid.*, III.2.1-13: Providence: First Treatise.

* * *

26. The Evolution of The Soul (from *Body And Soul*, 2011; rev., 9-4-19)

In the scheme of the 3rd century mystic-philosopher, Plotinus, all body-bound souls are extensions of the one Divine Consciousness; but, because each soul is uniquely distinct as an individual, it is able to formulate its own desires and set out to fulfill them in the (lower) material world, thereby incurring the risk of losing sight of its Divinity. And so, from the one Divine

Soul, which is their common Source and Reality, a multitude of separate selves comes into existence, each driven by its own independent desires and circumstances, as well as by its false identification with the material body.

These individualized souls, we must not forget, are manifestations of the Divine. Nonetheless, while inhabiting or being associated with bodies, they pass through various experiences which may serve to forge a strong bond with the material world. However, over time, the indwelling Divinity instructs those ‘individualized souls’ by those very experiences in the errors of their ways and returns them by various and sundry ways to the awareness of their true nature, guiding them by the most blessed path to the reformation of their loving intent and the restoration of their inherent bliss. This is known as ‘the evolution of the soul’.

According to Plotinus, the Divine Mind, in its infinite wisdom, allows more than one ‘incarnation’ for the soul to traverse this evolutionary path. The soul’s excursion into the material realm is fraught with difficulties and dangers and may bring with it many painful and binding impressions. These must be resolved and released in order for the soul to regain its blissful freedom. And so, the process of soul-evolution may be prolonged and stretched over a number of soul-incarnations. Whatever necessity requires will inevitably find a means for its accomplishment in the evolutionary journey toward truth and freedom.

The objective of the soul’s evolution is the purification of the heart and, ultimately, the vision of God. In that vision, it is revealed to the soul that it is truly identical with God, and it thereby becomes free of the illusion of its individuality. Jesus put it well when he said, “You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.” According to this understanding, a man is free insofar as he is cognizant of his essential identity with the Highest, and he is bound when he departs from the knowledge and awareness of his Divinity, identifying with the body/brain complex. He then succumbs to the rule of earthly necessity and is moved willy-nilly by the causative forces inherent in Nature. He has the power, as the Divine Self, to will freely, unencumbered, uncompelled by circumstance; and, for that reason is responsible for his individual actions. All souls are linked by inclusion to the one Soul, and by extension to its Source, the Divine Mind; but only he who is cognizant, aware, of his Divine Identity, is truly free.

27. A Grand Evolution

How does an invisible and omnipresent Mind
 Create a vast shower of light within itself?
 How does a human mind create a multitude
 Of thoughts within itself?
 Who can answer these questions?
 The divine Mind has this power.
 The human mind has this power.
 Who can explain it?

The divine manifestation of Light
 Miraculously transforms itself into visible forms—
 As stars, and planets, with creatures
 Crawling on their surfaces.
 Who can explain that?
 Is it a production of His thought—
 A vast panorama of imagination
 Taking place within that Mind?
 And what role do we serve
 In the purpose of this drama?

There is a grand evolution at work here—
 Have no doubt!
 Have you been thinking
 Only of this short-term life?
 Did you think you were here just to have sex
 And to fill your belly with the meat of corpses,
 To accumulate comforts and
 Make a name for yourself in this world?
 Whether you like it or not, you'll evolve.
 You'll grow a little each time that you
 Enter into this world,
 And you'll throw off many an illusion
 Before your journey's done.

But all in good time. This eternal Mind's in no hurry
 To bring this drama to a close at once:
 The drama's denouement is long and slow.
 And the progress of your story depends on you—

On how quickly you learn and heed the clues.
 Pay attention now: He's leading you to the knowledge
 That He is you and you are Him.
 The dreamer and the dream: one unending Self,
 One all-containing Mind, your secret identity.

And when you wake to know that Self,
 Your journey will be done,
 The story will be written, and the end assured.
 But that end is not yet come.
 There's much yet to do and learn;
 Much yet to know and be;
 Much yet to suffer and to earn.
 So, keep up the good work!
 You're doing fine.

* * *

28. The Unitive Vision

The increase in scientific knowledge has proceeded over the years and centuries, so that much of what was once a matter for speculation and myth has given way to a vast body of reliable knowledge currently available to everyone. But the accumulation of such knowledge took a great deal of time, effort, and perseverance on the part of those who ferreted it out from its secret recesses. Think, for example, how long men struggled to know the conditions and order of movement of the stars and the planets of our solar system, and how many false theories preceded our eventual understanding. Today, the vision of man reaches to the furthest limits of the universe.

The current radical evolution of our empirical knowledge entails an equally radical evolution in our comprehension of the invisible elements of the universal order which exist beyond our senses. In this endeavor too, the struggle has been long and arduous, and much still remains to be uncovered, but some advances also have been made. However, such problems cannot be solved, or even investigated solely from the perspective of reason and observation; they require the gleanings from the personal intuition and visionary experience of the countless mystics who have 'seen' into the subtle realms of universal manifestation.

The only evidence for the existence of the Soul is subjective—the subjective personal experience known not only to Plotinus, but to thousands, perhaps millions, who have been referred to as “mystics” or “yogis,” but whom materialists refer to as deluded and “irrational” individuals, whose “mystical” experiences they regard as aberrational hallucinations caused by some neuronal malfunction in the brain.

But it is the consistent nature of this unitive visionary experience, reportedly occurring to numerous souls over a great expanse of time, that provides insight into the nature of our Source and the manifestation of our universe. Without the accumulation of many common experiences of a supersensual reality, we would have no real clue as to our true nature, but only the endless arguments between faith-based partisans and secular rationalists. Merely our powers of observation and imagination alone are simply not adequate to the task. It is visionary experience, obtained by grace through prayer, contemplation or meditation, that reveals to us the true nature of our own conscious self and the universe in which we live.

* * *

29. My Own Experience

(from *Body And Soul*, 2011; rev. 9-8-19)

I am one of those who has been fortunate enough to experience the Divine reality; and so, I will interject here an account of my own experience of the Divine reality in order to provide another first-person account of just what such an experience reveals:

At the age of twenty-seven, I began experiencing the presence of interior sensations and spiritual understandings which led me to actively seek the knowledge of God. I therefore retired to a small cabin in a secluded forest and gave all of my attention to the pursuit of that goal: God’s gracious revelation. One evening, I was having my usual nocturnal conversation with my Divine Father; and after a while I found myself in an elevated and finely focused state, experiencing an intense longing for God in the very deepest part of my own soul. I felt then that my only purpose in life was to ascend to union with the Divine, in order to be able to knowledgeably praise and

glorify God for the benefit of all His children. And I was willing to die in the process, if necessary.¹

As I prayed for that union, my consciousness was suddenly expanded so that I became aware of myself as all-pervasive, beyond time, and indivisible. In that newly altered awareness, 'I' had become aware of my identity with the one cosmic energy and consciousness that constitutes this entire universe and all beings in it. There was no duality of Spirit and Matter, of soul and body, however. It was clear that 'I' was one undivided Essence that was *both* consciousness *and* the energy comprising form. My 'I' was seen to be the 'I' of every conscious being as well as of every inanimate object within this universe. It is an 'I' beyond time and place that fills all spatio-temporal beings with life and awareness, even though I might mistakenly attribute that 'I' exclusively to this individual body-brain complex.

More than that, as the focus of my concentration continued, I could see at a more elevated, subtler level, the unmanifest source, the transcendent Absolute, as the very font of all origination. I say that I *saw*, but it was not the seeing by a subject of an object, a second; rather, it was a recognition, from that eternal vantagepoint, of my own transcendent nature, my own true Self. What I saw, I saw through identity with it rather than as a seer separate from what was seen.

In this visionary experience I saw no separate soul—neither my own nor any other; but experienced my identity as the universal and all-inclusive Consciousness-Energy that manifests all this universe of forms, including the form I am accustomed to calling "my own". There was clearly nothing else but the one all-pervading Divinity, with no sense of a separate personal soul-identity. I had not become immobile during this experience but was allowed to write by candlelight my impressions as they occurred. But in reflecting on this experience in the ensuing years, many questions remained. My reason and learning told me that souls exist; yet my visionary (spiritual) experience told me otherwise. For, in that unitive mystical experience, I had not 'seen' a soul, or even the suggestion of a soul. I had known only the indivisible unity of all existence.

Now, at last, thanks in part to the reflections of Plotinus, the truth has dawned on me: The soul is not experienced in the unitive vision because the soul is the *experiencer*! It is seeing what is above it—namely its prior, its source: the creative aspect of God, the Divine Mind, which is its own true

Self, at a higher level of consciousness. The soul glimpses also that which is prior to the Divine Mind, namely, the Absolute, the One, *through* the Divine Mind. The individualized soul is that in us which is conscious of limited selfhood; and it is that which is silenced and made transparent, negated in the experience of identity with its transcendent source, the Divine Mind.

My own experience of this unitary vision was identical in all respects with that of Plotinus, and I agreed with his conclusions; but I had been puzzled regarding *souls*. There was no *soul* in my (mystical) vision! There was no soul in that vision because the “soul”, in its vision of its prior, is “taken into unison” with its prior, the Divine Mind, and is made transparent and unaware of itself as something apart. It is the soul that is *seeing*, experiencing its identity with its source, its subtler Self, as a wave’s sense of individuality might disappear as it becomes aware that it is the ocean. Likewise, the soul merged in the Divine Mind doesn’t see any *other* souls, because in the Divine Mind all Soul is one; it is only when it becomes embodied that Soul becomes individualized.

Whether one experiences a world of duality or a world of nonduality is determined by the ‘level’ of one’s consciousness. We live our entire lives in the world of duality, except for those brief timeless moments when we experience union, lifted to that state by the grace of God. So long as the soul is *not* caught up in union with the Divine Mind, the duality of soul and God, and all other dualities, continues.

From the vantage point of the individual soul, God seems to be something other than oneself; but when the soul, or ego-self, is merged in union, all duality is annihilated, dissolved in the suddenly perceived Identity of the Divine Mind. Initially, the soul is inspired by an attracting love for God; but when the soul is merged in God, there is no longer the duality of lover and Beloved, but only one blissful Self-awareness. When the soul is ‘merged’ in the Divine Mind, it sees from the vantagepoint of the Eternal, and no longer sees from the spatio-temporal vantagepoint. In that sense, the world disappears. But, in fact, the ‘world’ continues to exist; it is just that the soul is seeing it from the inside, as the one Consciousness-Energy.

NOTE:

1. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 9:6:10; MacKenna, Stephen (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, London, Faber & Faber, 1956; p. 221.

* * *

30. A Gift To Be Shared (9-22-2016; revised 8-21-19)

I think everyone realizes that we all live within a self-limiting illusion in which our perspective on the world is entirely self-centered. Each of us is the center of our own world, the subjective focal point round which everything else turns. My experience is different from your experience; yours is different from mine. And, while we can verbally share our experiences and our perspectives with one another, they remain mere hearsay since they were not personally acquired; and they do not, therefore, affect us in the same way that *personal* experiences do.

Despite this acknowledged incommunicability of personal experiences, I have spent a good portion of my life attempting to convey to others some sense of an experience of my own that I feel has some real importance for everyone, and therefore needs to be communicated.¹ It is an experience that occurred to me nearly fifty years ago, and yet it is a timeless one, in that it was an experience of eternity itself. Strangely enough, I had vowed to God that I would give pronouncement to this experience even before it was given to me: “Let me be one with Thee,” I prayed, “not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory, for the benefit of all Thy children.” I can only explain the uncharacteristic selflessness of this prayer as being itself the work of God’s Grace. And, of course, since God granted my request, you can well understand that I am not only obligated but am resolutely committed to praising God for your benefit, and for the benefit of everyone.

I am well aware that it is as true today as it was in the time of Jesus or in the time of Plotinus that the great majority of the people are ignorant of the existence of such mystical experience. Despite the many learned studies and the many available accounts of mystical experience by well-reputed people throughout the ages, the ignorant majority of the people remain as ignorant as before. Why is this so? It is so because the people comprising the ignorant majority do not have personal knowledge of mystical experience in their own lives and are therefore extremely reluctant to believe that such experiences are possible or relevant to their own lives. I understand this well, as I was once a member of that ignorant majority. And yet, today, I would say to that majority: the very fact that a few souls have experienced divine revelations *does* have a major relevance to your own lives. Mystical experience is a revelation by God of the nature of the reality in which all of

us live. It is as relevant to you as it is to those who are the direct recipients of that experience.

His gracious gift to me of mystical vision was undoubtedly meant for all of us. It was a rare gift of the knowledge that this world is His own, that you are His own, that nothing in the universe is outside of His divine domain; that if we can fully comprehend this truth, we will be able to see His love and His wisdom in all that is created and know His blissful presence in our own lives. For He is the air that fills our lungs; He is the awareness that allows us to experience and to know; He is the kindness that overflows in our hearts. Open your mind to Him, and know the unlimited wonder and joy of being, for your being is *His* being; your being is the expression of His infinite love.

This God-given vision was my own *personal* experience, to be sure, but I ask you to please accept my experience as your own. It is His wish, and therefore it is my wish as well, that you come to know Him in yourself. Look to Him for all that you wish for in this life, and you will be fulfilled beyond your wildest dreams. And, if you are very fortunate, He may also grant to you, as He did to me, the vision of your timeless divinity in Him. So, may it be.

NOTE:

1. If you would like to read a detailed account of my mystical experience, written as it occurred, please click on my article, “My Mystical Experience” in the Menu at my website: www.themysticsvision.com. There, at the “Read or Download Books” page, you can also freely download my book, *History of Mysticism*, containing similar accounts by other mystics throughout history.

* * *

31. All Glory To God

Some men are born to find a mate and raise families of children; I was born to write songs in praise of God. Isn't that strange? I don't know why I was made to be so unusual a person. Even as a child, I knew that I was to be a writer, though I didn't know what I would write. Then, after my twenty-eighth birthday, a prayer to God, which He implanted within me, burst from my heart: "Lord, let me be one with Thee, not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children." The Lord immediately granted my prayer, allowing me to know my oneness with Him, and since that time I have been an instrument of His service. The songs in praise of God come forth, even without bidding. They write themselves, as I watch the pen move. And nothing could please me more than this perfect fulfillment of my birth and my soul's prayer.

Though many would find my life narrow and uninteresting, I'm so grateful that the Lord has blessed me in this way and allowed me to sing His praise for the benefit of all His children—though to me, truly, it seems that I merely leave a space for Him to produce these works through me, and He does the rest. I have seen, in fact, that He is the doer of everything. To Him, therefore, let us give all the glory now and forever.

* * *

32. Tale of The Two In One

God has always been. As an invisible Spirit, He is unborn and unending. But periodically, He manifests from Himself a universe of form in order to live multiple embodied lives within a multiformed universe. And, since He is the only Existence, if there is to be a universe of form, it must be produced from Himself. God periodically takes form by manifesting His own Energy in the form of a concentrated radiation of Light. And, as that Light spreads, it transforms into material wave-particles, which congregate into molecular forms that then become the many diverse structures that go to make up the physical universe. That majestic universe continues to exist for billions and billions of years, and then it returns to the Divine Light-Energy from which it came. Then, in a

time of His own choosing, that Divine Being once again manifests His form-bearing Light as a multiform universe. ¹

But did you ever wonder how God, who is famous as the universal all-pervading Spirit, or Consciousness, also manages to create, or manifest, an immense universe of 'material' forms? It seems incongruous, doesn't it? He is Spirit, yet He produces, organizes, and reorganizes an incredible amount of Mass/Energy. These two qualitative definitions of Divinity seem to be distinctly alien to and incompatible with one another, presenting a perplexing conundrum that has baffled philosophers and theologians for many millennia. The solution to the conundrum that has surfaced in many different cultures throughout history is the recognition that God, though one, possesses *two distinctly different aspects*: He is the eternal Mind that serves as the absolute Ground of Consciousness in which all objects and beings are contained; *and* He is the Creative Power that produces an electromagnetic field of Energy that is capable of transforming itself into material wave-particles, which then aggregate into the elements and forces that go to make up the entire universe of objects and beings.

An eternal Being who possesses two separate and distinct aspects seems a bit fantastic, to be sure; but that is the conclusion reached by nearly everyone who has deeply pondered this question—including those, like myself, who have been graced with mystical vision. In that divine revelation, it is clearly revealed that the one Being constitutes both one's body and one's soul, both one's mind and one's 'physical' substance. There is seen to be only one existent, one contiguous reality identified as 'I', and yet It is *both* Spirit *and* the Energy that becomes Matter; i.e., both soul and body. To give human expression to this duality-in-unity for the purpose of rendering It comprehensible, these two—the invisible Spirit and the form-producing Energy—have been given many different names over the centuries, such as *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, *Brahman* and *Maya*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, *Jahveh* and *Chokmah*, *Haqq* and *Khalq*, *Theos* and *Logos*, *Godhead* and *Creator*, and many other names.

Here, however, we will continue to call them "Spirit" and "Energy", noting that the Energy is born of the Spirit, belongs to the Spirit, and that, therefore, the Spirit and Its Energy were never divided, were never two, but are simply two complementary aspects of the

one Divine Self we call God. It is also important to note that it is that One, as Energy, who becomes our body, and it is that One, as Spirit, who becomes our soul. It is clearly evident, therefore, that we are, from head to foot, inwardly and outwardly, nothing else but God; that, in accord with His will, God encompasses within Himself an entire universe and lives within that multiformed universe *as us*. Isn't that awesome and marvelous!

* * *

33. The Two Hands of God

There are *two* different ways in which the one Creator-God manifests: (1) As the Mind, Spirit, or Soul that permeates all matter and which constitutes the limited mind, or soul, of each individual sentient being; and (2) As the producer of the light-energy that transforms into the material particles that make up the physical universe. So that, with these two aspects of Himself, He constitutes both matter and Spirit, both body and soul; thereby constituting all that exists. Though some might object philosophically to what appears to be a dualistic perspective, I would point out to those objectors that, since both the substance of the material universe and the indwelling Mind, or Spirit, both derive from one and the same supreme Being, there is, in fact, no duality, but rather an undeniable Nonduality—or, if you prefer, a Unity. That the one God manifests in these two different ways does nothing to detract from His singularity.

There is one other issue I wish to resolve: and that is whether the light-energy that the Creator produces to form the material universe is His own substance or a second substance other than Himself. I maintain that the great burst of light-energy which formed the vast universe is a projection of His own Creative Power and is therefore identical with His own essential Being. He did not borrow some other substance to make the physical cosmos; from where would He borrow it? No; He breathed forth that active light-energy from Himself. Though the universe is *not synonymous with* the supreme Consciousness, it is a projection of His inherent power and does not belong to any other category than Himself. It emanates from Him and is therefore of His Being.

Both the light-energy that transforms into the material universe and the indwelling Spirit, or Soul, derive from the same Divinity; and yet they are not the same. They are different in quality and characteristics and are distinct and obviously separable from one another. Though His Light-Energy is eternally inherent in His Divine Being, the *forms* that evolve from His light-energy are subject to entropy and dissolution. They appear for a brief time; and when those material forms cease to function as viable entities, the indwelling Spirit departs. The forms of His light-energy are therefore transient and subject to decay and dissolution; while His Creative Energy, along with the Spirit, or Soul, continues to exist eternally. It is immortal.

Now, to the question of *how* the Spirit, the Soul, the Divine Consciousness “permeates” the material world: Some ancient philosophers posited a *pneuma* that the Creator breathed into man exclusively, constituting the human soul; others suggested that the Divine Consciousness fills the entire universe as a numinous and all-pervading intelligence. Accumulated evidence—both from empirical and mystical sources—supports the latter premise. An all-pervasive consciousness may be inferred from the “fine-tuning” effects evident throughout the cosmos, though such an all-pervading Intelligence remains undetected by our technological instruments. It is witnessed directly, however, by the human mind, or soul, during what we call “mystical” experience.

During the “mystical” experience, the individual mind (or soul) is drawn into union with God, the Divine Consciousness, and perceives through and as that Divine Consciousness, seeing from the perspective of that Divine Consciousness. While seeing from God’s perspective, the all-pervasiveness of the Divine Mind is experienced and known. In such awareness, that Divine Consciousness is revealed to the soul as both the initiator of the creative act of universal manifestation *as well as* the living Spirit pervading it. Though this knowledge (*gnosis*) is not what we consider to be ‘empirical’ knowledge, it *is* experiential knowledge. It is knowledge obtained from a transcendent perspective and carries a certainty for the experiencer far above any mere temporal knowledge.

* * *

34. The Universe Exists In God

This universe, fostered by God's light, exists within Him. He is all-encompassing. When the "Great Radiance" of God's light burst forth as an expanding universe of time and space, of substance and form, where must that 'Radiance' have occurred? It had to have occurred in the Mind of God! Where else could you put a universe when there is nothing outside of that Divine Mind, when nothing exists or can exist but that all-encompassing Mind?

And so, without the need for an "infusion" of the spark of life and consciousness, this world, by virtue of its presence in the Mind of God, is naturally and effortlessly suffused with His living presence. And what we speak of as the 'soul' of individuals is simply the embodied expression of His all-encompassing conscious presence. The inclusion of the universe within the Divine Mind obviates the need for an infusion of God's presence as 'soul', since His life and consciousness are inherently the very Ground, substance, and support of the world, and constitute its very being. It is this realization that prompted St. Paul to declare, "In Him we live and move and have our being."

Some people speak of "intelligent design" in the universe, as though God were similar to a human craftsman or architect who had thought out and prepared a blueprint prior to building the universe. But a little reflection on the nature of God reveals that He is neither a maker of blueprints nor a builder. What He is is an unfathomable Intelligence, the all-pervading Mind in which the universe exists, and by whose power it operates. God does not stand apart from the universe, like a builder fashioning a building; He does not "fine-tune" the universe as an object separate from Himself; rather, the universe exists within the Mind of God, and every single speck of it is controlled and coordinated by His will.

Though we have given names to all the various forces comprising our universe, such as 'electromagnetic fields', the 'force of gravity', the 'strong' force, and the 'weak' force; all these are simply manifestations of the cohesion inherent in His Mind-born creation. We have also named the material particles mysteriously formed from His light, such as 'quarks', 'protons', and 'electrons'; but these also are simply the evidence of the scintillating effusion of His imagination. Only in these last centuries have scientific investigators come to understand just how inconceivably evanescent and indescribable these sub-microscopic particles really are.

As dream-stuff responds to our human will, the stuff of this universe, produced from Himself, responds to His will. And, since He transcends the confines of space and time, those evolutionary changes that, from our human perspective, require eons for their accomplishment, He accomplishes in an instant. Because His Consciousness is all-pervading, all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. What appears to our eyes to be random and uncaused is, in fact, the unfoldment of His Will.

Consider: If an invisible and omnipotent Mind caused the decay of one particle of uranium and left a second particle intact, would it not appear to those witnessing it that what had occurred was the random spontaneous decay of a particle? And if that same invisible and omnipotent Mind caused a gene in a strand of DNA to mutate, would it not appear to those examining that DNA that what had occurred was the random mutation of a gene? How would one be able to distinguish such a caused event from a random one? All is occurring within that one Consciousness. He has only to breathe, and a million worlds begin and end; and in this breathing, all that is contained within this universe is nourished and sustained.

This body that you regard as your own is actually His—as pebbles are the earth's, as waves are the ocean's. In accord with His purpose, the sun daily stirs the waters of your heart, and the vapor of your love flies to the four corners of the world; while at night the moon stills you, and the cold darkness is your bed. All is in accordance with His design. He is the life-pulse of every creature; and when the clanging bells of joy exult within you, it is His joy; the fire of song that inspires you is also His. Even the obscuring dust of unknowing that blinds us to His presence is brought by Him. He is in the clouds and in the gritty soil; and if you bend over a pool of clear water, you may see on the water's surface the reflection of His face.

How does He pervade every particle of this universe? He is the Mind from which the universe took birth, and the universe exists within Him. All is contained in Him. In Him, there is no I or Thou, no now or then. In Him, life and death are undifferentiated. And that transcendent deathless Self is our eternal identity. So, you see, there is nothing to vanquish, nothing to lament, and nothing on which to pride oneself. In Him, and by Him, all is accomplished in an instant.

* * *

35. All Things Move Together of One Accord

*All things move together of one accord;
Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.*

Sometimes we forget that all that exists in this world is created and controlled by God. All things do indeed move together in accord with His divine Will, and His assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. This is an unmistakable truth experienced by the mystic, but I understand that for all others, it is not at all evident, and must remain merely a matter of faith. It is so easy to be misled and to forget the infallibility of the Divine Will, because oftentimes the affairs of the world appear to our limited vision to be in error, or random, and ungoverned by His just and perfect Will. But time will prove all things right. His evolutionary plan and His vision will be vindicated in the end. Therefore, hold this faith above all: that everything is connected to His purpose, and all is ordered and occurs according to His will. Praise God!

* * *

36. Time And Eternity (2008; last revised 8-15-19)

From a purely theoretical point of view, Eternity can be a very daunting concept, one which scientists usually refrain from considering. But for those of us who have been privileged to *experience* Eternity directly, it is neither a theory nor a concept. We know, with absolute certainty, that Eternity is the underlying foundation, support, and projecting power upon which this universe of time and space exists. We know that time exists only in the universal manifestation, with a recurrent beginning and end, and that in Eternity there is no such thing as time – no past, no present, no future, no projected universe at all. For Eternity is just another name for the absolute Consciousness that is the Ground and support of the universal projection; and it is the source of the (limited) consciousness which sentient beings experience within themselves. Eternity is the upper reach of Existence, to which the mind may be drawn, if God so wills; and there, it is seen that time has no absolute existence but exists only as a byproduct of the universal

expansion of space projected upon the one eternal Mind. It is a measure, as spatial location is, of the progression of universal manifestation.

This universal manifestation is superimposed upon Eternity, as a dream is superimposed upon the consciousness of a dreamer. One could say that the temporal universe and Eternity exist in separate dimensions – as the dreamer and his dream-world exist in separate dimensions, levels, or realms of consciousness. Eternity is the highest level of Consciousness; It is experienced by a mind that is intensely and utterly focused and intent upon the Divine. It completely supplants one's limited consciousness, raising one's awareness to Its own place, and revealing one's ultimate identity with Itself. This experience of Eternity is very pleasant. It is single; perfect aloneness, blissfully content. It sends forth a new universe in every breath, while in the same alternating breath annihilating the old. It is so simple and unencumbered that it cannot be conveyed in speech. It is the ancient, unnamed God. It occupies its own place, its own dimension, quite sovereign and alone. The temporal array spewed out in each breath offers no distraction or interruption to the sweetness of Its homogeneous peace. It is its own perpetual delight and satisfaction.

The cosmos, quite a different thing, originates from Him, and dissolves in Him; and time derives from Him, though He is utterly beyond time's reach. It is as a dream, emanating from the mind of a dreamer, exists in its own place, depicting a drama, originating, then reaching a culmination, but in no way affecting the dreamer; even though each of the dream characters is, in reality, the dreamer, and once awakened, returns to the awareness of its true source and Self.

This projected universe of time and extension is nothing more than a dream. We who live within it are all none other than the one Eternal Mind, and on awaking shall once again know our blissfully eternal Self. And even now, in this temporal moment, in this spatial unfoldment of the cosmic dream superimposed upon the eternal Consciousness, we are in truth that one eternal Self, blissfully content, fully awake, in our solitary, timeless and space-less place on high. And while this imaged time marches on, begun in that first instant of cosmic appearance along with space, we momentary creatures move to its rhythms without knowing why or whence, yet happily knowing, by the Creator's grace, our everlasting Self beyond time, and singing praise and glory to His name.

* * *

37. Within His Own Mind
(last revised 8-13-19)

At the highest octave of His Consciousness,
 The One remains whole, unmoved, inactive and unmanifest;
 It is only His lower Mind that acts,
 That manifests a vast universe of forms within Himself.

Within His own Mind, He creates a universe of Light;
 And, by virtue of its presence within His knowing Mind,
 Every particle of that universe is filled with His Consciousness

And so, in harmony with His omnipresent Will,
 All things move together of one accord;
 And assent is given throughout the universe
 To even the motion of a falling grain.

Because He is the living presence within His Mind-born universe,
 He easily manifests within His creatures
 As animate life and awareness,
 And, little by little, He leads His creatures
 To self-reflection and wisdom.
 And then, when His creatures are fully prepared,
 He reveals Himself within them as their origin and indwelling self,
 Their very life and awareness;
 And He brings them to completion in the knowledge
 That they are none else but Him,
 That He alone comprises all that is.

One by one, He leads His creatures
 To this self-revealing wonder and amazement, their ultimate prize;
 And when His solitary game of hide-and-seek is complete,
 He takes a rest,
 And then He begins it all once again. What fun!

* * *

38. The Purpose of God's Creation (8-13-2017; revised 8-15-19)

The summit of divine evolution comes when God, living and experiencing *as* a human soul in a human body, awakens to the truth that all this is Himself, that He is and has always been the one all-pervading Existence. God gets to experience the joy of this revelation not once, but billions of times in countless different forms over an immense span of time and space. That, I believe, is the hidden purpose of His universal manifestation: to slowly evolve as human souls over lifetimes in utter blindness of ignorance, and then, in a time of His own choosing, to suddenly awaken each of these beings from within themselves to the greatness and beauty and joyfulness of His own limitless and unfathomable being. The thrill of enlightenment multiplied billions of times, the sudden unveiling of His perfection in billions of souls that turn out to be Himself—this is His evolutionary game. This is the answer to the question, 'Why does He do it? What is the purpose of His Creation? I believe it is for this long prepared and frequently experienced Joy! It is an awesomely involved adventure, a prolonged drama, played out on countless far-flung stages, in countless unsuspecting hearts, each one culminating in Joy—the ever-new and unimaginable Joy of the discovery of one's own unbounded Self. What an exquisitely marvelous and satisfying game He has devised—satisfying both to Him and to us, who are His images and instruments! Praise God!

* * *

39. Imagine

Imagine there's one religion, and one God who lives within everyone. Imagine that, through contemplative experience, every human being is capable of directly knowing that God who is their divine origin and eternal Self. Imagine that, in this contemplative experience, the world of time and space is transcended along with one's personal identity and is replaced in consciousness by a universal Identity that is eternal and all-pervasive. Imagine also that, in the past, some who experienced that eternal Identity, became convinced that they themselves were the Divinity incarnate—and they really were! And then imagine that everyone else is as well—even if they don't know it! Imagine that this experience of an eternal, all-inclusive

Self is possible simply because we are all made of the divine Light and our consciousness is actually synonymous with the one eternal Being. Imagine that nothing other than that one Being exists, that we are all contained within It, and are capable of knowing It in ourselves!

Imagine that this mystical experience of the one divine Self is a common factor in the lives of the founders of all the religious traditions, and that all of the religious traditions in the long history of human experience were simply independent manifestations of that one common mystical experience. Imagine that ancient Judaism, for example, founded on the mystical experience of such ancient figures as Abraham and Moses, represents an anthropomorphic theological view appropriate for the time and place of its origin, given the undeveloped psychological perception of that culture in the millennia preceding our Current Era. And imagine that Hinduism and Buddhism, which began around the same time as Judaism, but in the very different geographical setting of the subcontinent of Asia, were both also clearly based on that same contemplative mystical experience.

Imagine that Christianity and Islam, both later developments, represented the thought of individual founders who were inspired by their own spiritual experience, and whose small following then evolved over time into world-wide religious traditions. Imagine that, in the process, a few inevitable fictions were added and became integral parts of all these various religious narratives over the course of time, disguising the fact that they are all products of the mystical experience revealing the one divine Self. Imagine there's one religion, and one God who lives within everyone. Imagine that, through inner reflection and contemplation, every human being is capable of directly knowing within themselves that one God who is their divine origin and eternal Self.

* * *

40. The Maker of The Game (8-3-2015)

How is it even possible to talk about God when we have so little real knowledge about Him? We are aware that He transcends the universe as pure Spirit, or Mind, or Consciousness, and yet we are also aware that He constitutes the universe itself. He is both our inner conscious Self and the form and substance of everything that we experience. At times we are aware that He is within us, for we are able to come in contact with Him only through our conscious minds; but, upon reflection, it seems more reasonable to assume that the entire phenomenal universe, including ourselves, is contained in Him; and that our intimate conscious contact with Him is therefore a result of our integral presence *within* Him.

In our philosophy, we hold that the material universe is His creation, made of Himself in some way, perhaps as an emanated substance such as light transformed into matter. We have ascertained only recently that the latest burst of that emanated divine Light occurred around fourteen billion years ago as 'the Big Bang' or 'Great Radiance'; and we know that ever since then the material universe has been expanding. Our mystical perceptions as well as scientific reasoning leads us to believe that, eventually, this expansion will turn to contraction, and the whole thing will collapse in upon itself, only to begin once again in a similar deliberate outrushing of light turned into mass and energy.

We humans relate familiarly with the phenomenal/material world, but the world of Spirit, or the universal Mind, is much more unfamiliar and remote. The nature of the relationship between our own individual soul/mind and the transcendent Mind that is God is not at all clear. We feel that there *is* such an intimate relationship, and mystical experience suggests that each of us is integrally connected with that transcendent Mind, and, at some level, synonymous with It; but how all this is possible is not even remotely understood. To make matters more difficult, the *awareness* of His immanent presence is, for many of us, notoriously inconstant and tenuous at best.

We must believe that one day our understanding of His nature will become substantially greater, and we shall become more consciously aware of His immanent presence. At present, we must acknowledge our utter lack of true spiritual knowledge, and our nearly complete reliance on faith and the occasional 'mystical' glimpses to guide us. Either our present state is simply

a prolonged evolutionary stage of ignorance which will eventually pass in time, or it is exactly the way He intends it always to be. Presently, we do not know with certainty what is the objective of our participation in this adventure—or even whether or not there *is* a definite objective.

It may well be that our collective ignorance regarding God's purposes is a necessary requirement to assure the trust and faith on which our individual judgment and responsibility must rely. To be absolutely certain of His will and overly confident of His presence and Grace might in fact diminish our individual merit and detract from the adventure of life as He intends it. But, of course, speculating on God's purposes or motives is a very uncertain and unverifiable business. His intentions are what they are, and, despite the presence of hints occasionally granted, and the occasional glimpses of our divine Identity, we are each clearly responsible for our own judgment in this three-dimensional adventure called "life", and responsible also for the quality of our own individual relationship to the Master and Maker of the game. I feel certain, however, that, over the course of time's evolution, each of us shall eventually reach the finish line and attain lasting certainty of our eternal Identity in Him. Therefore, to all a heartfelt God bless and Godspeed!

* * *

41. God's Love

Love is born of God and may rest in nothing less than God.

For we see that all *worldly* love is but one half of an inseparable pair,
 And we recall with gladness that God's love has no contrary;
 For He is the One in whom all opposites merge,
 The One whose love never wanes.

Search this earth and through all the galaxies, you'll find
 Nothing truly worthy of love but God. For all else is lovable
 Only to the degree that it is reflective of Him.

Let not your love, therefore, settle on anything or anyone but Him.
For He alone is the source of life and joy,

The Giver of wisdom and satisfaction,
The final destination of all the heart's desires,
And the source and resting place of every wandering soul.

* * *

42. What Kind of Love Is This?

When we experience the kind of attraction to another person that we humans call “love”, we form at the same time its opposite in the form of “hatred” or “aversion”. This is because of the very nature of the human affections: for love and hate are but two sides of the same coin. Just as “north” cannot exist without “south”, just as “up” cannot exist without “down,” just as the amplitude of a wave cannot exist without its trough, neither can “attraction” or “love” exist without its opposite, “hate” or “aversion.” This is the nature of the wave-like affections that humans produce. However, there is a kind of love that is *not* subject to this polar alteration: it is the love that emanates from the divine Self in us. That love does not consist of two polar opposites; it is singular and constant, because it is all-inclusive. Not only does it have no opposite, it is impersonal and unconditional. In other words, that love does not focus on any distinct person, but rather on the divine essence of all persons, the divine and indivisible reality of which those individuals are the manifestation. Such divine love does not result from an attachment to an individual, but is all-embracing and all-inclusive, and therefore has no opposite.

We humans experience both kinds of love—one kind more than the other, depending on our individual proclivities. The polar love, born often of a merely physical or sensual attraction to a particular individual, is common in our youth. When we are young, we fall in love quite readily, and through the frequent experience of such personal infatuations, we learn how easily this kind of love fades, and how easily it reverts to its polar opposite. Eventually, as we age and the desire for such unfulfilling relationships wanes, we become more and more aware of the divine love that lives in our hearts, and which flows outward to all beings equally and unconditionally. This love is of the nature of God and raises a soul upward to its Creator. It is

a liberating love that requires nothing of its object but gives itself without demanding anything in return. It is the wholly satisfying gift of God that flows unceasingly from within us and sheds light on all whom it touches. It is this divine love that all of us are designed to experience and know within ourselves, as we evolve from the human to the divine.

* * *

43. Why We Were Born

The Jews are praising Thee, Lord;
 The Christians and Muslims are busy praising Thee as well.
 The Hindus and the Sikhs, the Platonists and the Taoists
 also sing Thy praise.
 The farmers tilling the land have no other goal but to give
 praise to Thee;

Even the men and women of science, who hope to ferret out
 Thy secrets,
 Are engaged unwittingly in praising Thee.
 For no one on this earth of Thine can find satisfaction
 In anything other than Thy praise.
 What other purpose might we have, O Lord?
 Why else were we born? Why else would we live
 But to joy in giving praise and glory to Thee?

* * *

44. How May I Praise Thee, Lord?

Though my soul yearns to flood the world with Thy praise, when I open my mouth to speak, there are no words to say. My heart leaps up to sing, but the sound is stillborn in bewildered silence. My arms lift up thousands of bouquets of multi-hued flowers to lay at Thy feet but fall helpless at the realization that these flowers already belong to Thee, are indeed Thy glory and Thy gift.

How then may I praise Thee, Lord, who art the singer, the praise, and the instigator of the desire to praise? What words are worthy to speak of Thee? What gift is not Thine own? What song is not Thy sound? O God, who dost fill my heart with the desire to praise Thee, let Thy song of love cascade from this heart, which is also Thine own, and enchant the world with its joyful melody. Let all hearts be awakened to see Thy spreading Light. Let knowledge of Thee spring up like a clear spring of water to quench the thirst of every mind and satisfy every soul with certainty and peace.

O God Thou dost praise Thy own self in the countless hearts of countless creatures fountained forth from Thy own effulgent will. If it be Thy will, let this life which Thou has imagined into being become an instrument of Thy praise, whether in song or in silence. Let Thy Love, Thy Grace, Thy boundless Joy release itself and flow through this projected form of Thine to flood the world with Thy own Light and Thy own Song to lift all souls to Thee.

* * *

45. Praise God

I'm here to sing the praise of God, and so I shall.
 And let none think belief's the basis of my song,
 Or words I've read in high-flown works;
 The subject of my song is what I've seen,
 What He's revealed to my most meager sight
 In holy quiet night's retreat.

Though many have praised His creation —
 Its beauties, and its grandeur;
 I would praise Him in His unborn formless Essence
 Where He lives unmoved, and happily serene.

Though He breathes forth the immense and tumultuous cosmos,
 Enjoying the drama of its unfolding activity,
 He remains clearly indivisible
 And perfectly unmoved within Himself,
 Continually aware that He alone exists.
 There is no other; so all's contained in Him.

Serene, yet keenly awake, He spreads
 His outflowing radiance in every direction;
 Delight, unbounded and uninterrupted,
 Permeates Him and all that He proffers.
 In one breath, He flashes forth the universal array,
 And then withdraws it all again,
 Only to breathe once more and fling the stars
 And galaxies wheeling on their rounds again.

For creatures, it's an almost endless parade
 Of eon upon eon, unfathomably deep in time's recess;
 But for him, who knows no change or movement,
 It's but a moment's breath.

And yet the greatest wonder is that every soul breathed forth
 Is but a time-wrought image of Himself;
 And each one, being His by virtue of its life in Him,
 Is capable of finding at its core that One who fashioned it to life.

As a figure in a dream awakes to know he is the dreamer,
 Each soul, when it awakes, discovers it is none but Him.
 He appears as though in a house of many mirrors,
 Fragmented into a million images, yet all are Him;
 It's but a masquerade.

And when the soul awakes to know its deathless Self,
 Beyond imagined dreams of personhood,
 It knows that forever it has lived serene and blissful,
 Just beyond the dream.

It learns that all the devilish battles and tortuous travails
 Were but a thought-parade in which, for the briefest time
 It marched, all unawares, to finally break away
 And find its way to freedom from time's tumultuous play.

To find such freedom one must look within,
 And, gaining clarity of mind, discover who one really is.
 Who one really *is* is Him! For none exists but Him alone.
 It's true! He lives alone in high eternity;

But He lives as well as you and me.

It's you and me who lives in that eternal sky
While playing out our destined roles below.
Two selves, one vigilant while tossing out the stars,
The other strutting on this stage of dreams,
Oblivious to the other, her subtler Self and Source.

The all-encompassing, all-sustaining Self of all
Is quite alone, and quite contained
Without a drama to behold,
Until He beams Himself in outward radiance
As particles and galaxies and separate living things
In bright array,
To people all these worlds with beings
Conscious of their knowing selves.
His game: to lead them all within themselves
In stage by stage to knowledge of the ways of things,
And, finally, to awareness of that deeper Self
Who flung them forth to journey home
To know the ultimate Truth that they are Him.

Awaking to that joyful knowledge,
The spell of separation falls away
Along with fear and worry, woes and cares.
And, lifted up in mind and spirit,
The knower lives in peace and joy beyond this world
Alone, eternal, as all in all.
He knows the universal design to be his own;
He walks in freedom. His soul is blest.
Praise God!

* * *

46. A Song of Praise

O God let me sing a song to Thee.
 I am just Thy foolish unworthy child, as Thou dost know;
 But I beg Thee, let me honor Thee with my song of praise.
 After all, I have no other reason for existing but to sing Thy praise.

O God Thou art so far beyond my vision that I do not know how to begin to praise Thee.
 Thou art hidden beyond this world of my daily experience,
 invisible to my eye.
 But Thou hast shown Thyself to me when I was young.
 I know Thy perfect aloneness, untouched by all that transpires here below;
 I know Thy timeless face, Thy incomparable peace.
 Dear Lord, I can only stammer and write these miserably inadequate words;
 for no words are there to speak of Thee.
 All that flows from Thee bespeaks Thy bounty; but Thou art far greater than the sparkling sky, the star-filled cosmos.
 Thou art the emptiness from which all bounty flows;
 An emptiness that contains nothing yet gives being to everything.

As winds arise from air, as waves arise from the sea, as dreams arise from the quieted mind, so does the universe arise from Thee.

Thou art the bearer of happiness, the stirrer of devotion,
 the inventor of thought, surprise, and awe.
 Thou art the redeemer of error, the mother of love;
 Thou art the beauty of a summer's day.
 O God, whatever *is* is done by Thee.

But why should I remind Thee of Thy works?
 It's Thee, above all works, that I adore.
 I, who am Thy errant child, whose soul is birthed by Thee, and who longs to return to Thy womb, am nothing else but Thine.

Displayed into this world, I am Thy own substance, Thy own imagined form. And as I'm from Thee, so to Thee shall I return.
 No longer image shall I be, but transformed into Thee,
 not something other, but Thee entire;

One glowing I, unending, perfect beauty, perfect bliss, and consciousness absolute.

None of these words, of course, come close to saying what Thou art; though I searched, I could not find words that tell Thee truly.

Down here, we have no words to describe what Thou art; and so, once more, my praise falls short.

But we both know Thy true condition; we both know Thy unspeakable place of being; and we both know it is of that I speak.

Dear Father of my life, my thought, my love, please accept my pitiful attempt to praise Thee.

Fault me not for my lack of words that tell Thee.

Only grant that I may always love Thee, till I'm once again at home with Thee.

O dear God of Gods hear my prayer! You know my heart, my heart's desire:

I long to rise above this worldly self to bathe in Thy untroubled Life.

I cannot do it, but only Thou canst bring me there to live in Thee.

O Lord, who art alone, sole Source

And Master of the world, I beg Thee draw my mind and heart to Thee; let no other love distract me.

Let no dreams or other goals detain me from my journey home to Thee.

* * *

47. Song of Thanksgiving

Hari, my love, I wish to sing to Thee a song of Thanksgiving.

Yet, O how I dread the futile search for meaningful words to offer Thee!

My heart is full of thanks and praise for each breath that is granted me,

But to speak reveals the lie of pretended two-ness that I must tell.

For Thou art my breath, my voice, the Real; and I am but the image;

I live by Thy uncommon Life, imaged in Thy dream of me.

And yet my gratitude to Thee upwells, as an image in a mirror

Might admire its own source, its real and original Face;

Or as a dream character might call out praise to its dreaming Self.

Though we are one, not two, I'll speak as though we're separate and apart;
 For how else might I truly speak to Thee?
 O Hari, Thou art alone, undiminished by the clatter and glitter
 Of a billion billion images, mere reflections in a house of mirrors;
 For Thou art alike the house, the mirrors, and the flitting images as well.
 This speaking too is like the barking of a dog in an empty field;
 For, though it may be heard, the silence of the cosmos remains unbroken.
 Yet I, this imagined form, am present—at least in appearance;
 And because I'm here, please let me speak to Thee in loving thanks.

O Hari look how wonderful is this story Thou dost tell!
 Look how beautiful is this body and the life ensouled.
 Though all too quickly it will turn to dust, this form is Thine
 And holds Thy greatness and Thy holy light and breath of life.
 Thou, this brightly glowing wakeful knowing;
 Thou, this deep and endlessly creative song of light and love
 That bubbles up from Thy unfathomable depths
 Within the soul of me to greet each day with joyful thanks.

O Hari, from Thy eternal Goodness and unknowable Repose,
 Thou hast issued forth this universe of man and beast
 With purpose known only to Thy own delight;
 And Thou hast given Thy own thoughts to guide us from within
 To bring us happily, through adventures great and small,
 To our end in Thy boundlessly blissful Self.
 O Hari, it is a most wonderful and admirable drama
 Thou hast produced, full of harrowing dilemmas,
 Frightful predicaments, and uproarious denouements!

Yet, in the end, we all awake to know one Self,
 The Dreamer of this dream, our ever-undisturbed Reality.
 Always unperturbed, Thou art forever untouched by time,
 As the patient sky is ever untouched by passing clouds;
 We are where we have always been in truth, never separated
 From our constantly unfolding, ever undivided Self;
 Where all the fervent lives o'erpassed, like dreams,
 Once left behind in waking, hastily retreat from view,
 Revealed as the flimsiest of transient illusions.

In waking, we are one in Thee, O Hari!

And in Thee, *as* Thee, we have always been.
 Never imprisoned as we thought in separate forms,
 Once reawakened from our dreams, we know our
 Ever undivided and eternal Identity as Thee.
 In blissful folds of snow-white radiant Eternity
 We rest as Thee in peaceful oneness and joy;
 But while I live in pretended separation from Thyself,
 Let me now offer my song of grateful thanks to Thee,
 Who art the Life that lives me, my secret pride and joy;
 For it is Thou who hast made Thyself as me.

Dear Father, all that Thou hast made is good,
 And all Thy beauteous forms sing praise and thanks to Thee.
 Then, let me uplift my voice in song as well
 To glorify in praise my gracious Lord:
 O Hari, all praise be to Thee in Thy heavenly glory!
 All praise be to Thee in Thy universal pageantry of form!
 My head is bowed in loving thanks and worship,
 Knowing Thou art all and more than all.
 Thy grace to me is beyond what my voice can tell;
 I can but offer thanks, with hands held high, to Thee,
 My ever kind and gracious Lord.

* * *

48. My Two I's

My present name is Swami Abhayananda, though I was given the name Stanley Ross Trout at birth. Both of these names refer to who I am as an individualized person temporarily existing in the grand illusion of time and space. But there is another 'I' that I claim as my *permanent* identity. That other *I* (what Vedantins call the *Atman* or Self) is the universal Consciousness that is the eternal foundation and support of all I's. If I refer to my temporal phenomenal self, 'I' means one thing; if I refer to my eternal Self, 'I' means something else. So, as long as *I* exist in both the eternal and the temporal realm, it appears that there are two I's. But that is only an appearance. ¹

It is only those who have become consciously aware of the eternal *I* who are able to recognize this apparent double-identity, and to distinguish between the two *I*'s. Jesus, for example, on whom the religious organization of Christianity was founded, spoke frequently from the individualized temporal identity, identifying with the personal being who was born as a Jew, and lived in the community of Nazareth; but he had known his eternal 'I', and he occasionally spoke from that universal Consciousness identity as well, such as when he said, "I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there." ²

Many of those who do not recognize the existence of two *I*'s in themselves are confused by the words uttered by Jesus. 'Well, which is he?' they ask, 'man or God?' And, of course, the answer is 'He is both!' They are the two aspects of his dual identity. The same is true of you—except that you are as yet unaware of your greater identity. When you do become aware of that greater Self, you will declare, as Jesus did, "Before Abraham was, *I* am." ³

The dual identity of Jesus as man and God was much discussed by the early Church Fathers, but they did not understand that Jesus was disclosing, not just his own personal reality, but the divine nature of all men. Though he was treated as a common preacher, Jesus was a mystic, privy to the mysteries of the divine reality, and he was revealing a metaphysical truth universally applicable to everyone.

The fact is, there are never really *two* *I*'s; every soul is a manifestation of the one universal Consciousness and has no other permanent identity. That One is the only true 'I'. But, from the time we are born into this world, we begin fashioning a false separate personal self that exists only in our minds. At birth, each of us is given a name to distinguish each of us as a unique being, with a distinct parentage. We each bear distinctive characteristics, and, in the course of time, distinctive histories, which in turn contribute to our distinctive personalities. In this way, a soul is developed over many lifetimes, giving us a strong sense of individuality and uniqueness. But the fact is that we are all manifestations of the one eternal Self, the one Consciousness, from whom and in whom all beings exist, and to whom we all owe our being.

That one Being is everyone's true Self, but in order to become aware of that universal Self, it is necessary to give some time to meditation in which you can quiet the mental urging and clamoring of your fabricated personal identity. It will help if you can focus your mind instead on a phrase or mantra that brings silence and peace to your conscious awareness. Let the breath too be calmed, and devoutly invoke the Lord of all being. When you become aware of His presence, approach Him reverently. If your heart is pure and He is favorable to you, He will merge your awareness into His own; all remnants of your limited personal being will fade away, and you will know yourself as the one illimitable Self of all.

NOTES:

1. See my article, "The Appearance of Duality," and the article, "The Story of Jesus, The Mystic", at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.
2. *Thomas, Gospel of*, 114; (trans. by Thomas O. Lambdin), from Robinson, James M., ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, E.J. Brill and Harper & Row, 1977, p. 135.
3. *John, Gospel of*, 8:58; from the New Testament of the King James Bible.

* * *

49. A Sense of Me

We know that we are grounded in and supported by God; we know
 That He is the eternal Reality underlying our very existence,
 And yet, in our minds we seem to be something other:
 We sense the existence of a 'me'—a 'me'
 Who walks this earth in multitudes with its own peculiar will.
 And even though we know that God is our own higher Self,
 Not separate from us,
 Each 'me' is filled with an innate love for Him,
 As though He were something other than our own Self.
 We long to be enfolded in His embrace, to unite our awareness
 With His far greater awareness, but we can't do it without His grace.
 And so, day and night we lament that He so seldom reveals Himself,
 Though He knows full well that our only delight
 And desire is to know Him,
 To see the light of His eternal day and merge into His all-revealing light.

But be assured: He will not always remain hidden!
 One not too distant day or night He will still your breath,
 And your mind will become absorbed in Him alone;
 And whatever this thing called 'me' is will disappear in one
 Unending conscious light, and you will know in fullest clarity
 That, all along, it was only Him, the one never-ending Light,
 Who walked this earth pretending to be a 'me.'

* * *

50. Let Me Be Thy Instrument

Teach me, Lord, to look with love upon Thee and all Thy doings; for Thy love is my only delight and my only good. Teach me, Lord, to correct my wayward mind whenever it falls from remembrance of Thy goodness and the presence of Thy omnipotent hand in all that occurs here on earth. Lift me into Thy Light, O Lord, for without Thy grace, I am but a burden on the earth. Teach me to become perfect in wisdom, perfect in knowledge, perfect in contentment, perfect in love.

Let me by Thy instrument, Lord, in spreading Thy perfect joy to Thy children in whatever measure is ordained by Thee. Father, remove from me all darkness of ignorance, and all self-serving motivations, that I may truly serve as an instrument of Thy truth and Thy grace on earth; and I shall give adoration to Thee in my heart, and sing Thy praise throughout all the days of my life.

* * *

51. The Me Between Us

When I first discovered that God was within me, and that everything in the world around me was also God, it still seemed to me that, between the God within and the God without, there was still a ‘me’ that stood in the way of my vision of unity. I felt as though I was a pitcher of water in an ocean of water: I understood that there was water within and water without, but *me*, the pitcher, was there as a separate thing preventing my awareness of God. And I prayed that God would take away this *me* that veiled His omnipresence and let me know oneness in Him.

And suddenly I was graced by God with the revelation that even this body, and even this *I*, is God’s own. It had been my owning of this *I* that prevented my realization that there is nothing anywhere but God. He creates the forms of this world, and He constitutes our awareness of this world. It is we who make the mistake of thinking that this body and this awareness of *me* separates us from God.

This perception of a *me* is a blindness within us that tends us toward self-preference; we call it the *ego*, or ‘I’. It is a blindness that is built in for self-protection, for self-preservation. But it prevents us from the vision of God’s all-encompassing presence, and it can only be healed with the help of God’s grace. He reveals through divine vision that the One constitutes both *I* and God, both past and future, both life and death; and that all things move together of one accord, coordinated in God. It is this vision that rids us of the blindness under which we so long suffered.

But beware! We may not easily be rid of this *me*, for this blindness—this ego—will continue to rise up in its attempt to corrupt your sight once again. At every corner, it awaits the opportunity to subtly reassert itself and leave you once again in darkness and confusion. Your only weapons against this enemy are silence and humility, and a constant diligence to remember the One in whom and by whom you are fashioned. Sing His name in your heart to remind you and rely on His help in your need. He will illumine your blindness, and restore you to sight, and eventually He will uplift you to wholeness in the sweetness of His eternal Light. There, no ego will threaten; there, you’ll need not struggle to remember. His peace and yours will be the same, all duality put behind.

52. The Presence of God

It is not intellect or learning that endears us to God, but the tender receptivity of our souls. The realization that we are nothing without His blessing is the sole passage into His presence; the poverty and pure longing of our heart is the only invitation He heeds.

The only knowledge He requires is the knowledge that He alone is the nectarean sweetness our heart desires; that He alone is the fulfillment of our soul's hunger and its thirst; that He alone is the source and aim of our every prayer, and that without His gracious presence there can be no happy day or hour.

How can it be that He is present every minute,
And yet to the devout lover's heart He is so painfully absent?
Alas, He is not present, nor can we taste His sweetness or see His beauty,
Unless we are truly present to Him.

* * *

53. Where Are You Now?

He did not come into the world; there was no world.
He didn't come into the space; there was no space.
He invented space and the world with a great "woosh!"
And then a roaring fountain of light that spread out
Like porridge spilt by an invisible Chef on high.
Where are you now? Do you know? Look about!

He invented time to spread out the cooking of his masterpiece.
He invented space to accommodate time.
And the fountain of His light danced into lively forms
To worship Him with love.
Do you court Him in the light? Do you fly to Him at dusk?
Do you see the scattering particles of His love forming your world?
Where are you now? Do you know? Look about!

* * *

54. No One Ever Enlightened Himself

No one ever enlightened himself,
 Though many have taken credit for the feat.
 He gave you that brief glimpse, didn't He?
 You did nothing to bring it about;
 It was all His doing, all His grace.
 And now you hold classes to teach others
 How to become enlightened. What a scam!
 In His time, unscheduled by you,
 He lit up your mind, parting the ego-veil.
 You saw—as far as He allowed you to see,
 Revealing that all is His own, all is in Him.
 He allowed you to see with His eyes,
 So you could say: "All this is me!"
 But then the old 'you' came back, and now
 You try in vain to lift your vision
 To that holy inside view.
 Reform your heart, my friend!
 There's no other way, no other key, to that door.

* * *

55. What May I Give Thee, Lord?

What may I give Thee, O my Lord, who hast given to me so greatly of
 Thyself? What, indeed, do I have to give that is not already Thine? And
 who is this upstart 'I' who speaks of serving 'Thee', whom everyone knows
 art both the server and the served?

It is this very sense of 'I', this false ego that I offer, Father, as my gift to
 Thee. For there is nothing that is not Thine own: this body, mind and
 intellect, all belong to Thee and serve Thy purposes in reflecting Thy
 Wisdom and Thy Truth. It is only this mistaken sense of 'I', this 'me and
 mine', that stands like an interlocutor before Thee, obscuring the clarity of
 Thy inherent Light and the sweetness of Thy perfect Peace.

Then let this ‘I’ be always prostrate at Thy feet in adoration, silenced in surrender, awed and voiceless in anticipation of Thy touch. And let these eyes turn ever-upward unto Thee, though blinded by Thy brilliant Light, until, transparent as a polished pane of glass, this soul becomes the pure conduit of Thy Truth, Thy Will, Thy Love, who art the only ‘I’ that truly lives.

* * *

56. Be Still And Know I Am God

Years ago, I came across a quote attributed to Meister Eckhart, and though I don’t know where among his copious writings this quote appears, or even if it is an authentic quote from the great Christian mystic, it is a sentiment that holds an important place in my own philosophy and is one that I frequently reflect upon and hold as a treasured rule. It is this: “*The very best and utmost attainment in this life is to remain still and let God act and speak in thee.*” I believe implicitly in the truth of this quote, and I try to practice it in my own conduct every single day. Many is the time it has proven its value in the course of my life.

Implicit in this saying is the notion that there is more than one identity within each person’s consciousness: one is an individual personal identity who is simply the active voice of our uncensored mind; and the other is a still, underlying identity who speaks and acts from a divine perspective—an identity whose voice, though subtle, can be ultimately trusted as that of God within us, our true Self. Our highest duty is to deliberately keep our active and uncensored mind quiet and at rest, and to allow God, our divine inner Self, to handle whatever needs to be said or done. This, of course, is not an easy accomplishment. It requires, first of all, a self-directed mindfulness that holds in check the impulse to speak or act on one’s own without benefit of divine inspiration. We need also an unflinching trust that divine inspiration will come, if only we refrain from taking matters into our own hands when divine inspiration appears to be absent.

The “still, small voice” of that divine Self exists in everyone. It is heard and discerned only when we have resisted and put to rest our own scattered mental impulses, so that His voice alone may be heard. God wants to work in and through all of us, but He can do so only when we ourselves are silent

and obedient to His will and His abiding wisdom. And when it comes time to withdraw into ourselves in order to meditate or pray, we find these same two identities that constitute our active inner life, and our task remains the same: Silence that clamoring mental self by focusing on your true identity, your divine Self. The one making all the noise pretends to be you; but you are really the silent one, the one who knows without words the truth of who you really are. Abide in that everlasting Self.

* * *

57. Trust In God

God is not only the Creator and Governor of His universe, He is the Foundation of existence, being both the conscious Ground as well as the substance of the entire universe, and so He comprises both our mind and our body, and all else that exists. All is contained in Him and partakes of Him; nothing has existence other than in Him. This being so, why do we ask ‘How is it possible for us to connect to God? How may we experience His presence?’ This question is like that of a wave on the ocean asking how it may connect to the ocean; or how it might experience the Ocean’s presence. As a wave is contained in the ocean, we are contained in God, and therefore we need only become awakened to know His presence both within and without. What more is there to be said?

Be still and know the One who is, the One who lives as you. Trust in Him. Every moment, He is watching over us all. Though turmoil and anxiety fill many hearts, and fear and distrust is rampant in the world of men, trust in His inscrutable will; He will unfailingly bring us to the wellspring of His love and the refuge of His eternal peace.

* * *

58. Let All Voices Be Silenced

Let all voices be silenced, and do Thou only, Lord, speak to me in my soul. Let all the clamor of thoughts, stirred up in my restless mind, be stilled; and let my anxious heart find rest in surrender at Thy feet.

Do with me, Lord, as it pleases Thee to do, and let no care for my own well-being arise to trouble my heart; for Thy wisdom and Thy love shall always suffice to guide me day by day.

Dear God, bestower of Grace, lift up my mind to Thee—above all worldly thoughts and concerns, above all reservations and doubts, and let my heart pour forth loving praise in showers of golden song to Thee. Thy Will has always led me in times past through all my troubles, and why should I turn now to my own devices?

Let Thy joy fill my heart and my soul, and lift me, Lord, on wings of longing, buoyed by the breeze of Thy Grace, into Thy perfect stillness, into Thy fatherly embrace.

* * *

59. Let Me Sit Quietly In Thy Presence.

O my Lord, Father of the universe! Let me put aside all thoughts and concerns, all activities of the body or mind, and let me sit silently in Thy presence. Let my mind be stilled in adoration and let all voices within me be stilled. Thy language of intimacy is silence, for my soul most nearly approaches Thy state when it is silent. O Father conform my mind to Thy peace. Still me in Thy calming glance. Rest me in Thy cradling wings. Dissolve me in Thyself.

How wonderful, Lord, is Thy stillness! In quietude, I know fulfillment. In nothingness, I know release. How good Thou art, O God of gods, to rest me in Thy peace, to grant me from within this taste of Thee, of Thy bliss. What a great wonder it is that I can find Thee and touch Thee and enjoy Thee when I am empty and still! How happy this, Thy silent, laughing Self!

* * *

60. My Love Affair

I have enjoyed a life-long love affair with God. Though He is always within me and I am always within Him, I pretend to be separate from Him in order to carry on this relationship. One day soon I shall shed this separateness and shall once again live everywhere as all-pervading Spirit; but, for now, I'm confined to operating exclusively in conjunction with this tired aging body and brain. I know that it is He who gives me life and thought and movement, and that without Him no I exists. And so, when at last He leaves this body, it is I who shall leave it as well; it is I who shall shed these bodily limitations, and the happy culmination of our love affair will result in the dissolution of our pretended relationship. Then, I and Thou shall melt into one inclusive awareness and no longer exist as two separate identities.

'Thou' art my beloved, my father, my master, my larger self. Within me, Thou art the voice of both the seeker and the sought. Yet neither I nor Thou is ultimately real; only the one awareness into which these two imaginations must eventually dissolve is ultimately real. And yet, dear Father, how mysterious is this grand illusion in which an imaginary I seeks an imaginary Thou! How amazing is this love affair with all its yearning and desire that takes place wholly within one undivided awareness! Do you create this imaginary division within yourself only to enjoy the exciting drama of a loving relationship? Or does your only satisfaction come from bringing this imaginary I and Thou together at last in joyful union?

Help me to know Thy purposes, dear Father, and whatever is Thy will, may it bring Thee all possible joy and satisfaction. Let my will be the same as Thine, for Thy will alone is truly unfailing. I am grateful, dear Father, for all Thy many gifts and blessings throughout these many years, and I pray that all my errors and failures may eventually be corrected, and that I will at last be made whole and perfect in Thee. Till this earthly illusion of separation is fully cast away and I know once again our inseparable unity, I remain Thy child, Thy lover, Thy servant.

* * *

61. My Foundation

There is an ‘I’ at a deep level in this apparent ‘me’ that surfaces in its own time and produces creations that are beyond the power of this apparent ‘me’ to produce. That ‘I’ is divine and eternal and graces ‘me’ with Its presence in moments of its own choosing and has the ability to reveal a reality more true and more clear than this apparent ‘me’ can even imagine. It is this deeper ‘I’ that is referred to by some as the inner soul or *atman*, the Divine, or the Christ within. That ‘I’ cannot be known unless He makes Himself known, but His influence may be recognized by His fruits.

Therefore, let it be known and understood by all who read the words I have posted here that whatever truth or clarity may be found herein is not of my own making, but is given by that divine Self as a favor to this supplicant soul for its eagerness to serve. No praise is due this eager soul, this apparent ‘me’, but all praise is due to that divine and eternal ‘I’ who has treated me so generously in allowing ‘me’ to be included among Its humble servants.

That one Self, eternal and undivided, does not truly consist of two beings: a Master and servant, an ‘I’ and a ‘me’; rather It is an indivisible Spirit—appearing as an individualized form in this manifest world as ‘me’, but operating *within* ‘me’—as eternal Soul, a universal ‘I’. At times I address that Spirit as “Thou”, but He is my ground, my foundation, not separate, but surrounding and encompassing ‘me’. We are one, though, while the body persists, along with this *ego*, it seems that we are two.

* * *

62. Self-Reliance

For spiritual aspirants, there is a great deal to be said for living in a focused spiritual environment such as a monastery, ashram, or temple; but oftentimes a life so lived is at the cost of one’s intellectual and moral freedom, and this is detrimental. To limit oneself to a specific tradition, with determined hierarchies and specific unquestionable narratives, is always detrimental to the freedom of thought. And if that tradition demands an unswerving devotion, not to the divinity within you, but to the words and divine authority of some book or historical person, so much more is the limitation and the detriment.

Of course, living unprotected in the world is dangerous also. There are many temptations to avoid, and the peace required for meditation and contemplation is hard to find. Also, the absence of the companionship of like-minded souls makes for a lonely existence. But, it seems to me, that despite the loneliness and the hardship, an earnest soul has the strength, courage and inner resources to forge a spiritual life in the world. She finds companionship in the presence of God and knows the added advantage of living free of confining restrictions to her intellectual and moral freedom.

I am a great believer in freedom, and therefore recommend to all spiritual aspirants the path of independence, non-affiliation, and self-rule, which allows freedom to evolve. Even if conforming to the herd appeals to your desire for belonging to a community or for the possible attainment of some measure of authority; resist it; be your own master—even if it means you must deal with some loneliness and struggle. The greatest attainment is freedom—the freedom to give your heart entirely to God within you, and to think and act in accord with the dictates of your own divine Self. At the end of a long and productive life, nothing will savor so sweetly to you as the satisfaction of being and having been wholly true to your Self.

* * *

63. The Way of God

It is a great marvel to me that, despite the fact that we are all the embodiments of the Divine, of God Himself, the most predominant trait of all human beings is that they so hatefully despise each other, and constantly criticize and seek to harm one another. Equally astounding is the fact that each person thinks that everyone but themselves is suffering from this disease, and that they themselves are immune to it. But this is your malady and mine! This is your sickness and mine. We can blame it on the ego that afflicts us—but no one can defeat that ego but ourselves; no one but you, and you, and you, and me.

We are the embodiment of God's unflagging and undivided love! Why then don't we enforce our minds to think and act accordingly? Unfortunately, we have seen too many examples of evil, of tyranny, or inhuman cruelty in this world that, but for the critical perspective of a few, would have gone unbridled and unchecked. We have learned, therefore, to look with a critical

eye at the activities of others, but we do so at the expense of our broader vision of a divine world. We are all seeking to know the truth, and we are all—even the holiest among us—capable of making mistakes, capable of blindness and error. And each of us is worthy of tolerance and forgiveness. This is the way of God, who contains and embraces all His children—those lost or otherwise. And it is an example we do well to follow.

* * *

64. How The Enlightened Man Lives

How does the enlightened man live? He lives free of concern for himself, for he lives only to serve. As he views all the world as his own self, he acts always for the good of all. He is relaxed, asking for nothing; he relies on the universal order, trusting entirely in the perfect benevolence of the One. He is friendly to everyone, knowing all are struggling in the face of death. He gives, unconcerned with receiving, for the One he serves fills his heart with joy, and that is all the reward he needs.

He is wise, but he appears to be a fool. He appears to be poor, but he is the wealthiest of men. He lives and acts in the world like everyone else, finding enjoyment in pleasures, like everyone else. But, to him, it is all a game, quickly put aside. He does not follow the broad pathways of men, but he keeps to his own quiet ways. His is a life of peace, hidden and calm, though he accomplishes a thousand marvelous deeds. He seeks no glory or honor, and so is ignored by the world. He is a roaring fire, shedding light for generations, warming hearts both living and unborn; yet, in his own heart, he never strays from the sweet tranquility of his eternal home.

* * *

65. If I Told You

Many of us have experienced the interior revelation of the divine nature of ourselves and of all reality. We have announced throughout the centuries that this experience is real and profoundly meaningful. But these announcements have meant little or nothing to those of you who have not experienced this revelation. If I told you that you are the one source and divine Self of this universe and all beings in it, what knowledge would you have gained? You would have gained nothing, and you would be no wiser than before. Words cannot reveal the truth to you; Self-knowledge is not made of words. You will know the truth when it is revealed within you, when the Self reveals Itself, and not before. All my words can do is encourage you to look, to search, to examine who you are at your subtlest core. If the truth is to be found, it will be found in quietude at the highest reaches of your heart and soul. When you have received the blessing of God, then you will know the truth of who you are. Then alone will you know the truth of who you are.

* * *

66. The Nondual Truth In A Nutshell (last revised 8-14-19)

When I was a young man, I was graced with a mystical experience, a divine vision,¹ that revealed to me that I was not truly the unique individual person I thought myself to be, but was in fact a manifestation of an all-pervasive continuum of Consciousness, that I was made of that Consciousness, and was nothing else but that Consciousness. And yet, how could this be explained? Over the years that followed, I endeavored to formulate in words a metaphysical context that would provide a rational explanation for that mystical experience, an explanation which would also conform to current empirical data. Here, in a nutshell, is what I have determined to be the metaphysical context of that experience:

First of all, the one conscious Continuum, the reality that I experienced in that mystical revelation, is the one indivisible, formless and all-pervasive Consciousness-Bliss who alone exists, and whom we usually refer to as 'God.' That Consciousness-Bliss possesses a Power of Creation, by which

He is able to fashion an entire universe of imaginary forms within Himself. With that Power, He periodically breathes forth an intensely powerful current of high-frequency Light which, as it expands, converts itself into mass-bearing ‘particles.’ And those particles combine to become atoms and molecules, which in turn combine to compose the various objects of the manifested universe.²

That Power of Creation—the Light-Energy that constitutes all the universal forms—is inherent in the one Consciousness-Bliss, and so it is also eternal; but the forms of the various objects composed of that Light-Energy are transient and temporary, subject to change, entropy and decay. Thus, all the imaginary forms of this created universe are constantly changing and evolving, while the Light-Energy of which they are formed—the Power of Creation— exists eternally in the one Consciousness-Bliss.

The most recent burst of divine Light, called by some “the Big Bang,” occurred fourteen billion years prior to our present time; and over the immense expanse of time that has passed since then, the expanding converted ‘particles’ of Light, having transformed into ‘material’ particles, have congregated to form the many stars and planets spread throughout the universe. On at least one of those planets, the one Consciousness-Bliss manifests His own conscious Life in various creatures, and those living creatures evolve into many different forms and species, including humans. Like their eternal Source, these evolved living creatures also possess the power of creation, having the power to create an imaginary subjective world within themselves that they may then manifest in the objective world.

All of this dynamic multiplicity takes place in the universal Creation that results from the expansion of the Creative Power of the all-pervasive Consciousness-Bliss. Before the divine Creation, there is only the one Consciousness-Bliss; and after the Creation expands and evolves from the divine Light with the passage of time, there is still only the one Consciousness-Bliss, as all the universal forms created in His imagination are contained in Him. And because the universe is within Him, all the universal forms are alive with His own Consciousness.

This is *why*, when a living creature on one of the planets in this universe enquires within as to its true and lasting identity, even though that creature may have acquired individual characteristics and the belief that it possesses an individual identity of its own, it discovers, by the gracious revelation of the One, that it is in fact comprised solely of the Creative Energy and that it

is created and animated by the one Consciousness-Bliss. Just as a wave on the ocean might realize that it is not separate from the ocean, but is, in fact, nothing but ocean, that living creature realizes that its separate identity is illusory, and that it is, truly, nothing else but the one eternal Consciousness-Bliss whose imagination all this is.

When this divine truth is revealed in you, you will know that only One exists, and that *you are* that One who alone exists and who will continue to exist even when all these individuals and all these worlds have vanished and are no more. This is the nondual truth that has been revealed to me and to all those others throughout time who have been graced with divine vision.

NOTE:

1. The account of that Divine vision may be found in the Article, “My Mystical Experience” at www.themysticsvision.com.
2. For a more complete explanation of the manifestation of the universe from the Divine Light, see my Article, “How God Made The World.”

* * *

67. We Who Have Been Blessed
(last revised 7-14-19)

If we reason clearly and correctly, we must come to the acknowledgment of our utter dependence on God’s blessings. We have no power, no intelligence, no sweetness, and no illumination of our own; all that we know as ours is in fact the gracious gift of God. For that reason, we cannot claim to have earned spiritual wisdom or vision by some worthiness of our own making. Whatever comes to us does so of His power and His grace. And so, though I would gladly offer instruction and advice in the endeavor to assist others in joining their soul to God, I am too clearly cognizant of the fact that He alone can bring each soul to His embrace; and that He alone, whose Light illumines all, can peel away the blinders of the illusory ego, and show Himself as the true and everlasting Self of all.

So, what am I to say to those who ask the way to God? ‘Follow the noblest that’s in you; that will lead you home to Him. Revere silence, solitude, reflection, and deep thought. Read the lives and words of those who found their way to His door, and thus purify your heart. Above all, converse with Him; He’ll guide you from within and lead you every inch of the way.

Rejoice often in His great love in looking after you and all good souls. He is the inner life, the inner heart, of you; and He seeks only what is your highest joy and light. Turn your face to Him, your mind to Him, your heart to Him; and nothing else at all needs to be done. When it is your time to know your eternal identity, the whole universe, including the stars in the heavens, will conspire to bring about your awakening. Do not fear; no one will be forgotten or left behind.’

* * *

68. Wake Up! (12-26-19)

We all recognize that we each have a purpose peculiar to our own self-development that is designed and decreed by God. But we must recognize also that we have a *common* underlying long-term spiritual purpose in knowing and giving expression to the Divine within us, to the one eternal Self whose manifestations we are. To know that Divine Self, we must seek God within ourselves; and if we are fortunate, we will experience an enlightenment, a mystical dawning within our souls, that will reveal to us our own divinity, our own eternal Self.

No one really knows what “enlightenment” is until it happens to them. But be assured that it is not just a myth; enlightenment is real. In some cultures, it is described as “union with God,” “the Divine Marriage”, “Self-Realization”, or any number of other names. But it is the ultimate Goal and Purpose of all man’s endeavors on this earth and always has been. Today, however, in these dark times, we are bombarded with the message that our happiness depends upon owning a “smart phone,” that the highest goal and purpose of every young person is to become an athlete, a professional player of basketball or football, to earn a huge salary and achieve fame and renown. This is the “dumbing down” of our civilization; this is the repudiation of our culture, the surrender to the ideals of idiots, to the government of imbeciles. And *if* I thought that anyone was listening, I would shout, “Wake up, my brothers and sisters! Wake up! Remember who you are and reclaim your Divinity!”

Those who *have* directly experienced a profound realization of the Divine are often found to be associated with one specific religious tradition of another. There have been Self-realized, or enlightened, saints among the Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike. It seems nearly impossible to find a true mystic who is not affiliated with one or another religious tradition—a fact no doubt attributable to the strongly-felt influence of sectarian religion in the education of children in nearly every regional populace.

As for myself, I have no such affiliation. I have been deeply influenced by the devotion of the Christian, Thomas á Kempis, by the nondual philosophy of the Upanishads and Shankaracharya, by the poetry of Sufis such as Rumi, and by the Neoplatonist vision of Plotinus; but I do not consider myself to be a member or affiliate of any of these traditions. In fact, I am of the opinion that we would all be much better served if we could just boil them all together in a large pot and skim off all the long-accrued, habitual and separative elements, such as the personification of God as Jesus in the Christian tradition; the mythology of legendary patriarchs and the divinely appointed nationalism of the Jewish tradition; the sectarian allegiance to the ancient relatives of ‘the Prophet’ in the Islamic tradition; the fanciful gods of the Hindu tradition; and other such sectarian nonsense. Once we skimmed off all these impurities, we would be left with a purer brew from which all could happily drink.

What would be left would be a simple and straightforward love of God, a love directed solely to Him, both in His transcendence and in His immanence. It would be a devotion requiring no formal or ritualized activities, one which relied on no ancient revered texts, but one which pointed all souls toward direct personal contact with the Beloved and an allegiance to Him in every thought, word, and deed. Such a ‘pure’ religion would be universal, uniting all mankind in a common creed in which hatred and murderous violence would be disallowed under any circumstance. Jesus, the Buddha, Muhammed and Abraham would be honored as distinguished members of a holy brotherhood, and God would be re-established as the sole rightful object of our worship. Every variety of worship and praise of God would be encouraged with no limit to their expression. The real meaning of the word, ‘religion’, which signifies the uniting of the soul with God, would be supremely honored in the hearts and minds of all.

Of course, this ideal is not possible of attainment today, but it is the goal, and one day it shall be realized.

When this goal is achieved, the widespread recognition that mystical experience is the fountainhead of all religion will constitute one of the most significant historical revolutions of our time. It will be comparable to the Copernican revolution that so overwhelmingly transformed the intellectual comprehension of our place in the cosmos. Likewise, the Mystical Revolution will utterly transform our understanding of who we are spiritually and redefine our spiritual path. It is a revolution that has already begun silently amongst the most thoughtful and knowledgeable of us and which in time will expand to illumine the minds of every man, woman and child. It will be a revolution founded in divine revelation and yet which is free of religious superstition, a revolution based upon the common spiritual experience of the most gifted illuminati among us.

* * *

69. Now, While There's Still Time (last revised 7-14-19)

Now, while there's still time, call on God with a yearning heart!
 How swiftly passes this busy life of occupations and obligations.
 Too soon the day is lost to inconsequential chores;
 Too soon the months, the years, are lost
 To scattered aims and fruitless schemes.
 Suddenly we awake one morning, and we're old and feeble,
 Unable to make any effort at all.
 And who knows when the end will come?
 You may be certain it will come one day —
 Perhaps without warning, unannounced,
 Perhaps while you walk, or sleep, or play;
 Or in between the syllables of a word you start to say.
 And when it comes, will your heart leap up and cry,
 "O glorious day!"?
 Or will you beg for just a little time to set things right—
 The way you'd always hoped they'd be?

O friend make now your heart to be as you would have it then.
O now, my friend, while there's still time,
Call on God with a yearning heart!
Lead your soul to Him who is your true and everlasting home.
He is your joy unlimited, your boundless satisfaction;
Your Lord, your Goal, your Life, your Self.

* * *

4. THE QUESTION OF DESTINY

by Swami Abhayananda

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Destiny is the idea that the future of one's life is pre-determined and inevitable. It is an idea that is debatable, but unfortunately unprovable, since that destined future would have to reside solely in the Mind of God. But while destiny cannot be conclusively proven to exist, I would like to offer my own evidence for the acceptance of its existence:

*The following passages are excerpted from my book, **The Supreme Self:***

The Celestial Dynamics of Grace

Nearly ten years had passed since my experience of enlightenment in the Santa Cruz mountains, when I began to be interested in the peculiar claims of astrology and came to have an understanding of the "celestial dynamics," not only of my own personal characteristics, but of all the ordinary and extraordinary day-to-day transient conditions of the mind, the body, and the soul. There were, no doubt, some "celestial influences" accompanying that dawning interest in astrological correspondences, but all I knew was that I had become fascinated with the clearly meaningful connections between my own natal planetary positions and my personal characteristics and fluctuating mental states; and as I eagerly consumed what literature I found on the subject, I became more and more convinced of the validity of the astrological principle of correspondence between the planetary positions and the varying conditions of my psyche.

According to the principles of astrology, one can discover the secrets of a soul's unique characteristics (the psychology of a personality) by drawing a map of the heavens as it appeared at the exact moment and place of birth, which serves as a sort of blueprint of that particular soul. But how, when,

and in what sequence the events of the person's adventure on earth will take place is told in the *progressions* of the planets (one day in the ephemeris represents one year in the life), and by the daily *transits* (actual transitory positions) of the Sun, moon and planets as they pass through and relate to the natal map.

All of the planets move (transit) through the twelve signs of the zodiac which comprise the 360° of the ecliptic; some slowly, some more rapidly. The Sun moves approximately one degree per day, and the moon one degree approximately every two hours. The outer planets take weeks or months to move through a degree. But always the overall architecture of this "atom" which we call the solar system is altering its design moment by moment. And we, who are within the confines of this "atom" are continually experiencing the changes in our own energy-patterns according to, and corresponding with, the changes in the angles from which the various planets and stars relate to us.

This implies, of course, that *everything* that happens to us in our lives will be accompanied by a planetary arrangement [that was set in the heavens since the instant of Creation], which, in its relationship to the positions of the planets at the moment of our birth, will symbolize that event. One day, it occurred to me that, if these principles were true, there would have to have been a configuration in the progressed and transiting positions of the planets on the night of my "mystical experience" that was significantly extraordinary. In other words, that Divine experience which we refer to as "*grace*" must also have been signified in the planetary patterns in effect for me on that very night.

This was a mind-boggling concept that was to stand many of my most cherished presumptions on their heads. In order to explain why this should be so, let me take a moment to describe some of those presumptions regarding that mysterious thing called "grace," which is, from the standpoint of its recipient, a new and radical change in consciousness, and, subsequently, in the personality, which arises seemingly from out of nowhere:

From the moment my soul first awakened with "spiritual" understanding, and the love and desire for God first entered my heart, I had attributed that awakening to God's grace. And there was no question in my mind that my later, "mystical," experience was the gift of grace, for there was absolutely no denying the fact that this experience had been *given* to me. I had not

earned it; I had practiced no technique, no method; by no means could I be said to have produced it. There was no other word to describe this gift other than “grace.”

Traditionally, grace—the grace of God—was thought of as the freely-given intercession of God to a humbled soul, lifting it momentarily to mergence in the universal Consciousness. In this experience, the false, but insistent, illusion of a separate soul-identity, or ego, is dissolved, and the Divine Intelligence, which is the infinite and eternal Self of all, is revealed. How could the illusory, individual self, imagine that it had accomplished this feat? Let those who think they can accomplish it do so. When the Self is realized, that separate self is no longer even there! The eternal Self appears only at its demise. And it has not the ability to slay itself; it is only the divine revelation of God that, in an instant, dissolves that tenacious illusory ego. It is grace.

Listen to what that enlightened 15th-century monk, Thomas á Kempis, had to say about grace:

When spiritual comfort is sent to you of God, take it meekly and give thanks humbly for it. But know for certain that it is of the great goodness of God that it is sent to you, and not of your deserving. And see that you are not lifted up therefore unto pride, nor that you joy much thereof, nor presume vainly therein, but rather that you be the more meek for so noble a gift, and the more watchful and fearful in all your works; for that time will pass away, and the time of temptation will shortly follow after. When comfort is withdrawn, despair not therefore, but meekly and patiently await the visitation of God, for He is able and of sufficient power to give you more grace and more spiritual comfort than you had first. Such alteration of grace is no new thing, and no strange thing to those who have had experience in the way of God; for in all great saints and in all lovers of God similar alteration has often been found.

... If almighty God has done thus with holy saints, it is not for us, weak and feeble persons, to despair, though we sometimes have fervor of spirit, and are sometimes left cold and void of devotion. *The Spirit comes and goes according to His pleasure* and therefore Job said: “Lord, Thou graciously visitest Thy lover in the morning, that is to say, in the time of comfort; and

suddenly Thou provest him in withdrawing such comforts from him.”

...He who knows the comforts that come through the gift of grace and knows also how sharp and painful the absencing of grace is, shall not dare think that any goodness comes of himself; but he shall openly confess that of himself he is very poor and naked of all virtue. ¹

What Thomas said conformed to my own experience. The fervor of devotion was not always the same; it came and went, apparently according to its own pleasure. Likewise, the clarity of understanding was sometimes absent, and at other times inspiration seemed to flood my mind with the wisdom of God. One day I might be filled with love and fervor; another day I might be dry or lethargic, or physically energetic, or contemplative. One day I might be bubbling with creative energy; another day I would be dry as a bone. There was no telling what kind of inner state each day would bring.

The experience of union, or Unity, had come to me only once. Why on that day, at that time? I could only explain it, as Thomas á Kempis did, as God’s inexplicable grace. But now I was beginning to understand something of the celestial dynamics of grace, i.e., the principles of astrological correspondence. And so, I drew up a chart for that night of November 18, 1966.

What a revelation it was when I beheld that chart! The correspondence was undeniable. Here before my eyes was clear and unequivocal proof of the “science” of astral correspondences. Any impartial astrologer viewing the progressions and transits to my natal chart which occurred on that evening would have to acknowledge that this was indeed a night of destiny, an undeniably magical night of mystical vision, a once-in-a-lifetime night of incredible potential for the meeting with God. The extraordinary emphasis on the planetary position of Neptune (known as the planet of mystical experience) at that particular time is eloquently conclusive.

If—as many people think—there is really no correlation between the planets and the human psyche, then what an extraordinarily grand coincidence it was, what a marvelous accident of nature, that at the same moment that I was experiencing the Godhead, the planets were proclaiming it in the heavens! I think any reasonable person with even a little astrological acumen, on viewing the “influences” in effect for me that night, would have to

acknowledge that the significant planetary picture at the time of my “enlightenment experience” does, in fact, seem to provide evidence of the validity of the contents of that experience, confirming that all things do indeed “move together of one accord,” that nothing happens that is not ordained to happen, that the universe is one coordinated Whole. (*The Astrological conditions existing at the time of my “Enlightenment,” appear in the Appendix that follows.*)

But, along with the excitement of discovery and validation which I felt on viewing this chart, there was a nagging question that left me baffled and confused: If this “mystical experience” was described in the heavens since the beginning of time, and therefore entirely predestined, where was “grace”? Where was the freely given gift of God that I had experienced as occurring at just that moment? If everything was strictly predetermined, where was grace and free will and the possibility of spiritual endeavor?

Where was choice or merit or virtue? Where was blame or culpability? And where was the hope or possibility of “spiritual experience” for those in who’s astrological forecast the prerequisite planetary conditions were *not* present? If God’s universe is merely the mechanistic unfolding of an undeviating script, then are we all merely mechanical pawns, and our trials and triumphs, our perseverings and defeats, merely dramatic plot-twists in a story that’s already written, typeset and published?

It is important to emphasize at this time that the planets, in themselves, do not have the power to *cause* either good or ill-fortune, though many (including myself) habitually speak of “planetary influences” as though they were *independent causes* determining our fate. In ancient times, of course, as planetary configurations were seen to correspond to definite kinds of psychological and behavioral effects, the naive supposed that planets were therefore independent forces, responsible for the destiny of man. Each planet was fitted out with its own individual personality and was assumed to have independent power to affect events on earth. This was the basis for the myths of the “gods.”

The great Roman mystic, Plotinus, writing in the 3rd century C.E. on the subject of *Are The Stars Causes?* noted that a belief in the independent power of the planets is “tenable only by minds ignorant of the [true] nature of a Universe which has a ruling Principle and a First Cause operative downward through every member.”² He explained:

Each [planetary] entity takes its origin from one Principle and, therefore, while executing its own function, works in with every other member of that All. ... And there is nothing undesigned, nothing of chance, in all the process: all is one scheme of differentiation, starting from the First Cause and working itself out in a continuous progression of effects.³

This perfectly unfolding progression of effects from the one all-ruling Cause is clearly seen by all who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is that “vision” which is the experiential basis for the assertion that “all things move together of one accord”; that “assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” Still, the question of *how* the transiting “planetary influences” operate, i.e., by what process Neptune or any other planet transmits to individual souls its effects, is a legitimate one. And the matter of how *progressions* operate (which are not even present-time events, but “symbols” of planetary events already past) is even more perplexing. These questions cannot be answered by present-day knowledge, but many astrologers guess that something like the following is the case:

As the planets of the solar system change their angles to one another and thus rearrange the structural design of the entire system and its relationship to the design at one’s nativity, there is a corresponding change in the pattern of conscious energy (*Shakti*) which makes up our psychic and phenomenal reality. The energy-pattern (produced by the angular positions of the Sun, Moon and planets), which exists at the time of an individual’s birth, corresponds to the conscious energy-pattern, or aggregation of qualities, of that individual soul. And the subsequent alterations of the planetary positions after that moment spell out in decipherable terms his or her destiny.

It seems to me, however, that the search for a *cause-effect* relationship between the transits and progressions of planets and the lives of individual souls on earth is indicative of humanity’s long-standing mistaken view of reality. Plotinus saw in the 2nd century what is true eternally—that there is *one* Cause, and all else is Its effects. The planets do not focus beneficent or malevolent rays or forces in our direction; they do not put forth any fields of influence that impinge on us at all. In short, they are not *causes* at all, but merely *signs* of the activity of the one Cause, which is God, revealed to those who can read them.

I believe it is very important to understand that, although the planets *signal* psychic and physical events experienced on earth, they are not themselves responsible; they are not the *cause* but are only coincident effects synchronous with the effects perceived upon earthly life. In short, the “influences” of the planets are really the influences of the unbroken Whole, manifesting locally as specific patterns of relationships. The planets do not determine our fate; they merely reveal it. Our lives are determined by the One in whom the planets move. This is a view consistent with the view of Plotinus, and I believe it will be consistent with the enlightened understanding of the future.

The evolution of the soul occurs over many lifetimes, with its summit being the full openness to self-surrender in the Love of God, and the subsequent realization of its supreme Identity. And because the evolution of the universe reflects the evolution of each soul, the stellar and planetary positions, which signal that soul’s enlightenment, will coincide perfectly with that moment in the soul’s evolutionary summit. And the question of whether it is the soul’s evolutionary struggle or the planetary alignments, which brings about enlightenment must be answered, “Neither.” They are coordinated events in the unfolding of God’s cosmic drama; both events are simultaneous effects of the one Cause, occurring in Himself in the ordered unfoldment of His will. All is one coordinated whole, and all that occurs within it is a manifestation of His grace.

The complexity of such a universe—a universe in which the destiny of each succeeding manifestation of a soul on earth is in synchronization with the ongoing motions of planetary bodies—is indeed beyond our present ability to conceive or visualize. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that it is impossible to separate the birth of any individual from the cosmic conditions in which it occurs. For the universe is an integral Whole, and every event in it is in interlocking agreement with every other; not even the tiniest, most seemingly insignificant, event may be considered as an isolated phenomenon.

Within this Whole, where “all things move together of one accord,” the division of small-scale events into categories of *cause* and *effect* is imaginary and has no real meaning. For it is the Lord, God, *Shiva*, Self—call Him what you will—who, by means of His Power of Will (*Shakti*), is the sole Cause of the entire manifested array of the cosmos and therefore of every single event which takes place within it. This truth is seen clearly and unmistakably in the unitive experience of the mystic.

FREEDOM OR DETERMINISM?

This startling empirical evidence of an astrological correspondence to the experience of enlightenment leads us to some unavoidable conclusions: It appears evident that enlightenment, the vision of God—whatever we may wish to call it—is a fated and determined event. This is a staggering thought! “Well,” you may ask, “Can grace be a predetermined event? Is enlightenment merely a matter of fate?” These questions are not easy to answer, but I will try: From our limited viewpoint in time, the experience of unity appears to be a product of instantaneous grace. But *time*, from the viewpoint of eternal Being, is another thing altogether. To It, the entire universal cycle, from “Big Bang” to final implosion, is but the blinking of an eye, the rising and falling of a breath; and the universe, including all our experiences within it, evolves according to the undeviating law of causal progression. All things do indeed move together of one accord; and there is no event, however subtle, that is not determined from the first by God, who is the ultimate Cause.

Frequently it happens that those who commit themselves to a life of devotion and service to God do so at a time when they are newly awakened by grace. That amazing grace is experienced as a suddenly growing intensity of their experience of the Divine presence in their lives and a fervent clarity of their inner vision. No doubt some heavenly body (or bodies) is beginning at that time to enter into a significant relationship with Neptune’s place in the pattern of planetary positions existent at their birth. Perhaps, at the moment that body (or bodies) culminates its relationship to Neptune’s natal position, they will have a profound experience of the One as their own eternal Self.

Then, as time passes, those who once thrilled to the touch of God’s invisible hand and peered into the infinite peace and wonder of God’s eternal Self no longer feel the nearness of His presence nor any longer see with the same clarity. It may be that they will come to feel that God has abandoned them, or that perhaps they have gone astray and are being punished for their infidelity. No doubt, they will long for those earlier days when their thoughts never strayed from His praise and their hearts were never without the fullness of Divine love, when they were consumed with selfless desire for His enveloping embrace.

But the heavens change, and the earth spins on through endless space, and the celestial influence which God once brought to pass in their lives moves on to affect and inspire another. God has not withdrawn His grace; it was but a momentary opening of the aperture of the psyche, a glimpse into the eternal Source, signified by the momentary arrangement of the ever-changing positions of the planets, stars and galaxies in this fathomless universe as they relate to this one human entity in time and space.

In short, that receptivity, that mysterious opening of awareness, that drawing of the human heart and mind to immersion and complete abnegation in the heart and mind of that universal Being which we call God was coincident with the conditions occurring in the natural unfolding of God's universal drama, of which He is the producer, director, stage, actors, and scenery. In short, it was His gift, His grace. It was He who planted that moment in amongst all the moments, that arrangement in amongst all the possible arrangements of the heavenly bodies in the universe, and that "mystical" experience in amongst all the experiences known to man. What else shall we call it but His grace? And what are all other moments, arrangements and experiences that follow in a lifetime but His grace as well?

As for the question of man's "free will" in a universe entirely determined by the will of God, the nineteenth century saint, Sri Ramakrishna, perhaps the greatest mystic and seer the world has ever known, had this to say:

The Englishman [i.e., the Western materialist] talks about free will, but those who have realized God are aware that free-will is a mere appearance. In reality, man is the machine and God is the Operator. Man is the carriage and God its Driver. ⁴

For many, such a declaration implies a strict determinism, which they regard as unacceptable. The prospect of a universe of strict causality appears to them a dismal one, reducing the status of men to that of helpless cogs in a machine whose functioning had been preordained from the day of its creation. Yet most men of science find it necessary to acknowledge that if the universe *is* ruled by the principle of strict causality, then all men's acts, thoughts, desires are also governed by that principle. Max Planck, the founder of quantum mechanics, once said:

The principle of causality must be held to extend even to the highest achievements of the human soul. We must admit that the mind of each one of our great geniuses —Aristotle, Kant, or Leonardo, Goethe or Beethoven, Dante or Shakespeare —even at the moment of its highest flights of thought or in the most profound inner workings of his soul was subject to the causal fiat and was an instrument in the hands of an almighty law, which governs the world. ⁵

We all feel, however, that we have some freedom in our choices, that we are able to do whatever we want. Yet we must recognize that the “wants” which govern our “doing” are given factors, results of precious causal factors. The German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, noting this, remarked: “You can do whatever you want, but you cannot *want* whatever you want.” Many another scientist or philosopher has reflected on the possibility of “free will” in a deterministic universe. Baruch Spinoza, for example, declared:

There is in the mind no absolute or free will, but the mind is determined in willing this or that by a cause, which is determined in its turn by another cause, and this by another, and so on to infinity. ⁶

... Men think themselves free because they are conscious of their volitions and desires but are ignorant of the causes by which they are led to wish and desire. ⁷

This may indeed appear a “dismal” view to some, but really it is not so dismal if seen in the proper perspective. In the context of the One, the unbroken Whole, men are not “cogs”, but instruments of Divine Will, and expressions of Divine Joy. If the universe is to be seen as a machine, it must be seen that it is a living one, and that the life of the parts is the life of the whole. It is the Creator Himself who is playing out the drama. Who, then, are the victims? And who is the tyrant whose will is being thrust upon us? *Us* is Him. And our willing is His willing. Our dreaming and discovering, our joys and despairs, and even our doubting, is His doing. There are not two.

The universe *is* determined; it is determined by the One who is manifesting as the universe. But though a man’s life is destined, still he is free. Man’s true and eternal freedom lies in his eternal Being; he may do only what lies in his destiny to do, but he is always free in his Being. He may be glorified

or vilified; he may be crowned or nailed to a cross; but as the One, as the unchanging sky of pure Consciousness, he is ever free, untouched by the raging storm of the world.

Still, you may object to what is seen as a world of strict determination, and ask, “If every event in our lives is determined by God, where, then, is our freedom of choice? Where is the possibility for virtue, for choosing the path of righteousness over the path of evil? And how is it even possible to progress spiritually by one’s own efforts if all is in God’s hands? How can we be held responsible for our acts if every sentiment, emotion, thought, or act is determined by God?”

These are questions, which must occur to anyone who thinks deeply about such matters. But these questions are framed on a presumption of duality where none in fact exists. For *we* and *God* are ultimately not two. And it is only a linguistic quandary that we fall into when we regard ourselves and God as separate entities and consider one to be determining the other. There is only One in this universe; it is *He* who, *as us*, is freely making all the choices.

Each individual being (soul) chooses according to his or her evolutionary development, but it is He alone who is manifesting as each individual at every step on the evolutionary scale. Therefore, we must admit that everything is determined by God’s Will. And ... we must also see that, since we are Him, we are free to choose. When these two, man and God, are recognized to be one, this question of whether we are free or determined in our willing is easily resolved: Determinism and free-will are *both* true; they are “complementary” truths, each representing one aspect of a dual-sided reality. As the one eternal Consciousness, beyond time, we are forever free; as individualized souls, in time, we are determined by the law of causality, and are therefore under the decree of fate.

Thus, the question, “Are we responsible for our acts?” must be answered, “No,” from the standpoint of our individualized souls; and “Yes,” from the standpoint of the Self. For, as the one Consciousness, we are the witness of all the thoughts and impulses of our nature and are free to grant or withhold consent to her promptings. Therefore, ultimately, we *are* responsible for our acts. It is on the basis of our Divinity that all civil and criminal law intuitively recognizes the culpability of the individual. For, if we were not the eternal Self in essence, if we were not absolutely free from causal necessity, but merely unwitting, mechanical pawns, we could not be held

responsible for what we do. But our Self *is* God, we *are* free; and therefore, we *are* responsible.

The question of “free will” is one which has fascinated the minds of men since first man looked to the heavens and deduced a Creator. And, though the answer to the problem is very simple, it is difficult for most minds to assimilate, which have not gotten into the habit of allowing for two answers to be true which contradict each other. Such an attitude is required of physicists for whom light, and energy itself, must be seen as both a particle (quanta) and a wave, whose respective qualities are mutually exclusive. What is required is the ability to freely shift one’s viewpoint from one frame of reference to another.

The answer to the question, “Do I have free will?” is determined by who *I* is; in other words, to which “I” you are referring. If you are identifying with the body, mind and soul, the answer is, “No, you do not have free will.” Nothing happens in this drama that was not in the original script. Omar Khayyam has rightly said: “The first morning of creation wrote what the last dawn of reckoning shall read”. The Will that flung forth the universe is its only Cause, and all that follows is effect. All effects are implied and contained in their cause, as the tree is contained in its seed. Even your apparent choosing is *His* choosing; even the choosing is Him. In short, there is no escaping Him, for He is ‘even that which thinks of escape.’

On the other hand, if by *I* you refer to the one and only true Self, the one universal Consciousness; if by *I* you mean the eternal Lord and Witness of all this drama, then you already know the answer: “Yes, you have free will. Your will is the only will; You are Freedom itself!”⁸

NOTES:

1. Abhayananda, Swami., *Thomas á Kempis, On The Love of God*, Atma Books, 1992; pp. 74-75, 78
2. Plotinus, *Enneads*, II:3:6
3. *Ibid.*, II:3:7
4. Nikhilanda, Swami, Nikhilananda, Swami (trans.), *The Gospel Of SriRamakrishna*, New York, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942; pp. 379-380
5. Max Planck, *Where Is Science Going?* London, George Allen & Unwin, 1933.
6. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, II.48.
7. *Ibid.*, I. Appendix

8. The above passages and the Appendix that follows are excerpted from Abhayananda, Swami, *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, N.Y., 1984.

* * *

APPENDIX

This Appendix is added for the benefit of those who have some familiarity with astrological principles and are able to understand the significance of the following charts:

The first chart, chart A, is the chart of the *transiting* planetary arrangement in effect at the time of my “experience of unity.” The lines connecting those planets in *opposition* (180°) *trine* (120°), and *sextile* (60°) aspects to each other show the angular relationships between these transiting planets. This, in itself, is a remarkable configuration. But to fully appreciate the significance of this transiting planetary arrangement, it must be seen in relationship to the positions of the planets at my birth.

This may be seen in chart B. It is a composite chart, showing the positions of the planets in my natal, progressed, and transiting charts, shown in consecutive wheels. In the center wheel, my *natal* chart, calculated for 6:01 P.M., August 14, 1938, at Indianapolis, Indiana; in the intermediate wheel, my *progressed* chart for 9:00 P.M., November 18, 1966, at Santa Cruz, California; and in the outer wheel, the *transiting* chart for the same time and place.

CHART A

Stan TroutTrans.

Nov 18 1966 9:00 PM PST
 Santa Cruz California
 38N00 121W53
 Nov 19 1966 05:00:00 GMT
 Tropical Placidus True Node

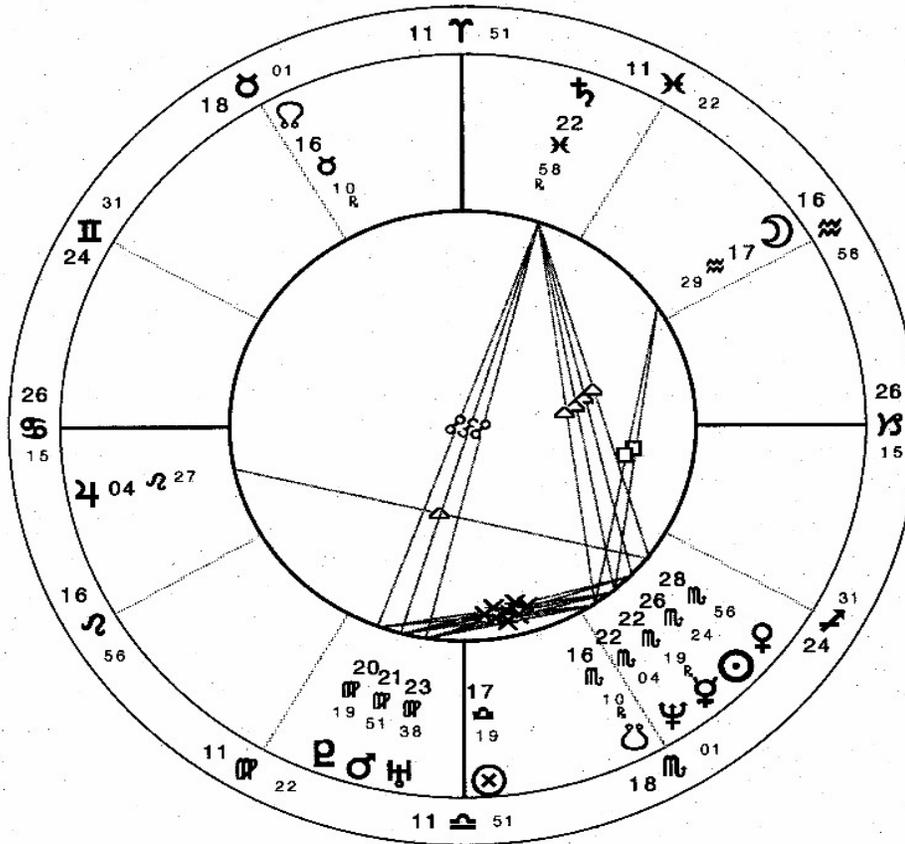


CHART B

Stan Trout

Aug 14 1938

Indianapolis

39N46

Aug 15 1938

Tropical

6:01 PM GST

Indiana

86W09

00:01:00 GMT

Placidus

True Node

Second Chart Solar Arc Progression

Stan Trout SAP

Nov 19 1966

05:00:00 GMT

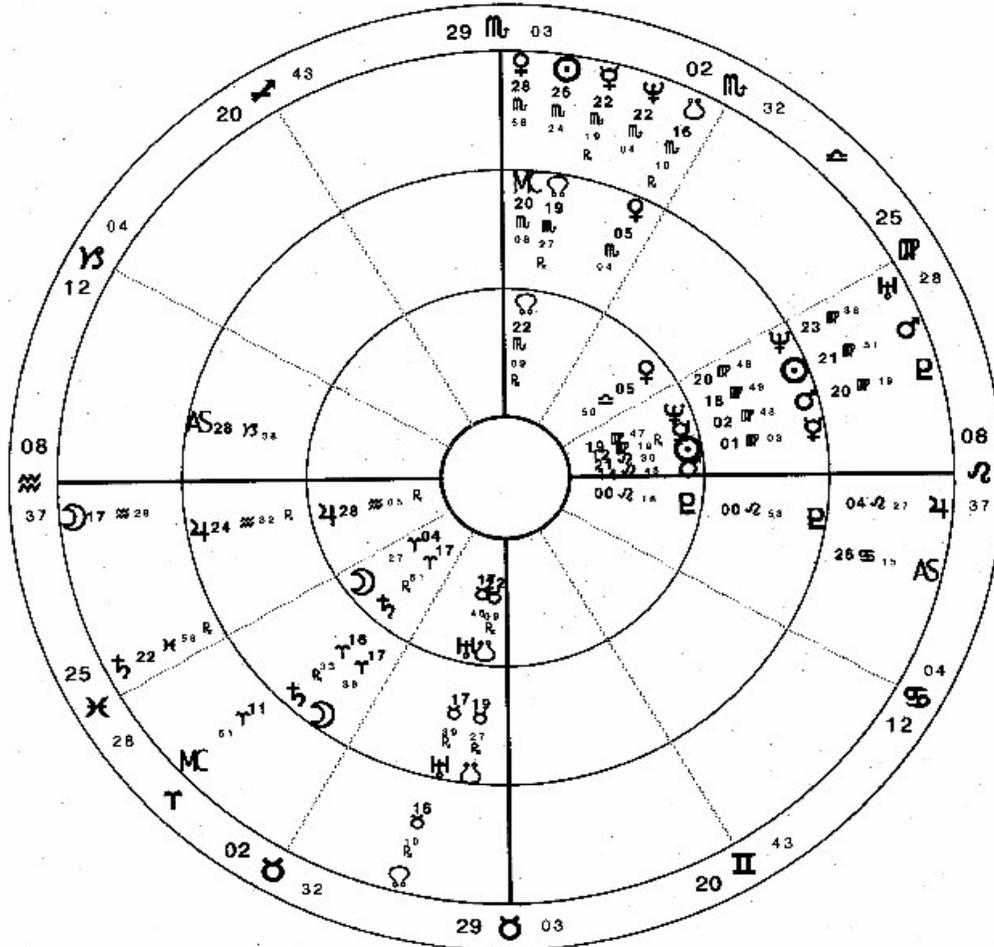
Third Chart

Natal Chart

Stan TroutTrans.

Nov 19 1966

05:00:00 GMT

*Natal Aspects:*

- Sun conjunct Mars
- Sun trine Saturn
- Sun square Uranus
- Mercury trine Uranus
- Mercury conjunct Neptune
- Mars square Uranus
- Saturn semisextile Uranus

Uranus trine Neptune

Progressed Aspects (to natal planets):

- Moon conjunct Saturn (exact)
- Moon semisextile Uranus (exact)
- Sun conjunct Neptune (exact)

Transiting Aspects (to natal planets):

- Moon sextile Saturn (exact)
- Moon square Uranus (exact)
- Sun conjunct Midheaven
- Mercury square Sun (exact)
- Mercury conjunct North Node (exact)
- Venus conjunct Midheaven (exact)
- Venus square Jupiter (exact)
- Mars conjunct Neptune
- Jupiter trine Moon (exact)
- Uranus conjunct Neptune
- Neptune conjunct North Node (exact)
- Neptune square Sun (exact)
- Pluto conjunct Neptune (exact)

Note: planets within 1° aspect are considered to be exact.

In examining this composite of charts, the first thing that stands out to the trained eye is the highly significant progression of both the Sun and the Moon (middle wheel) to exact conjunctions with natal planets (center wheel). The Moon's progression to an exact conjunction to my natal Saturn is a conjunction which occurs only once every twenty-eight to thirty years; while the Sun's progression to the natal position of Neptune occurs in one's chart only if one's Sun position is natally within 60° or so, clockwise, of Neptune's position—and then, only once in a lifetime. The likelihood of both the Sun and Moon forming progressed conjunctions to (major) natal planets simultaneously is obviously very remote, and when it *does* occur, is highly significant of an extraordinary event.

Neptune, to which the progressed Sun is conjoined, figures quite prominently in my natal chart, as it forms there a conjunction to Mercury and a trine to Uranus. In my early deliberations about my own chart, I had come to look on it as a representation of a certain mental receptivity to

poetic inspiration. But Neptune represents much more than that; with beneficial aspects from other planets, it can represent an access to the very subtlest of spiritual realms. One astrologer, Robert Hand, who is a recognized authority on astrological symbols, says about Neptune:

Neptune symbolizes the truth and divinity perceived by mystics. (*Keep in mind that the planet is an agent or a representation of an energy, not the source of the energy.*) At the highest level, Neptune represents Nirvana, where all individuality is merged into an infinite oneness of being and consciousness. ¹

Notice that the massive conjunction of transiting Mars-Uranus-Pluto (outer wheel) is precisely over my natal Neptune, along with the progressed Sun, and that the conjunction of transiting Mercury-Neptune is precisely over my natal North Node of the Moon. There were, on that night of November 18, 1966, two exact conjunctions of *progressed* planets to natal planets, and ten exact aspects of *transiting* planets to natal positions, five of which were conjunctions. The concentration of energy over my natal Neptune position was clearly intense—intense enough for even a thick-headed person like myself to catch a glimpse of God.

If it could be shown that, in all cases, the mystical experience of Unity coincided with progressed solar and/or lunar aspects to Neptune in the charts of the experiencers, we would be in possession of a neatly consistent formula for anticipating mystical experience. However, that does not seem always to be the case. When one examines the charts of known mystics of the past progressed to the date of their transcendent experience, one encounters a very inconsistent collection of varied influences, although aspects to the natal Neptune position do seem to figure strongly

For example, in the chart of Sri Aurobindo (born August 15, 1872), at the time of his reported enlightenment (January 15, 1908) the progressed moon is exactly conjunct his natal Neptune, and the progressed Sun is exactly quincunx Neptune's position. In the chart of Sri Ramakrishna (born February 18, 1836), progressed to the date of his first *samadhi* at the age of twenty-nine (February 1, 1865), the progressed moon is exactly sextile his natal Neptune's position, while there are no major aspects from the progressed Sun. And in the progressed chart of Sri Ramana Maharshi (born December 30, 1879), who became enlightened at the age of sixteen (September 15, 1896), the progressed moon is 3° past a conjunction with

natal Jupiter, and the progressed Sun makes only one aspect: a trine to natal Pluto. Even with so brief a sampling, it is clear that there is a wide range of variation in the progressed solar and lunar aspects occurring at the time of enlightenment.

Strangely enough, the one modern mystic whose progressed aspects at the time of his enlightenment most closely resemble the planetary aspects present in my own enlightenment chart is someone who was personally known to me—Swami Muktananda.

Muktananda's natal horoscope reveals him to have been an immensely powerful personality, but it only hints at the tremendous personal power he came to possess through the legacy of *shaktipat* transmitted to him by his guru, Nityananda, and through his lifelong retention of that power. He was totally unique in his masterful attainment, and his life of sharing his spiritual realizations was also amazing and unique; but *his experience of the Self was the common experience of all the enlightened.*

While our paths to enlightenment, our visions, our circumstances, personalities and destinies (as symbolized in our individual horoscopes) were very different, the enlightenment experience which revealed the eternal Self to Muktananda was identical (by definition) with that which I experienced. What's more, the planetary signifiers of enlightenment were nearly identical in both our cases.

Despite the unique elements of Muktananda's *sadhana*, which differed considerably from my own experience, both of our actual enlightenment experiences, though nearly ten years apart, coincided with a strong aspect of the progressed moon to one of the outer natal planets, at the same time that *the progressed Sun was forming an exact conjunction with the natal position of Neptune.* There was also, at the time, an extraordinary and significant array of transiting planets in the heavens in both cases. Here is a chart showing the positions of the transiting planets on the day of Muktananda's enlightenment (determined to be July 30, 1957):

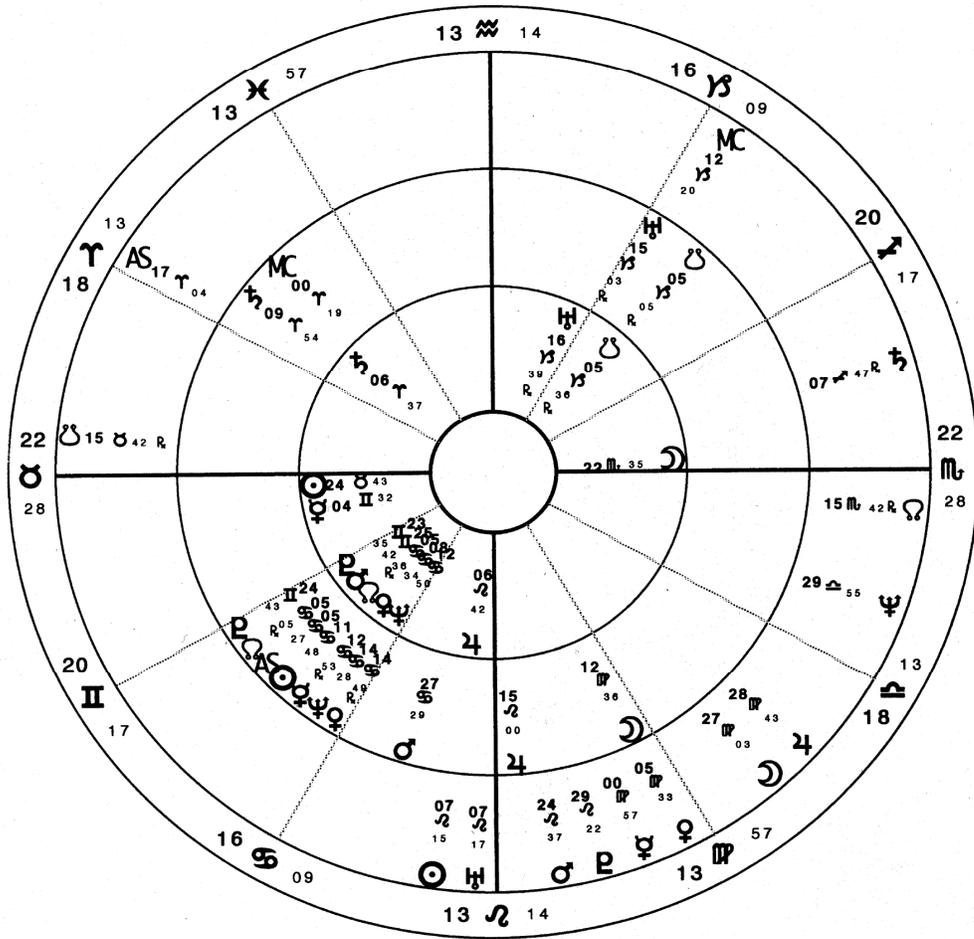
And here, on the following page, is a composite chart for the time of Muktananda's enlightenment (the inner wheel is his natal chart (May 16, 1908, at Mangalore, India; 6:00 AM INT); the middle wheel is the progressed chart; and the outer wheel represents the transiting positions of the planets on that day, July 30, 1957:

Swami Muktananda

May 16 1908 6:00 AM INT
Mangalore India
12N52 74E53
May 16 1908 00:30:00 GMT
Tropical Placidus True Node

Second Chart Solar Arc Progression

Swami Muktananda SAP
Jul 30 1957 17:30 GMT
Third Chart
S. M. Transit7-30-57
Jul 30 1957 17:30:00 GMT



Natal Aspects:

Sun conjunct Ascendant
 Sun opposite moon
 Mercury sextile Jupiter
 Venus conjunct Neptune
 Venus square Saturn
 Mars conjunct Pluto
 Jupiter trine Saturn (exact)
 Uranus opposite Neptune

Progressed Aspects (to natal planets):

Sun-Mercury conjunct Neptune (exact)
 Moon sextile Neptune (exact)
 Jupiter quincunx Uranus

Transiting Aspects (to natal planets):

Sun-Uranus conjunct Jupiter
 Sun-Uranus trine Saturn
 Moon-Jupiter trine Sun (moon exact)
 Mars-Pluto square Sun
 Saturn trine Jupiter
 Saturn trine Saturn

Note: Planets within 1° aspect are considered to be exact.

In Muktananda's *natal* chart, notice the powerful stellium of planets in the 2nd House, along with the Sun-moon opposition closely conjunct the 1st-7th House cusps. Mars conjunct Pluto, and Venus conjunct Neptune give some indication of his spiritual evolution and the great forcefulness of his personal energy. Jupiter in the 3rd House shows his learning and speaking ability, and Uranus on the 9th House cusp relates both to his advanced philosophical views and his amazingly broad travels. (For a thoughtful and thorough examination of his life from an astrological point of view, see the excellent treatment by my good friend, Greg Bogart, in his book, *Astrology And Spiritual Awakening*, published by Dawn Mountain Press.)

The *progressed* chart shows the progressed Sun and Mercury in exact conjunction with his natal Neptune, and the progressed Moon in exact sextile to natal Neptune. In addition to these highly significant aspects, Jupiter is progressed to an exact quincunx to natal Uranus.

The *transiting* aspects are equally notable: a transiting Sun-Uranus conjunction is conjunct natal Jupiter, and forming a trine to natal Saturn, while transiting Saturn is forming a grand trine with natal Saturn and Jupiter. A transiting Moon-Jupiter conjunction is forming a trine to the natal Sun, while transiting Mars, Pluto, and Mercury are in close square to that natal Sun position. All in all, it is a remarkable set of circumstances, signaling a remarkable occurrence. Clearly, it is *as* uniquely powerful a set of progressed and transiting aspects as those which occurred in relation to my own chart in November of 1966.

It is my opinion that this discovery of the correlation of celestial dynamics and Divine grace is a breakthrough in knowledge comparable to those brought about by Copernicus and Galileo and has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of “spiritual” experience. However, it requires so bold a departure from traditional ways of thinking that it is unlikely to have a great influence on the understanding of any but the most discerning. In fact, many so-called “spiritual teachers” will find this information embarrassing and will reject it, for it makes a folly of their contention that it is practices and techniques which bring about Self-realization. For without God’s celestial grace, without the timing of God’s heavenly motions unfolding in one’s life, no illumination will come.

The present-day understanding of how astrology ‘works’ is as far from a comprehensive resolution as is the science of microphysics. It was a mystery to the ancients, and it is a mystery today (although David Bohm’s concept of the immediate interconnectedness of everything within “the unbroken Whole” hints at the way ahead). And while “the science” of the astrology of enlightenment is in its infancy today, I am hopeful that the data that is here provided will point the way to greater exploration and understanding of the relation of astronomical phenomena to mystical experience in the years to come.

NOTE:

1. Hand, Robert, *Astrological Symbols*, Rockfort, Mass., Para Research, Inc., 1980.

A Carrier Pigeon?

I have come to understand that I am without any power to initiate or affect even the tiniest event in this world. The One who is manifesting and directing this entire array of phenomena in time and space and orchestrating every event in it is our transcendent Lord, the divine Author of this world. And if we are observant, we will find all around us many clear signs of His authorship and His efficacy. Here, for example, is a plausible sign of pre-determination that appears in the astrological lore from the writings of the legendary twentieth-century Astrologer, Dane Rudhyar, whose “Sabian Symbols” give meaningful interpretations of each of the 360° of the Zodiac.

My August 14th birthdate puts the Sun at my birth at 21 degrees, 30 minutes of the constellation of Leo in the Tropical zodiacal arc. This, rounded to the next full number, becomes Leo 22°. Rudhyar’s Sabian Symbol for that zodiacal degree reads:

“A CARRIER PIGEON FULFILLING ITS MISSION.

“KEYNOTE: *Spirituality in terms of training for service to mankind.*

“In contrast with the intoxicated chicken (pictured in Leo 21°), we now have the successfully trained carrier pigeon delivering the message it was its function to carry. Here, the domesticated bird is seen endowed with a special significance and purpose. This refers to spiritual energies which are being used constructively and which bring to the consciousness messages from other realms. Individual realizations acquire their true meaning only as they fulfill a collective function.

“This second stage symbol clearly presents a contrasting alternative to what the preceding picture revealed. The ‘release’ of higher energies becomes effective and valuable to the extent to which it serves a higher, but concrete and definite, purpose. This is the ideal of the WORLD SERVER.”¹

All these many factors that I have listed point to the fact that my destiny was cast in the very second that I was born. (You may be assured that this is true of you as well.) My natal astrological chart shows clearly that, on November 18, 1966, my progressed Sun would reach the position of my natal Neptune,

corresponding with the occurrence within me of a significant “mystical experience.” And, according to Mr. Rudhyar’s symbolic interpretation, the prayer that was planted in my heart on that November night in 1966 was an inevitable event in God’s already scripted drama, signaling the imparting of the message I was destined to deliver. God’s revelation to me and my sharing it with you is clearly His doing, and not mine. And if I am indeed a metaphorical ‘carrier pigeon’ as the above passage suggests, it should be understood that the message I carry originates with Him and was revealed by Him; I am only the carrier of the message, and I am fulfilling my mission by delivering that message to you. That is my destiny. May *your* destiny also lead you to the direct knowledge of God in yourself.

NOTE:

1. This quote is from *An Astrological Mandala: The Cycle of transformation and its 360 symbolic phases* by Dane Rudhyar, Vantage Books, 1973, pp. 144-145.

* * *

5. THE NEO-COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

by Swami Abhayananda

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We are all familiar with the story of Copernicus and his revolutionary sixteenth century theory of a heliocentric solar system. Prior to the publication of his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (*On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*) in 1543, everyone living in the world believed in the geocentric astronomical theory, that all the planetary bodies seen in the sky revolved, not around the Sun, but around the earth.

When Copernicus showed astronomical evidence that all the planets, including the earth, actually revolve around the Sun, few were able to believe it. Centuries of religiously based tradition were not easily overturned, and people were bitterly reluctant to give up their habitual beliefs. In fact, the heliocentric system became accepted only after the passage of many years, not because thousands of people read Copernicus' work, but because the new vision of the solar system became acknowledged as valid throughout the scientific community and then eventually filtered down as established fact to the lay religious populace.

Today, the people of the world are in an historical period similar to that which preceded the Copernican revolution. Currently, throughout the world, the people of all the many nations hold fast to their long-held belief in their own regional religious traditions in which one or another historical person is considered to be an icon of that religious tradition, represented as a divine prophet, messenger or progeny of God. But I believe that we are in the latter stages of that prolonged historical period in which the people strongly believe in their multiple regionally based religious mythologies. What is needed now is *a revolution in thought* similar to the scientific revolution that followed the revelations of Copernicus, but this time *a spiritual revolution* that would establish a universally accurate empirical theory embracing and applying to *every* religious tradition, just as Copernicus' heliocentric theory included and applied to every planet.

Enter the evidence of the seers, the mystics—men and women of every spiritual or religious tradition throughout the centuries—who report having experienced a common subjective phenomenon which they describe as “a

union of the soul with God.” The empirical evidence, accumulated over more than thirty centuries, clearly shows that, not only those who are religious icons, but many ordinary people also, have purportedly experienced intimate contact with their ultimate Source and have told of that experience in various degrees of detail. In nearly every instance of such ‘mystical’ experience or vision, several common features are noted:

1. Mystical experience reveals to the one experiencing it that the universal Reality is an integrated Mind-born continuum of Consciousness in which all beings exist, and whose identity is both eternal (as the One Mind) and transient (as the phenomenal universe containing individual objects and individual embodied souls). The fact that all individual souls are contained in and consist of that all-inclusive continuum of Consciousness ensures the consciousness of each individual soul and its interconnection to the entire continuum as well as to its Source. Each individual soul is therefore as capable as any other of being graciously uplifted to an experience of union with the Divine Source (referred to by Jesus as “the Father”).

2. That unitive experience, which appears to be divinely initiated and facilitated, is a transient one, but while that experience lasts, the individual soul experiencing that “union” is absorbed in and made “one with” the One Mind, knowing itself no longer as an individual soul, but as the One Mind in whom all is contained. It is reported that in that experience of “union,” the duality of “I” and “Thou,” of soul and Father, no longer exists, and the experiencer perceives and knows ‘I am in the Father and the Father is in me. I and the Father are one.’

3. Also, in that experience of “union” or “unity,” the dualities such as ‘life’ and ‘death,’ ‘time’ and ‘space,’ ‘mind’ and ‘body,’ no longer exist; nor do the dualities normally framed in the individual human mind, such as ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ ‘love’ and ‘hatred,’ ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly,’ ‘happy’ and ‘sad,’ etc. These dualities are merely conceptual or emotional and are exclusive to the individual ego/mind in which they exist. With the vanishing of the ego (the sense of an individual ‘I’), those opposites are gone; the eternal One is alone and is experienced as one’s only Self.

The fact that over the centuries multiple individuals have experienced this mystical “union” with their eternal Source strongly suggests that the early stories portraying those who experienced that “union” as divinely appointed ‘saviors,’ ‘messengers,’ or ‘messiahs’ are simply examples of the zealous

misinterpretation of the unitive mystical experiences that occurred in various individuals in the past. Such misinterpretations commonly occur in societies of people who are ignorant of the perennial occurrence of the unitive spiritual experience—societies such as those existing in the time of Jesus¹ or al-Hallaj, or today, for example.

If, in accordance with God's will, such a modern Copernicus was to appear and provide the explanation to the people that the region's favorite prophet, messenger, or progeny of God was in fact simply someone who had a profound mystical experience, momentarily experiencing his oneness with God, and that such mystical experiences are a regular feature of God's activity in rewarding pure souls, might not such an explanation provide a meaningful alternative to the diverse religious narratives existing today?

Such a hypothetical Copernicus might well support his narrative with the overwhelming experiential evidence provided by the recorded testimonials of the mystics. He might even issue a *History of Mysticism*² to show the recurrence throughout the ages of mystical experience along with the unanimous testimonials of the many mystics of all religious traditions. In this way, he could formulate a convincing historical narrative and initiate a basis for a lasting revolution in the spiritual understanding of all the peoples of the earth.

It would also be helpful if that modern Copernicus were himself a mystic.³ That way he would have personal experiential knowledge of his subject, and he would thereby possess the requisite understanding and passion of certainty required to convince the public of the truth of his observations. A universal revolution in spiritual understanding would not develop immediately, however. As in the case of the 16th century revolution, it would require an initial cadre of credible advocates, and, even so, the revolution would likely spread only slowly at first.

But, in time, as the old die-hard partisans of multiple regional religious traditions eventually died off, the many well-known occurrences of mystical experience throughout the ages would become acknowledged, and the universal capability of all people to experience such mystical vision would gradually become universally accepted. We may even dare to hope that, with the elimination of multiple false religious traditions, bigotry as we now know it would disappear from this world, and all people would at last come to know the joy of the Eternal in their own lives.

And that, of course, is the Divine objective to be attained. Mystical experience shows to the recipient the truth that we all exist in God, that we are all evolving within God, and that our very own nature is God. God is infinite Existence, Consciousness, Freedom and Bliss; and to know Him as our eternal Self is to partake of that nature and to share in His gifts. To know God is to know a security, contentment, imperturbability, intelligence and serenity that you never dreamed was possible for you. Having known God as your own divine Self, you will urgently wish that divine happiness for everyone, and you will sing His name ever in your heart.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. See Swami Abhayananda, "Enlightened Christianity: The Story of Jesus, The Mystic." This is an article specifically designed for the Christians among us. It is available in PDF format as a free download at www.themysticsvision.com.
2. See Swami Abhayananda, *History of Mysticism*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, N.Y., 1987. This book introduces the reader to the Great Mystical Tradition and the brilliant mystics who have comprised its ranks from ancient times to the present. It is available in PDF format as a free download at www.themysticsvision.com.
3. See Swami Abhayananda, *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, N.Y., 1984. This is an autobiographical work, containing my own mystical experience, written as it occurred. This book is available in PDF format as a free download at www.themysticsvision.com.

* * *

6. THE ASTROLOGER'S VISION

by Swami Abhayananda

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THE ASTROLOGER'S VISION

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Introduction

Throughout history, a number of individuals, including the Upanishadic rishis, Heraclitus, Lao Tze, the Buddha, and Jesus of Nazareth, have been graced with a “mystical experience,” a divine revelation that the phenomenal reality, including one’s body and soul, is a manifestation of an eternal Divine Mind. The authorship and governorship of the phenomenal universe by the Divine Mind is therefore not merely a matter of religious belief; rather it is a direct and certain knowledge provided through divine Grace to a few chosen souls and which manifests as a direct “mystical experience” of the magnificent Intelligence, the transcendent Mind, that underlies the world and our personal consciousness.

This revealed knowledge is no doubt the greatest and most beneficial knowledge possible of attainment, and one aspect of this direct knowledge is the clear realization that this divine universe is an integrated and coordinated unit, in which “all things move together of one accord; [that] assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.”

We may extrapolate from this direct knowledge of the integral unity of the universe that, included in that integral unity is an invisible coordination between the movements of the heavenly bodies of our solar system and the events in the lives of men and women on earth. And over the centuries a great deal of evidence has been accumulated to corroborate and support this theory—a theory that has been given the name of “astrology.” And today, the practical use of astrological information is a proven and invaluable tool for understanding and adapting to the manifest patterns of change experienced in the world and in one’s personal consciousness. And so, I am sharing some of my writings on the subject of astrology for those who may be able to benefit from it. What I wish to offer is a mystical philosophy that includes an understanding of the principles of astrology, or cosmic synchrony.

The realization of the divine Mind, the eternal Self, is to be regarded as of paramount importance to comprehending one’s spiritual nature; but the knowledge of the karmic forces forming and influencing one’s personal inner and outer life-experiences in the spatio-temporal world is also important and useful. It is my own mystical experience of the eternal Self which taught me that “all things move together of one accord; that assent is

given throughout the universe to every falling grain,” and it is this very principle of cosmological synchrony that accounts for the science of astrology and its usefulness as a tool for the knowledge of the personal self.

It is just this understanding of cosmological synchrony that allows us to see that every thought, activity, or experience occurring within the solar system is dependent upon and coordinated with even the smallest alteration in the angular relationships between each of the planets of the solar system, upon the transient organization of the entire universe, and ultimately upon the one eternal Mind in whom all this panoply of change occurs. This constant evolution of the cosmic panoply must be seen as a superficial play upon the divine Mind, understanding that the “assenting” Mind, the one Consciousness, or Divine Identity, remains one and unchanging despite the universal kaleidoscope of mental and physical movement and the changing stellar relationships that are continually evolving in space-time.

We live in a consciously coordinated universe. It is one integral Unit. In such a universe each soul is born at the exact moment the universe has prepared for it throughout the unfolding of time. But by what means do the positions of the planets of the solar system at the time and place of a soul’s earthly embodiment relate to the character and actions of that individual soul? It is not possible to answer this question except by recognizing that ‘we live in a consciously coordinated universe. It is one integral Unit.’ In other words, there is a synchronistic accord invisible to the human eye by which all things in the universe are coordinated and interconnected, just as all the functions of a human body are synchronized and coordinated to the health and benefit of the whole body.

Philosophers of ancient Greece believed in this truth; the very meaning of their word, *cosmos*, referred to ‘an orderly, harmonious, systematic universe’ of which human souls were an integral and interrelated part. Today, this notion is regarded as antiquated, and the current popular trend is to regard the existence of humanity as a meaningless accident in a purposeless and indifferent universe. But the reader will quickly discover that the ideas and principles described in this collection of essays diverge radically from the popular conceptions accepted in our current society.

In a secular society such as ours there is bound to exist much ignorance and mythology surrounding the esoteric subject of astrology. This spiritual ignorance often occurs among those with a leaning toward a secular scientific orientation. One of the widespread myths concerning astrology

that arises from this ignorance is the myth that astrologers believe that the changing positions of the Sun, Moon, and planets *determine* or *cause* the fate of human beings on earth—apparently by some mysterious invisible rays of influence. If this belief is held by any astrologers, they are certainly in a very small minority. A modern astrologer is much more likely to believe that one's own karma, recorded within one's own psyche or soul, is the only force or influence that is impinging on one's life and decisions; the positions of the planets merely represent corresponding conditions in a universe whose elements are integrally related and unified in a common noumenal reality. In other words, it is you, and not the planets, who is responsible for what you are and what you become. We must not imagine that the planetary environment is the *cause* of events in our psyche and in our physical lives; it is merely a reflection, a readable symbol, of those influences, written large into the cosmos, and telling of an integrated cosmic synchrony.

But, regardless of what we call it, the critics of the notion of a spiritually interconnected universe, in their ignorance of the spiritual reality, and their confidence in the imagined materialist view, are firmly convinced that there is not the slightest rational basis for believing that there is any connection at all between the lives of the inhabitants of earth and the positions of the Sun, Moon, and planets of our solar system; and they seem at this stage to be developmentally incapable of comprehending the cosmos as an integrated Mind or Psyche. One such critic, well learned in the Advaita Vedanta tradition, has publicly stated that he believes “that one's personality/destiny is affected or revealed more by the passing of a truck in the street outside than by a planet in the outer reaches of the solar system”.

So, it is necessary to provide some answers to these doubters and detractors. and in the following chapters some answers will be provided:

The first chapter of this little booklet, "The Self, The Soul, And The Planets," explains the complementarity of the soul and the eternal Self. They are not two separate entities; but rather it is God, the one divine Self, who takes on the attributes of each incarnated soul and appears as that individual soul. At the deepest level of consciousness, it exists as the Self; at the phenomenal level, it is the individual soul with all the characteristics acquired in its many births, as it evolves from lifetime to lifetime toward recognition and manifestation of its true, eternal, Self.

The second chapter, “The Science of The Soul,” offers a perspective on the integral synchrony of the cosmos, wherein the planets do not *cause* or *determine* effects among the people on earth, but whose positional patterns reflect or symbolize the physical and psychological conditions on earth simply because they are two synchronous events occurring in a common integral cosmic Psyche.

The third chapter, "The Soul And Karma," attempts to explain the representation in the natal chart of characteristics formed by each individual's actions (*karma*) and their effect on the individual soul.

The fourth chapter, “The Soul And Free Will” establishes the lack of any compelling motivational force in one’s life other than one’s own determining will. Even the recorded experiences of the past which hold such a grip on us from lifetime to lifetime may be overcome and thwarted by our own determined will, since that will has sprung from a universal and divine Will.

The fifth chapter, “Eternal Freedom,” establishes the nonduality of the individual soul and the eternal Self and their common freedom. It is the very freedom of God that is our legacy as a soul incarnated on earth and defines our own sovereign responsibility for our ongoing destinies.

The sixth chapter, “The Celestial Dynamics of Grace,” taken from my spiritual autobiography, *The Supreme Self*, leads the reader to the inescapable conclusion that every occurrence in one’s life—even spiritual realization—is reflected, or revealed, in its planetary complement.

The seventh chapter, “As Above, So Below,” presents for the curious student an array of the charts of a number of famous people, revealing the diversity of soul-characteristics and their associated planetary relationships.

And the eighth chapter recounts the February-March 2022 airing of “The Changing of The Gods” on the internet.

I hope this little collection of essays provides you with a framework by which to comprehend your own spiritual Self and the spiritually based universe, and to understand the role of astrology, or “cosmosynchrony,” in both.

ONE: THE SELF, THE SOUL, AND THE PLANETS

The Judeo-Christian tradition has a long theological legacy of belief in the existence of individual souls. Though the notion of individual souls was scarcely mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible, the existence of souls was established by the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, and was incorporated into the teachings of the early Christians, and later amplified upon by Medieval Church figures, such as Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. René Descartes in the 17th century put his own distinct stamp on the notion of soul, and—in the minds of many—completely exhausted the subject. Thereafter, the notion of the soul was seldom spoken of; but it is enjoying a resurgence of interest today in some academic circles.¹

The ancient scriptures of Hinduism also contain references to souls, but some Nondualists, including Buddhists and Vedantins, deny the existence of individual souls, asserting that one's sense of 'I', is truly the one Divine Mind or eternal Identity, but is falsely interpreted by the human consciousness as an independent soul. Jews, Christians and Muslims explain their particular personal traits as characteristics of their individual souls; but Yogis and Buddhists have realized and described their spiritual identity as nothing less than the highest spiritual Reality, the divine Mind, the absolute Self. Who is correct? Both have evidence on their side! But can they both be true? Yes, they can be, and they are. The Divine Mind, or absolute Self, and the soul both exist; but they simply exist on different levels, or planes, of consciousness.

We are told that the characteristics of our soul are the results of our actions (karma) in previous incarnations. These characteristics are portrayed in the patterns of the planets of the solar system at the moment of our birth. The planets of our solar system tell of the tendencies and propensities of our individual personalities, our souls; but the Consciousness of which that soul is made, its non-individualized essence, is the Divine Mind, or Self. Though on our journey toward self-knowledge, we may come to know the various elements of our self-made soul, brought into being by our karma, we must go further within to know the one divine Self who exists at the heart of our being, and who constitutes the one Divinity within us all. That one divine Self appears in the guise of every soul, with its associated tendencies and proclivities, symbolized in the varied patterns of the planets in our solar system. In truth, all souls are the one divine Self, clad in a myriad of soul-qualities.

Our individual soul and the Divine Self are not two; there is only the one Self, appearing in many forms, and as the many varied souls. And yet, since most of us exist on a lower level of consciousness, we do not experience ourselves as the divine all-pervading Self; instead, we experience ourselves as individual souls with distinctly unique attributes, and we deal with others as individuals with unique attributes—though in fact, there is only the one Divinity living and acting in the world as individual souls. Look more deeply into the truth! Lift the veil! See God in each other! There is no one here but God—appearing as you and as all in this world. This is the highest knowledge and the highest attainment. Identify with the attributeless Self and become free of the limiting soul attributes. Once you’ve known your divine Identity, those soul-attributes may or may not continue. No matter. Know that you are free. Know that you are the one Divine Reality.

On the physical level, we see each other solely as physical bodies; on a subtler spiritual level—let us call it the ‘astral’ level—souls may be seen and experienced. But at the highest, or deepest, spiritual level, there are no souls; there is only the divine Mind, the One, wherein all the various levels of manifestation—including the material and the astral—are merely potential. This ultimate reality has been called Brahman, the One, the Godhead, the Self, the Void, the Tao, and many other names; it is realized by enlightened sages as the highest Truth, the sole source and origin of all the manifest planes of existence, and everyone’s ultimate identity.

But understand – there is no contradiction between the soul and the divine Self. The Self simply manifests as a soul associated with a body in the manifested plane. Many, including myself, have seen disembodied souls on the astral level; and many, including myself, have experienced the universal Spirit, the divine Self, as their ultimate identity. The soul and the Absolute are not mutually exclusive. He is all, and all is He; He also transcends all. Brahman, the Godhead, the one Spirit, is the ultimate Reality and Source of all that exists and constitutes the ultimate knowledge to be attained. But each of us is an individual soul at a grosser level of consciousness, just as we are manifested—at a yet grosser level—in this phenomenal world as a *material* body.

Realization of the Self does not put an end to one’s soul or one’s physical body, just as, in other cases, knowing or recognizing the whole does not negate or destroy the constituents within that whole. We, as souls, live within Him, even while being aware of our oneness with Him; and we partake of that vision by His loving Grace. So, let us put away our

arguments, and acknowledge that we are both the divine Self and an individual soul. These two are complementary aspects of our own and the cosmic reality.

NOTES:

1. See Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliafero, *A Brief History of The Soul*, West Sussex, U.K., John Wiley & Sons, 2011; and Mark C. Baker and Stewart Goetz (eds.), *The Soul Hypothesis*, N.Y., N.Y., The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.

* * *

TWO: THE SCIENCE OF THE SOUL¹

It has been well established that the eternal Self, or God, is the ultimate Identity of everyone; but we have to ask, ‘what is it that makes “distinct individual souls” of each of us?’ Why does one person have a passion for music and another for physics? Why does this one become an architect, and the other becomes a writer of fiction; this one a neurobiologist and this other a stock-broker? These are questions about the individual soul-characteristics with which each of us is born. We cannot deny that such differences exist among human beings, even though we are united as one at the Source. One person is born with every advantage; another is born infirm and in very limited circumstances. How do we account for such differences? Clearly, each individual is endowed with his or her own unique characteristics, qualities, virtues and vices by which each is set apart from the others. These may extend to physical characteristics, but they belong primarily to an interior reality, which we have traditionally termed ‘the soul’.

For those who have experienced the one eternal Self, the previous identification with a separate and distinct individual self is seen to have been produced by our erroneous conviction that we are a distinct ‘I’ embodied in a distinct body. Having known the eternal Self to be one and transcendent, we tend to explain our previous sense of self as merely a limited ‘reflection’ or ‘contraction’ of the Divine Consciousness and pass over the whole subject of ‘soul’ as though it were identical in all respects with the one Divine Self, ignoring the distinctiveness of individual souls. But many questions continue to arise: How do we account for the strong individual characteristics which we each possess? What of individual free will, and the culpability of the individual? What about each person’s individual karma? And if there is such a thing as karma, mustn’t each of our karmic choices attach to some kind of separate reincarnating entity? So many questions! And, while we repeatedly encounter the barriers to knowing the answers to these questions, still we cannot cease from seeking answers. For the overarching desire to *know* is one of the most evident characteristics of being human! And, just as surely, that inherent desire is a Divinely implanted one, leading us, slowly but surely, toward the clarity of a Divine understanding.

Certainly, the *physical* characteristics of our bodies are encoded in our DNA, and these physical characteristics are passed along from one generation to the next. But the genetic makeup of our DNA pertains only to our *physical* lineage, and has no rulership over, nor any relation to, our soul characteristics. By “soul characteristics”, I mean those subjective proclivities that constitute our ambitions, our life-purposes, our primary interests, our passion, the direction of our focus in life. These proclivities arise and persist within us as individuals in a manner wholly unrelated to our physical lineages or ancestry. Some would claim that such proclivities arise accidentally in the course of one’s early learning experiences; but to others, these proclivities appear to be imprinted within the very fabric of our souls. But how and why?

Is it merely a random accident that determines one’s path in this life, or is there an evolutionary continuity, a carrying forward of the interests and talents, the virtues and vices, the karma of past good and bad deeds, from one incarnation to the next? If there is not such a continuity, we live but once, under positive or negative circumstances, purely by accident; and there is no *ongoing* personal consequence to any of our actions. If there is no retention of soul-identity across lifetimes, then personal evolution halts at the end of this current life, and no trace remains of the hard-won qualities of the soul, and there is no consequence for atrocities committed. In this case, life is, as Shakespeare characterized it, “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Fortunately, there is some evidence that order does prevail and has always prevailed in God’s universe. From the earliest times, this order has been observed and noted by men who gazed, intrigued, at the lights in the heavens passing in their predictable course overhead. And perhaps by revelation, perhaps by an extraordinary leap of inference, some Chaldean ancestor thought to compare the characteristics of his own soul with the pattern of the planets in effect at his birth and discovered there an unlikely correspondence. In subsequent times, other early star-gazers continued his study, and no doubt regarded this correlation of soul-qualities and planetary positions as “the science of the soul,” but we have come to refer to it as “Astrology.”

The synchronous relationship between the Sun, moon, and planets and the human psyche, or soul, may readily appear to be an implausible if not impossible relationship if we regard it as occurring in a classic (Newtonian) mechanical universe. But this interconnecting relationship

between the planetary environment and the soul appears in an entirely new light when it is seen to operate in a universe of Spirit, in a universe imaged in the Mind of God. And though astrology has been continually practiced for more than four thousand years, it has been, and probably shall always continue to be, practiced and understood by only a very small group of people. This is because the development of the intuitive faculty required for its comprehension and practice is confined to but an advanced few.

To the many, a belief in the effectiveness of astrology is considered to be the epitome of ignorance. Those who feel this way cringe at the very suggestion of a connection between the planetary environment of the solar system and those living within that environment, citing the absence of empirical evidence for such a claim. However, the claims of Astrology begin to seem plausible when one is able to examine the astrological correspondences in one's own natal chart or in the charts of well-known individuals with certain marked characteristics. An examination of our own astrological chart or the astrological charts of various famous people can help us to understand the seemingly inexplicable correlation that exists between the planets of the solar system and the lives of humans living on the planet Earth.

And yet, anyone with an inquisitive and critical intellect must ask, 'How could such a correspondence be possible?' By what possible means could the positions of the Sun, moon and planets at the moment of an individual's birth constitute the psychological framework of that individual? And how could the angular relationships of the continuing movements of those planets to their positions at birth have the slightest effect on that individual's evolution and development?

These are questions that have been asked of the defenders of astrology for the last two millennia; and the lack of any verifiable (or even unverifiable) theories to account for the correlations purported by astrologers to exist between planetary patterns and human character, psychology, and behavior is the primary reason cited by skeptics for their rejection of the claims of Astrology. No electromagnetic-type fields of force have been discovered to account for it; no observable 'planetary rays' seem to be present; no viable theory of universal sympathy or synchronicity has even been put forward. How then account for either a causal or an acausal synchrony between the angular positions of the Sun,

moon and planets and the minds and bodies of human beings living on earth?

Most astrologers admit they haven't a clue as to how the planets and human consciousness are connected. 'We see the effects of this correspondence,' they say, 'but we do not understand the mode of its efficacy.' And they point out that the same is true of so many phenomena—like the force of gravity, and the weak, strong and electromagnetic forces. Certainly, we know they exist and operate, but no one knows *how* they work or why. We know that gravity exists by observing its effects, though we don't fully understand the mechanism behind it or how to reconcile it with our quantum theories of the microcosm.

Likewise, we see the effects of molecular formation in the objects around us and in ourselves; but we don't really understand why the elementary particles form out of the initial burst of light-energy, or where the force comes from that causes them to bind together into molecules and from thence into larger living structures. Indeed, what is it that constitutes the life-force of sentient beings? How does it originate? And how does it operate? And what of that most fundamental phenomenon: light? It is a complete mystery. The ambiguous wave-particle duality of light, shown by many different experiments in the scientist's lab, reveals the indefinability of light at the quantum level. We know it is, but we don't know *what* it is or *how* it works.

The observed correlation of the positions of the Sun, moon and planets in the solar system with the lives and psyches of the inhabitants of Earth fits right in with all those other unsolved mysteries. We see and experience the connection, though we can't explain the why or how of it. Clearly, the subjective and objective data accumulated tells us that such a correspondence exists. Yet, the critics tell us that astrology *cannot* work in the material and mechanistic universe which science has presented this universe to be. 'In a universe such as contemporary science describes,' they say, 'astrology cannot possibly be explained!' And, of course, they are right. Therefore, either something is wrong with the astrological idea of correspondences between planets and people, or there is something wrong with the model of the universe which contemporary science portrays. Perhaps the answer to how astrology works must be sought in an entirely different framework of understanding from the usual empirical cause-effect framework in which most of us operate.

Let us look then for some alternative answers from one of our foremost thinkers on the subject of astrology: the author of the watershed classic, *Cosmos And Psyche*, Richard Tarnas. In that book, Tarnas suggests that astrology, from its earliest beginnings, is based on a worldview which he refers to as a “primal” one, a mindset that sees the inner and outer worlds as co-constituents of an all-embracing world-Soul (*anima mundi*) that permeates both cosmos and psyche. In this “primal” worldview,

The human psyche is embedded with a world psyche in which it complexly participates and by which it is continuously defined. The workings of that *anima mundi*, [world soul] in all its flux and diversity, are articulated through a language that is mythic and numinous. Because the world is understood as speaking a symbolic language, direct communication of meaning and purpose from world to human can occur. The many particulars of the empirical world are all endowed with symbolic, archetypal significance, and that significance flows between inner and outer, between self and world. In this relatively undifferentiated state of consciousness, human beings perceive themselves as directly—emotionally, mystically, consequentially—participating in and communicating with the interior life of the natural world and cosmos.²

This “primal” mindset is contrasted with the “modern” mindset, influenced as it is by the methods and conclusions of the empirical sciences, which assumes a distinct separation between subject and object, between self and world, allowing for no breach of this cognized barrier. The demands of this empirical mindset have taught us to see the world objectively, divorced from human subjectivity, and this perceptive framework has effectively erected a mental defensive barrier against the “primal” worldview. In the primal (or mystical) worldview, all in the universe is one organic and interrelated whole, and each separate element fits into that whole as an integral component. All things do indeed move together of one accord; not a sparrow falls, nor a grain of sand is moved by the currents on the ocean’s floor that is not coordinated with all else in a continuum of Divine interaction. All is contained in the Mind of God, as images contained in a dream are contained and coordinated in the mind of a dreamer.

We, who are but insubstantial images in that Mind imagine in our turn that we are, and all about us is, substantial, real, a solid edifice of reality that we can cling to and hang our hats on. But even this body which we label “I” is but a fleeting shadow, a flickering image on a passing screen in the Mind of the One whose bodies all these truly are. We exist in a dream-world, a projection of a dancing spray of light-beams upon an infinite expanse of Thought.

In our accustomed “modern” view of a universe of material effects from material causes, all separately isolated from one another, the seemingly dead planets circling the Sun have no bearing whatever on the minds of men on earth. In such a world of independently moving subjects and independently moving objects, how could there possibly be a correlation between the two? Impossible! Inconceivable! But—suppose a world all magically interconnected, a world intimately pervaded by a unified Consciousness whose single will governs all—why then, the possibility of a coordination, or synchrony, between the planets of the solar system and its inhabitants no longer seems so dubious.

In the Indian religious tradition, this phenomenal world is referred to as *Maya*. *Maya* is the Thought production of the Divine Mind. It is a play of light and energy; this light-energy forms the substance of *Maya*. We must grasp it as a Whole, without attempting to reduce it to elementals or causal relationships. Within it there are cohesive forces, but these too are irreducible to separable elements, just as it is impossible to define the elements or cohesive forces within our own dreams or fantasies. There are no individual elements or forces; the universe, like a dream, is a Whole, and operates as a Whole. Under the spell of *Maya*, we are deluded into believing that we are our bodies and are independent entities separate and distinct from the world of our experience.

It is only through an occasional glimpse of clarity that we become awakened to the truth that we live within the one Spirit, one world-Soul, and that this body and all nature is His; that it is an illusory world made of projected light, thought, and images in which all things are united and joined in the one all-pervading Spirit. In the delusive world of *Maya*, where all appears solid and permanent, the planets moving in the heavens appear to be only inert objects, disconnected from our lives and minds. But, in the revealed world of the living Spirit, there is an active force that interconnects the heavens and the earth and all that exists in one Consciousness, deliberate and

entire, guiding and directing every soul and everything in this universe by Its power.

Now, astrologers must possess something of this primal worldview in order to accept and account for the interplay between cosmos and psyche, between world and self, in the universal consciousness that is the *anima mundi*. And it is here, at the most fundamental level, that we discover the great divide between the “primal” and “modern” worldviews, as well as between those who are able to accept and embrace astrological principles and those who are not. It has been pointed out to me by Christopher Warnock, a well-known astrologer, that this division exists even among astrologers in the choices they make regarding their use of either the Tropical or the Sidereal Zodiacs. The atheist view is reflected in the use of the Sidereal Zodiac (which is based on the actual physical positions of the Constellations) by astrologers who regard only the material universe as empirically real and worthy of consideration; and the use of the Tropical Zodiac is reflective of the worldview of astrologers who recognize the spiritual unity of the universe as the only valid perspective. Here is an excellent summary of this dichotomy by Christopher Warnock, Esq. from his website, “Renaissance Astrology”:

“The sole advantage of the Constellational Zodiac, since it is irregular, disordered, outside the traditional elemental, quadruplicity and essential dignity systems as well as untried as an astrological system, is that it corresponds to the material/physical stars. However, this one advantage is so compelling to moderns that they almost instantly are ready to discard the Tropical Zodiac. Why is this? The answer lies in the difference between the traditional [what Tarnas calls the “primal” view] and modern world views.

“A world view is basically given to one by one's society and is one's conscious philosophy and unconscious views about the nature of reality. In essence it is your reality! World view is so ingrained and automatic that it is difficult for many to accept that anyone could have a different one. After all, reality is reality, isn't it? For our purposes, the key tenet of the modern world view is that nothing truly exists except matter and energy. For moderns even when dealing with spiritual issues, their unconscious assumptions are always pushing towards atheistic materialism.

When it comes to astrology, the automatic assumption is that the influence of the stars and planets must, of necessity, be exerted by matter or energy, i.e., some sort of field or rays, emanating from the stars and planets themselves. Given this, the complete focus on the actual physical position of the material stars and constellations is entirely understandable. If one is an atheistic/materialist, then the Constellational Zodiac is inescapable as the only logical and rational choice. Alternatively, if one automatically accepts the Constellational Zodiac, if it seems instinctively correct, then one is, at least unconsciously, an atheistic/materialist because whatever one's conscious beliefs may be, one is applying in practice, an atheistic/materialist view of the nature of reality.

“However, ancient and traditional astrologers did not have the modern world view. While there was of course, much individual variation and change over time, the traditional world view saw reality as containing both the material and the spiritual. Matter was, in fact, less perfect than the spiritual and imperfectly accepted the form of the Divine/Platonic Ideas which were what was truly real. Material things were created, changed their form and then passed away, while the spiritual was eternal. The irregularity of the Constellational Zodiac shows its essential imperfection while the regularity of the Tropical Zodiac was a much better reflection of the spiritual realities that underlay material existence. The ancient astrologers used their astrology to look through matter to see the hidden true spiritual patterns of reality. The incredible accuracy of traditional astrological prediction is evidence that their view was correct. Seen from the traditional world view that saw the Cosmos as one great unified being bound together by chains of spiritual correspondence and sympathy, the use of the regular Tropical Zodiac, and the ordered astrological system of which it is an integral part, is entirely logical and rational.

“To accept the Constellational Zodiac simply on the basis of its correspondence to the material/physical stars is to accept the primacy of the physical. Yet astrology itself is based on spiritual causality. There is not the slightest bit of evidence that gravity, light waves, magnetism, string theory or any other form of material or energetic causality supports astrology. If astrology works, it can only work through spiritual

causality. Using a material/energetic methodology to discredit the Tropical Zodiac, makes no sense, because a materialistic/energetic methodology discredits all of astrology.”³

From the “traditional/primal” perspective, to look for *empirical* proofs for astrological “influences” is irrelevant and beside the point. The connection between planetary positions and human psychology is neither physical nor mental; it is a consonance taking place within the one Spirit—a Spirit or Soul that is both immanent and transcendent, that resides in the individual’s innermost being, and yet is all-pervasive, that acts not only as the Providence and guiding Logos of all things and all beings, but as the very Self of those beings.⁴ For those of us to whom experience has taught the truth of such notions, the rationale for astrology is thus rendered adequate; and for those to whom such notions are nonsense, Astrology must also appear to be nonsense.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. This chapter, as well as the following chapter, is adapted from material appearing in a previously published book: Swami Abhayananda, *The Divine Universe*, New York, iUniverse, 2008.
2. Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos And Psyche*, N.Y., Viking, 2006; p. 17.
3. This passage is excerpted with permission from the website of Christopher Warnock, Esq., “Renaissance Astrology.” (<https://www.renaissanceastrology.com/zodiacworldview.html>).
4. Mystical experience reveals that in the Absolute Spirit, the divine Self (*Atman*), there is no individual soul (*jiva*). The one Spirit is seen to be undivided; it is common to everyone and everything. For many, this revelation rules out the existence of a separate and independent ‘soul’ with distinct characteristics peculiar to each individual. Where then does this notion of an individual ‘soul’ come from? And if such a thing exists, how can it be accounted for? It’s true that the individual ‘soul’ does not exist in an absolute sense; but it does exist in the phenomenal universe as an inherent quality of embodiment. The tendencies and habits (*karma*) that constitute an individual soul are the qualities previously established on a subtle, psychic, level, and which become the characteristics reincarnated in a new birth. And because all things move together of one accord, this set of characteristics is reflected in the planetary arrangement existing at that individual’s birth.

THREE: THE SOUL AND KARMA

Karma is a word derived from the Hindu religious scriptures; it is a Sanskrit word, meaning “actions” or “the result of actions.” The early Greek philosophers were familiar with this idea as well, and called it, *adrastreia*, “she from whom none can escape”. *Adrastreia* was a common epithet of the goddess, Rhea Cybele, in her attribute as the Mother who punishes or rectifies human injustice. Both the Greeks and Romans identified her with Nemesis, or just retribution. Among the ancient Greek philosophers as well as in the Hindu tradition, the belief in the effects of one’s *karma*—the results of one’s actions—was integrally associated with and reliant upon a belief in the reincarnation or re-embodiment of the soul. Not only the Greeks, but some Jewish sects during the time of Jesus, and Jesus himself, as well as the Hindus, and the Buddhists, saw the soul’s progress toward enlightenment as a journey extending beyond one single life, and believed that this journey extended through many lifetimes and had cumulative causal effects from each life to the next.¹ According to this belief, the current state of our lives is the result of our actions, our *karma*, in our previous life. The sum of all those decisions and actions throughout our lives has resulted in our current life situation. According to this understanding, our lives are what we ourselves have made them. It may also be assumed that our present karma determines what we are to become in a subsequent lifetime. As Heraclitus said, “Character is destiny.”

Our actions are not always under our own rational determination, however. They may, in fact, be influenced by impulses that seem to arise out of the blue. We are all familiar with the struggle that often arises within us between a strong commitment to a personal ideal and a mental impulse to act in a way contrary to that ideal. This is familiar to all of us as “the temptation to sin”. And, all too often, we read on the front pages of our newspapers of celebrities or politicians who have famously lost that struggle and fallen from grace. But what, we must wonder, is the origin of this pervasive struggle, this wrenching conflict that we frequently experience within ourselves?

In some ancient cultures, a semi-divine alter-ego to God was suggested as the culprit—an invisible, but persuasive daemon variously known as “the devil”, “Satan”, or the fallen angel, “Lucifer”, whose purpose was to mislead the well-intentioned from their intended paths by whispering his fiendish suggestions into their inner ears. This fanciful daemon appeared in the mythologies of many ancient religious cultures of the Middle East, such as

the Zoroastrians, the Manichaeans, and the early Jews. In fact, this mythology seems to have been popular among the Jews at the time of Jesus, who taught that such daemons sometimes inhabited unwary individuals, and this legacy of daemonic possession passed into some branches of Christianity, where it remains to this day.

A dissimilar tradition arose in the Vedic culture in the Indian sub-continent of South Asia, which attributed this inner struggle not to a daemonic presence that contended with our divine conscience for our ear and allegiance, but rather to the presence within us of tendencies resulting from habits of the past stored within our minds or souls, much as physical characteristics are stored and contained in the codes of our inherited DNA. These tendencies, in the form of subtle desires, were called *vasanas*. It was also recognized that there were subtle “impressions” on our souls of the actions (*karma*) performed in both past and present lifetimes, which appeared as deeply ingrained habits influencing our current thoughts and activities; these were called *samskaras*.

Today, the science of evolutionary biology lends credence to the possibility of the existence within all of us of memories, impressions, going back even to pre-human states—impressions that originate in our mental and physical actions, and affect our neuronal ‘wiring,’ including parts of our brains that may even be considered remnants of a reptilian evolutionary stage. Such impressions may be unique to our species, race, or regional origins, or may relate to specific experientially reinforced characteristics or traits unique to us as individuals. It has been suggested that these self-created and long-established impressions or tendencies (*vasanas* and *samskaras*) may be responsible for the “temptations” that sometimes pull at us from within, and not the whispered suggestions from some wily and invisible daemon from without.

Astrology claims a link between these karmic ‘impressions,’ and the planetary patterns accompanying each new nativity on earth. In other words, astrologers assert that the positions and angular relationships between the planets of the solar system reflect or symbolize the positive and negative impressions or qualities of the soul born under those planetary configurations. For astrologers, a study of the map of the heavens accompanying the birth of millions of individuals has tended to uphold this conviction, though to the great majority of the uninitiated, the whole proposition that the planets act as symbols of the characteristics of the

individual psyche seems so farfetched that they won't even examine the evidence.

To me, it is abundantly evident that we create our own *vasanas* and *samskaras* by our subtle choices, and hence we create our own karma. Likewise, by our own choices, we purify our minds (souls) of the negative or harmful impressions and create new karma. But I don't see how this can be proven. Even if it is granted that the natal map (horoscope) accurately describes the characteristics of the soul born at that place and time, what prevents us from concluding that each of us is simply a result of the fortuitous timing and placement of our birth, with no previous karmic factors involved? In other words, might we not be simply the effects and artifacts of the planetary patterns in effect at our birth, leaving out any causal factors carried over from a previous incarnation?

It seems quite reasonable to accept this simpler hypothesis rather than the more complex one; but this simpler hypothesis implies a causal link between the planetary pattern at our birth and our soul-characteristics and makes us victims rather than fashioners of our individual fates. If we are nothing more than the effect of the transient planetary conditions present at our birth, then the arbitrary timing and placement on earth of our nativity determines whether we end up as a hopeless basket case or a prince of fortune, a schizophrenic in a mental ward or a wizened sage. If such is the case, we are not bearers of a soul evolved over lifetimes, but merely one-time manifestations of cosmic energies. We are not the result of past efforts and experiences; but merely a serendipitous stamp of the planetary pattern existing in the sky at the time and place of our birth. If this is the case, there is no reward for accumulated merit, no punishment attending wrong-doing, and all is mere accident and chance, a game of cosmic Russian roulette. Can we accept such a scheme? Would we wish to live in a world so unjustly framed?

We seem inclined by our very nature to believe, however, not only in a physical Cosmos ruled by cause and effect, but in a universal Psyche or Soul ruled by the same principle of *adrasteia*, whereby we reap just what we have sown. But it must be admitted that, while we have mountains of evidence to show that the planetary patterns accompanying human births appear to have a direct correlation with the soul characteristics of each human being, there is no empirical evidence for the existence or reincarnation of souls or for the retention from one life to another of the karmic impressions of a past incarnation. This is not to say that there is no circumstantial or anecdotal

evidence for metempsychosis or for the retention of past-life soul characteristics. It is simply a matter, I suppose, of what one wishes to regard as evidence that is compelling enough.

Personally, I find the notion of the reincarnation of the soul through multiple incarnations rationally appealing and worthy of acceptance—insofar as its purpose is not merely the obtaining of lifetimes of experience, but is for the evolution or purification of the soul, bringing it into likeness with the Divinity, and making it worthy to see and know itself as the one deathless Reality, the divine Self of all. There have been many examples of persons who have reported possessing memories of past life-experiences, but these reports are merely anecdotal. And I am conscious of the fact that this evolutionary scheme does not appeal to everyone, and that this and all the other metaphysical schemes are highly speculative and not immediately apparent or confirmable.

There is, of course, an alternative scheme taught in the Abrahamic religions, in which there is no transmigration of souls, but rather a one-time embodiment and then an eternity of reward or punishment based on one's behavior in that one embodiment. But this, as well as the conception of the transmigration of souls, is but a projection of the human mind, one of many imaginative schemes, with no conclusive evidence for any of them. We are blind as to the afterlife, and we are only able to guess at what the truth may be. We get an occasional glimpse, but not enough to know with certainty what to expect after passing from this current body. And yet, we forage on, prepared for all eventualities by holding on as best we can to the one certainty, the one great Light, the enduring Center, the Divine Self. For this much has been shown by direct experience to be true: that the one all-pervading Mind is the only reality, blissful forever, appearing as each and every one of us individual beings evolving through our paces on this spinning earth, within this revolving planetary circus, in our own bright corner of the universe.

NOTE:

1. See the article, "Reincarnation In The Bible" by Kevin R. Williams, B.Sc., at "Near-Death Experiences And The Afterlife" (<https://www.near-death.com>).

FOUR: THE SOUL AND FREE WILL

Some of the keenest intellects of a few early civilizations recognized the correlation between the changing positions and patterns of the planets in our solar system and the changing mental and physical conditions of life on earth. As they learned by observation of the distinct nature of the effects associated with each planet, they ascribed to each a specific kind of influence, considering each of the heavenly bodies, including the sun and moon, to be embodiments of divine powers, or “gods”. These gods were both benevolent and mischievous, bestowing both blessings and calamities upon earth and her inhabitants. Each had its own personality and characteristics and dealt with men on earth in ways compatible with their separate natures.

Today, of course, these beliefs are regarded by many as mere primitive superstitions, having no basis in fact whatsoever. But let us not be so hasty in our judgment of these early mythologizers. Over the centuries, the correlations between planetary patterns and specific psychological and physical effects on Earth have continued to be chronicled by observers of the heavenly dynamics, and much evidence has been accumulated to show a factual basis for these planetary myths of correspondence. Today, the notion of “gods” is frowned upon; instead, we like to call those various distinct energies associated with the planets “archetypes”, after Carl Jung, who utilized the term (originally coined by Plato) to speak of those intangible influences. This may also prove in time to be an inadequate term; but for now, we shall speak of the power of the gods as “archetypes”.

For a long time now, this study of the correspondence of the archetypal energies associated with the planets and the patterns of mental and physical changes on earth has gone by the name of *astrology*. It is fashionable among those “learned” in the universities to regard this study as having no scientific basis and as being merely a throwback to superstition and ignorance, appealing only to the indiscriminate and gullible masses. But we should remember the words of the great astrologer, Ptolemy, who warned, “It is a common practice with the vulgar to slander everything which is difficult of attainment.”¹ How, then, shall we define these *archetypes*? Here is what Richard Tarnas, philosopher, astrologer, and author of the highly regarded affirmation of astrological principles, *Cosmos and Psyche*, says:

Archetypes can be understood and described in many ways, and in fact much of the history of Western thought from Plato and Aristotle onward has been concerned with this very question. But for our present purposes, we can define an archetype as a universal principle or force that affects—impels, structures, permeates—the human psyche and human behavior on many levels ... Moreover, archetypes seem to work from both within and without, for they can express themselves as impulses and images from the interior psyche, yet also as events and situations in the external world.

Jung thought of archetypes as the basic constituents of the human psyche, shared cross-culturally by all human beings, and he regarded them as universal expressions of a collective unconscious. Much earlier, the Platonic tradition considered archetypes to be not only psychological but also cosmic and objective, as primordial forms of a Universal Mind that transcended the human psyche. Astrology would appear to support the Platonic view as well as the Jungian, since it gives evidence that Jungian archetypes are not only visible in human psychology, in human experience and behavior, but are also linked to the macrocosm itself—to the planets and their movements in the heavens. Astrology thus supports the ancient idea of an *anima mundi*, or world soul, in which the human psyche participates. From this perspective, what Jung called the collective unconscious can be viewed as being ultimately embedded within the cosmos itself.

The basic principle of astrology is that the planets have a fundamental cosmically based connection to specific archetypal forces or principles which influence human existence, and that the patterns formed by the planets in the heavens bear a meaningful correspondence to the patterns of human affairs on the Earth. In terms of individuals, the positions of the planets at the time and place of a person's birth are regarded as corresponding to the basic archetypal patterns of that person's life and character. ¹

According to this interpretation, the natal chart represents the psychological make-up or orientation of the individual at birth; and the ongoing progressions and transits reflect the changing modes of thought and experience occurring throughout one's present life. The position of the transiting planets therefore represents a sort of evolving map of the intricately changing network of our mental experience. But there must inevitably arise the question of *how* and by what means are the changing positions of the planets synchronously related to the human psyche. The changing aspects of transiting planets to the positions of planets existing at birth can clearly have no effect on a person unless those natal planetary positions are an integral part of the makeup of an individual's personal psyche. It seems that the position of the planets at birth is somehow *imprinted* on that soul and is in a way synonymous with the characteristics of that particular individual's psyche; so that, the transiting aspects to the planetary positions of the natal chart are relating to something integral to the individual. They are relating to the living psyche of the individual, which in turn is synonymous with the planetary arrangement existing at his/her birth.

If this interpretation of "planetary correspondences" is correct, then every individual born bears within him- or herself the imprint and structure of the planetary arrangement existing at that very moment and is in fact an *embodiment* of that planetary arrangement. And the movements of the planets, along with their changing relations to one another during the course of the life of the individual, are intimately correlated with the unfolding life and psyche of that individual. It is not that one is considered to be causing the other; they are regarded instead as merely correlated events in the universal unfoldment. They are merely two synchronous mirror images of the activity of the Divine Mind. Here, again, Richard Tarnas, on why astrology works:

It seems unlikely to me that the planets send out some kind of physical emanations that causally influence events in human life in a mechanistic way. The range of coincidences between planetary positions and human existence is just too vast, too experientially complex, too aesthetically subtle and endlessly creative to be explained by physical factors alone. I believe that a more plausible and comprehensive explanation is that the universe is informed and pervaded by a fundamental holistic patterning which extends through every level, so that a constant synchronicity or meaningful correlation exists between

astronomical events and human events. This is represented in the basic esoteric axiom, “as above, so below,” which reflects a universe all of whose parts are integrated into an intelligible whole.²

In dealing with astrological “influences” one needs, therefore, to take a universal all-inclusive perspective, and to recognize the truth of the fundamental dictum that “all things move together of one accord.” From this perspective, the universe is the manifestation of the one Intelligence, the *Nous* or *Logos*; all is one integral life in which every entity and every action is interrelated, functioning as coordinated aspects of the universal expression. In such a view, the planets are merely “signs,” indicators of prevailing influences or energies currently operating, and have no causal function. This view also asserts a marvelously complex and exquisite perfection in the unfolding of the universe, and underscores the existence of a Divine Intelligence in operation down through each member, upholding, activating, and supporting all. The individualized soul, the result of its previously created karma, comes into the world at exactly the moment that the planetary arrangement mirrors the qualities of its being. What a truly extraordinary wonder of Divine creative perfection!

But should we gather, then, that we are wholly governed by these planetary energies (archetypes), that there is a cosmic determinism at work here that is inescapable? Should we believe that our sense of individual freedom is merely an illusion, and that we must unwittingly and unerringly follow the cosmic fiat as inscribed in the movements of the stars? And, perhaps most importantly, if there is, instead, a means by which each individual soul possesses a free and undetermined will, quite beyond the “meaningful correspondence” that exists between astronomical and human events, what is the explanation for such a free will?

The soul, or psyche, of each individual, though embodying the cosmic arrangement at the moment of its birth and constituting the specific tenor and structure of the life of the individual, has at its core the eternal Consciousness which is the principle and primary element of its being, constituting its permanent Ground and Self, beyond all projected energies resulting from any temporary arrangements of the cosmic array. Therefore, the cosmic arrangement at the moment of our birth into this universe may constitute our temporal identity; but the One who projects this universe, and in whose Mind we exist, constitutes our eternal Identity. This eternal Identity remains throughout our existence, and is unaffected by any transient

conditions, such as the planetary patterns of relationship appearing within the manifest universe.

The Neoplatonist conception, as put forward by Plotinus (205-270 C.E.), as well as the Vedantic conception, put forth in the Upanishads, satisfactorily explains this eternal Principle of freedom. The Divine Mind (*Nous* or *Brahma*), which is the active element of the Divine Consciousness, projects a coordinated Dream-world of immense vastness and complexity (the manifested *Cosmos* or *Maya*). Yet the source and heart of all existence, the substratum of Divine Consciousness, the Ground of the Soul (*the One* or *Brahman*), remains constant. It is independent of and unaffected by this surface play of universal phenomena; for the world of physical and mental phenomena is but an appearance, a kind of superimposition, on this substratum of Divine Consciousness. For most of us, the mind's continuous display of this superimposition of both physical and psychological states synchronous with the positions and angular relationships of the planets is extremely persuasive, becoming the primary basis of our psychologically perceived reality. But, through deep meditation or deliberate recollection, we are able to maintain identity with the Conscious substratum of Being, and able to view the ongoing parade of transient physical and mental conditions and images related to existing planetary energies as but the superimposed activities of that Conscious substratum.

Therefore, when we consider the correlation of planetary events and human events, we are *not* dealing with a straightforward cause-effect relationship. This is because we humans are of a two-fold nature; we are, in essence, identical with the divine Consciousness, our Divine Self, which assures us of a free will; and we are only secondarily products of the creative Power (*Nous* or *Brahma*) which begets the material body-mind complex along with its accompanying karmic tendencies. The winds of all the influences of all the planets may blow, but the Divine Self may yet remain unmoved, withholding and denying her consent to the influential powers; or better, she may use the influences of those planetary powers to her own Divine purposes, rather than to the merely pleasurable mental, physical and emotional activities to which they tend to incline. Conversely, if an individual's sense of the Divine Self is weak, the individual's will may be swayed by the mental and physical influences impinging on her and surrender to their power. But, with a determined dependence on and identification with the Divine Self, the individual will does have the free and final word on the course of the life it rules.

We are a combination, a duality, of identities: we are the Divine Self (*the One, Brahman*), and we are also distinctly individual souls by virtue of our embodiment in a Mind-projected universe. Our essence, the one Divine Consciousness, is the only true ‘I’ in all the universe and beyond; It is everyone’s eternal Identity. But, by His mysterious Power of illusion (*Maya*), the Spirit born into this world as Soul takes on a limited set of characteristics as well, which constitutes one’s limited temporal identity, otherwise known as the *jiva*, or individualized soul. According to that soul’s previous mental tendencies, and in synchrony with the evolving motions of the planets and celestial bodies as they relate to the place on Earth where that soul takes birth, the characteristics of each soul are made manifest. The astrological interpretations of the planetary positions at one’s birth can therefore provide helpful indications of the soul characteristics of each person born.

The astrological natal chart is an authentic diagram of the individualized soul, but it says nothing of the Divine Identity, or Self, underlying the manifestation of that soul. The ‘soul’ is in essence the Divine as it appears within the dream-fabric of *Cosmos/Maya*. It partakes of both the Divine and the illusory—just as in a dream, we partake of both our true conscious selves and an illusory self. The analogy is exceedingly apt, as in both instances, we retain our fundamental reality, while operating in an illusory ‘imaged’ reality. The individual soul (or *astral* body), as portrayed in the astrological chart, is, to a great degree, who we are; and we operate in this life from the past karmic tendencies embodied in that natal chart. However, at a more fundamental level, we are identical with the Divine Self, which comprises our freedom to will and act from a level of consciousness beyond our soul properties and characteristics. The past karmic tendencies are very powerful in their influence; and they can lead us astray, unless we are able to identify with the Divine Self and turn those inherent tendencies to Divine purposes.

A recent example will suffice to illustrate this dual identity: A young man, a college student, named Seung-Hui Cho, went on a recent rampage, killing thirty-two of his classmates at a Virginia College. The young man’s natal chart shows the difficult karmic limitation suggested by the Sun’s square aspect to a close conjunction between Mars and Pluto. A predictably volatile and violent aspect indeed! Also, at the time of his birth, Jupiter was in exact conjunction with Neptune. Such natives have a tendency, if there are other conflicting factors, to “lose contact with reality and live in a world of private fantasy”. This natal chart describes the soul characteristics under which this

young man took birth. They were not conditions which were imposed from without; they were conditions previously forged in his own soul, and they describe the embedded tendencies (as depicted in the natal chart) which constituted the framework of his recent life.

But underneath this projected framework there stood the divine Consciousness, the free Will of the Self. Would he identify with that higher Soul Essence and be triumphant in overruling the limiting structure of his accumulated tendencies, or would the tendencies win out? We now know the terrible answer to that question. But we must acknowledge that, despite the overwhelming strength of the negative tendencies embodied in this soul, at his core, he was free to refuse assent to their promptings. The negative soul tendencies won out. They proved too deeply entrenched, too overwhelmingly reinforced in this present life, to be overcome; but we must never doubt that, in his essential Being, he was free to choose. “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.”³

It is important to have a clear understanding not only of one’s Divine Ground and to identify with one’s eternal Freedom, but one should also have a complete understanding of the makeup of one’s soul as indicated by the planetary pattern existing at birth, as well as of the nature and occurrence of the various changing planetary conditions as they manifest daily in our lives. An awareness of the archetypal energies currently prevailing in one’s life gives an extraordinary advantage in the timing and utilization of those specific energies for the enfolding of one’s potential to manifest and express the freedom of the Divine Will. As Richard Tarnas explains,

Astrology can serve to greatly increase personal freedom... Partly this is because awareness of the basic archetypal structures and patterns of meaning in one’s birth chart allows one to bring considerably more consciousness to the task of fulfilling one’s deepest potential, one’s authentic nature. But [also because] the more deeply we understand the archetypal forces that affect our lives, the freer we can be in dealing with them. If we are altogether unconscious of these potent forces, we are like puppets of the archetypes; we then act according to unconscious motivations without any possibility of our being intelligent agents interacting with these forces. To the exact extent that we are conscious of the archetypes, we can respond with greater autonomy and Self-awareness.⁴

The soul is essentially identical with the transcendent Source of all, and is supremely, absolutely, free. In its transcendent aspect, it is always free, immutable and unaffected by the bodily conditions or worldly circumstances of individuals; however, when the soul identifies with the conditional, it is bound; it is subject to being carried along in the floodwaters of the archetypal forces of Nature. Only when it knows and identifies with the Divine Self, does it realize and manifest its true freedom. According to this understanding, a man is free insofar as he is cognizant of his essential identity with the Highest and bound when he departs from the knowledge and awareness of his Divinity, identifying with the body/mind complex. He then succumbs to the rule of earthly necessity and is moved willy-nilly by the causative forces inherent in Nature. He has the power, as the Divine Self, to will freely, unencumbered, uncompelled by circumstance; and, for that reason is responsible for his individual actions. All souls are linked by inclusion to the one Soul, and by extension to the Divine Mind; but only he who is cognizant, aware, of his Divine Identity, is truly free.

NOTES:

1. Richard Tarnas, Ph.D., *An Introduction to Archetypal Astrological Analysis*, pp. 2-3.
2. Richard Tarnas, Ph.D., *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4
3. William Shakespeare, *Julius Ceasar*
4. Richard Tarnas, Ph.D., *An Introduction to Archetypal Astrological Analysis*, pp. 2-3.

* * *

FIVE: ETERNAL FREEDOM

Now that we have firmly established that you possess in your very nature the capability of willing freely, let's take a look at that free will from a more expanded perspective: This world, and all that is in it—indeed this entire universe—exists in the Mind of God. This far-flung cosmos is a Mind-born image constituted of Thought. It is made of the Consciousness of the one Divine Self. It is that very Consciousness that we partake of as we become aware of our own existence. That Consciousness, manifest as us, is the inner sense of 'I am' that constitutes our awareness, our identity. The immense drama taking place as this universe, therefore, is, in many respects, like a dream. God is the Dreamer; we are the characters in the dream. Yes, indeed, we are able to will freely in this dream, as we are essentially identical with the Dreamer, partaking of His utter freedom.

To understand this better, let's look at our own dreams: In our dreams, our dream characters exist as images in our own minds, borrowing their awareness from the consciousness in which they live and move and have their being. Though they experience a freedom of movement and choice, it is the freedom of the dreaming mind (our minds) that is the foundation of that sense of freedom. Theirs is but an imagined freedom; they are in fact entirely governed by our own subconscious willing. When we awake, the dream characters vanish, and we alone remain. Similarly, we, in this phenomenal reality, experience a freedom of movement and choice, but it is the freedom of the One in whom we exist that is the foundation of that sense of freedom. When God withdraws this dreamlike universe of phenomena back into His own Consciousness, we vanish, and He alone remains. In our dreams, it is always only ourselves who truly exist; the dreams are but images playing in our own minds. Likewise, in this phenomenal universe, it is always only God, the eternal Self, who truly exists; the universal phenomena are but images playing in His own Mind. It is He who is the only Existent when the universe is imaged forth, and He is the only Existent when the universal image is extinguished. He is always the only one who exists.

And so, the free will that we experience during our brief imaginary existence is really His freedom of will. There is really no separate 'I' to claim possession of such a will, and there never was. The only 'I' was His all along. And all along, the freedom that we claimed was, and shall always be, His. The bottom line is, yes, we have free will! But we exist in Him, and what we think is ours is truly His. 'I' and 'Him' are ultimately not two; and

so, there is no contradiction here. Be free and know that you and He are one!

* * *

SIX: THE CELESTIAL DYNAMICS OF GRACE

(from *The Supreme Self*, 1984)

Nearly ten years had passed since my experience of enlightenment in the Santa Cruz mountains, when I began to be interested in the peculiar claims of astrology and came to have an understanding of the “celestial dynamics,” not only of my own personal characteristics, but of all the ordinary and extraordinary day-to-day transient conditions of the mind, the body, and the soul. There were, no doubt, some “celestial influences” accompanying that dawning interest in astrological correspondences, but all I knew was that I had become fascinated with the clearly meaningful connections between my own natal planetary positions and my personal characteristics and fluctuating mental states; and as I eagerly consumed what literature I found on the subject, I became more and more convinced of the validity of the astrological principle of correspondence between the planetary positions and the varying conditions of my psyche.

According to the principles of astrology, one can discover the secrets of a soul’s unique characteristics (the psychology of a personality) by drawing a map of the heavens as it appeared at the exact moment and place of birth, which serves as a sort of blueprint of that particular soul. But how, when, and in what sequence the events of the person’s adventure on earth will take place is told in the *progressions* of the planets (one day in the ephemeris represents one year in the life), and by the daily *transits* (actual transitory positions) of the Sun, moon and planets as they pass through and relate to the natal map.

All of the planets move (transit) through the twelve signs of the zodiac which comprise the 360° of the ecliptic; some slowly, some more rapidly. The Sun moves approximately one degree per day, and the moon one degree approximately every two hours. The outer planets take weeks or months to move through a degree. But always the overall architecture of this “atom” which we call the solar system is altering its design moment by moment. And we, who are within the confines of this “atom” are continually experiencing the changes in our own energy-patterns according to, and corresponding with, the changes in the angles from which the various planets and stars relate to us.

This implies, of course, that *everything* that happens to us in our lives will be accompanied by a planetary arrangement, which, in its relationship to the positions of the planets at the moment of our birth, will symbolize that event. One day, it occurred to me that, if these principles were true, there would have to have been a configuration in the progressed and transiting positions of the planets on the night of my “mystical experience” that was significantly extraordinary. In other words, that Divine experience which we refer to as “*grace*” must also have been signified in the planetary patterns in effect for me on that very night.

This was a mind-boggling concept that was to stand many of my most cherished presumptions on their heads. In order to explain why this should be so, let me take a moment to describe some of those presumptions regarding that mysterious thing called “*grace*,” which is, from the standpoint of its recipient, a new and radical change in consciousness, and, subsequently, in the personality, which arises seemingly from out of nowhere:

From the moment my soul first awakened with “spiritual” understanding, and the love and desire for God first entered my heart, I had attributed that awakening to God’s grace. And there was no question in my mind that my later, “mystical,” experience was the gift of grace, for there was absolutely no denying the fact that this experience had been *given* to me. I had not earned it; I had practiced no technique, no method; by no means could I be said to have produced it. There was no other word to describe this gift other than “*grace*.”

Traditionally, grace—the grace of God—was thought of as the freely-given intercession of God to a humbled soul, lifting it momentarily to merge in the universal Consciousness. In this experience, the false, but insistent, illusion of a separate soul-identity, or ego, is dissolved, and the Divine Intelligence, which is the infinite and eternal Self of all, is revealed. How could the illusory, individual ‘self’ imagine that it had accomplished this feat? Let those who think they can accomplish it do so. When the Self is realized, that separate self is no longer even there! The eternal Self appears only at its demise. And it has not the ability to slay itself; it is only the divine revelation of God that, in an instant, dissolves that tenacious illusory ego. It is grace.

Listen to what that enlightened 15th-century monk, Thomas á Kempis, had to say about grace:

When spiritual comfort is sent to you of God, take it meekly and give thanks humbly for it. But know for certain that it is of the great goodness of God that it is sent to you, and not of your deserving. And see that you are not lifted up therefore unto pride, nor that you joy much thereof, nor presume vainly therein, but rather that you be the more meek for so noble a gift, and the more watchful and fearful in all your works; for that time will pass away, and the time of temptation will shortly follow after. When comfort is withdrawn, despair not therefore, but meekly and patiently await the visitation of God, for He is able and of sufficient power to give you more grace and more spiritual comfort than you had first.

Such alteration of grace is no new thing, and no strange thing to those who have had experience in the way of God; for in all great saints and in all lovers of God similar alteration has often been found.

... If almighty God has done thus with holy saints, it is not for us, weak and feeble persons, to despair, though we sometimes have fervor of spirit, and are sometimes left cold and void of devotion. *The Spirit comes and goes according to His pleasure*, and therefore Job said: “Lord Thou [dost] graciously visit Thy lover in the morning, that is to say, in the time of comfort; and suddenly Thou [dost] prove him in withdrawing such comforts from him.”

...He who knows the comforts that come through the gift of grace and knows also how sharp and painful the absenting of grace is, shall not dare think that any goodness comes of himself; but he shall openly confess that of himself he is very poor and naked of all virtue. ¹

What Thomas said conformed to my own experience. The fervor of devotion was not always the same; it came and went, apparently according to its own pleasure. Likewise, the clarity of understanding was sometimes absent, and at other times inspiration seemed to flood my mind with the wisdom of God. One day I might be filled with love and fervor; another day

I might be dry or lethargic, or physically energetic, or contemplative. One day I might be bubbling with creative energy; another day I would be dry as a bone. There was no telling what kind of inner state each day would bring.

The experience of union, or Unity, had come to me only once. Why on that day, at that time? I could only explain it, as Thomas á Kempis did, as God's inexplicable grace. But now I was beginning to understand something of the celestial dynamics of grace, i.e., the principles of astrological correspondence. And so, I drew up a chart for that night of November 18, 1966.

What a revelation it was when I beheld that chart! The correspondence was undeniable. Here before my eyes was clear and unequivocal proof of the "science" of astral correspondences. Any impartial astrologer viewing the progressions and transits to my natal chart which occurred on that evening would have to acknowledge that this was indeed a night of destiny, an undeniably magical night of mystical vision, a once-in-a-lifetime night of incredible potential for the meeting with God. The extraordinary emphasis on the planetary position of Neptune (known as the planet of mystical experience) at that particular time is eloquently conclusive.

If—as many people think—there is really no correlation between the planets and the human psyche, then what an extraordinarily grand coincidence it was, what a marvelous accident of nature, that at the same moment that I was experiencing the Godhead, the planets were proclaiming it in the heavens! I think any reasonable person with even a little astrological acumen, on viewing the "influences" in effect for me that night, would have to acknowledge that the significant planetary picture at the time of my "enlightenment experience" does, in fact, seem to provide evidence of the validity of the contents of that experience, confirming that all things do indeed "move together of one accord," that nothing happens that is not ordained to happen, that the universe is one coordinated Whole.

But, along with the excitement of discovery and validation which I felt on viewing this chart, there was a nagging question that left me baffled and confused: If this "mystical experience" was described in the heavens since the beginning of time, and therefore entirely predestined, where was "grace"? Where was the freely-given gift of God that I had experienced as occurring at just that moment? If everything was strictly predetermined, where was grace and free will and the possibility of spiritual endeavor?

Where was choice or merit or virtue? Where was blame or culpability? And where was the hope or possibility of “spiritual experience” for those in whose astrological forecast the prerequisite planetary conditions were *not* present? If God’s universe is merely the mechanistic unfolding of an undeviating script, then are we all merely mechanical pawns, and our trials and triumphs, our perseverings and defeats, merely dramatic plot-twists in a story that’s already written, typeset and published?

It is important to emphasize at this time that the planets, in themselves, do not have the power to *cause* either good or ill-fortune, though many (including myself) habitually speak of “planetary influences” as though they were *independent causes* determining our fate. In ancient times, of course, as planetary configurations were seen to correspond to definite kinds of psychological and behavioral effects, the naive supposed that planets were therefore independent forces, responsible for the destiny of man. Each planet was fitted out with its own individual personality and was assumed to have independent power to affect events on earth. This was the basis for the myths of the “gods.”

The great Roman mystic, Plotinus, writing in the 3rd century C.E. on the subject of *Are The Stars Causes?* noted that a belief in the independent power of the planets is “tenable only by minds ignorant of the [true] nature of a Universe which has a ruling Principle and a First Cause operative downward through every member.”² He explained:

Each [planetary] entity takes its origin from one Principle and, therefore, while executing its own function, works in with every other member of that All. ... And there is nothing undesigned, nothing of chance, in all the process: all is one scheme of differentiation, starting from the First Cause and working itself out in a continuous progression of effects.³

This perfectly unfolding progression of effects from the one all-ruling Cause is clearly seen by all who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is that “vision” which is the experiential basis for the assertion that “all things move together of one accord”; that “assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” Still, the question of *how* the transiting “planetary influences” operate; i.e., by what process Neptune or any other planet transmits to individual souls its effects, is a legitimate one. And the matter of how *progressions* operate (which are not even present-time events, but “symbols” of planetary events already past) is even more perplexing. These

questions cannot be answered by present-day knowledge, but many astrologers guess that something like the following is the case:

As the planets of the solar system change their angles to one another and thus rearrange the structural design of the entire system and its relationship to the design at one's nativity, there is a corresponding change in the pattern of conscious energy (*Shakti*) which makes up our psychic and phenomenal reality. The energy-pattern (produced by the angular positions of the Sun, Moon and planets), which exists at the time of an individual's birth, corresponds to the conscious energy-pattern, or aggregation of qualities, of that individual soul. And the subsequent alterations of the planetary positions after that moment spell out in decipherable terms his or her destiny.

It seems to me, however, that the search for a *cause-effect* relationship between the transits and progressions of planets and the lives of individual souls on earth is indicative of humanity's long-standing mistaken view of reality. Plotinus saw in the 2nd century what is true eternally—that there is *one* Cause, and all else is Its effects. The planets do not focus beneficent or malevolent rays or forces in our direction; they do not put forth any fields of influence that impinge on us at all. In short, they are not *causes* at all, but merely *signs* of the activity of the one Cause, which is God, revealed to those who can read them.

I believe it is very important to understand that, although the planets *signal* psychic and physical events experienced on earth, they are not themselves responsible; they are not the *cause* but are only coincident effects synchronous with the effects perceived upon earthly life. In short, the “influences” of the planets are really the influences of the unbroken Whole, manifesting locally as specific patterns of relationships. The planets do not determine our fate; they merely reveal it. Our lives are determined by the One in whom the planets move. This is a view consistent with the view of Plotinus, and I believe it will be consistent with the enlightened understanding of the future.

The evolution of the soul occurs over many lifetimes, with its summit being the full openness to self-surrender in the Love of God, and the subsequent realization of its supreme Identity. And because the evolution of the universe reflects the evolution of each soul, the stellar and planetary positions, which signal that soul's enlightenment, will coincide perfectly with that moment in the soul's evolutionary summit. And the question of

whether it is the soul's evolutionary struggle or the planetary alignments, which brings about enlightenment must be answered, "Neither." They are coordinated events in the unfolding of God's cosmic drama; both events are simultaneous effects of the one Cause, occurring in Himself in the ordered unfoldment of His will. All is one coordinated whole, and all that occurs within it is a manifestation of His grace.

The complexity of such a universe—a universe in which the destiny of each succeeding manifestation of a soul on earth is in synchronization with the ongoing motions of planetary bodies—is indeed beyond our present ability to conceive or visualize. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that it is impossible to separate the birth of any individual from the cosmic conditions in which it occurs. For the universe is an integral Whole, and every event in it is in interlocking agreement with every other; not even the tiniest, most seemingly insignificant, event may be considered as an isolated phenomenon.

Within this Whole, where "all things move together of one accord," the division of small-scale events into categories of *cause* and *effect* is imaginary and has no real meaning. For it is the Lord, God, *Shiva*, Self—call Him what you will—who, by means of His Power of Will (*Shakti*), is the sole Cause of the entire manifested array of the cosmos and therefore of every single event which takes place within it. This truth is seen clearly and unmistakably in the unitive experience of the mystic.

Here are the charts drawn up for the time and place of my mystical experience: The first chart, chart A, is the chart of the *transiting* planetary arrangement in effect at the time of my "experience of unity." The lines connecting those planets in *opposition* (180°) *trine* (120°), and *sextile* (60°) aspects to each other show the angular relationships between these transiting planets. This, in itself, is a remarkable configuration. But to fully appreciate the significance of this transiting planetary arrangement, it must be seen in relationship to the positions of the planets at my birth as well as the *progressed* chart.

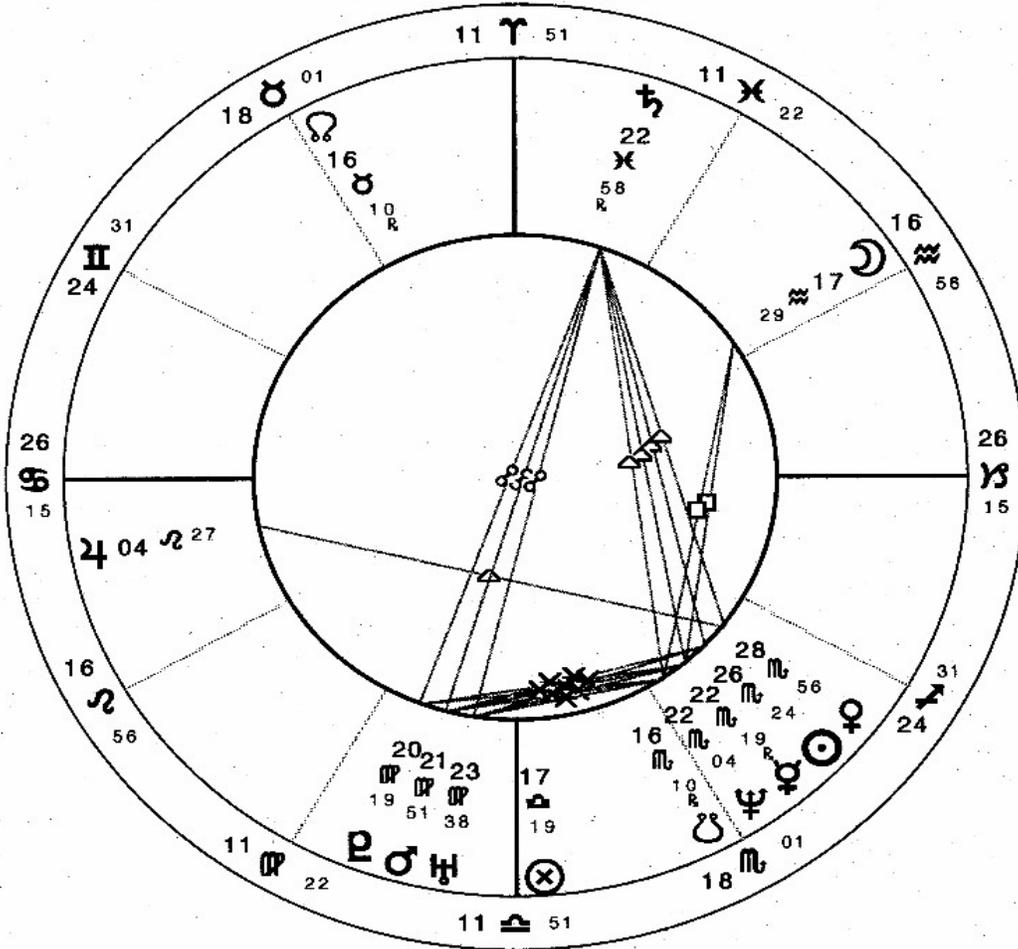
Chart B is a composite chart, showing the positions of the planets in my natal chart and my progressed chart, shown in consecutive wheels. In the center wheel, my *natal* chart, calculated for 6:01 P.M., August 14, 1938, at Indianapolis, Indiana; and in the outer wheel, the chart for the progressed planets at 9:00 P.M., November 18, 1966, at Santa Cruz, California.

In Chart C, one can see the natal chart and the transiting chart for the same time and place pictured in consecutive wheels.

CHART A

Stan TroutTrans.

Nov 18 1966	9:00 PM PST
Santa Cruz	California
38N00	121W53
Nov 19 1966	05:00:00 GMT
Tropical	Placidus True Node



Natal Aspects:

Sun conjunct Mars
Sun trine Saturn
Sun square Uranus
Mercury trine Uranus
Mercury conjunct Neptune
Mars square Uranus
Saturn semisextile Uranus
Uranus trine Neptune

Progressed Aspects (to natal planets):

Moon conjunct Saturn (exact)
Moon semisextile Uranus (exact)
Sun conjunct Neptune (exact)

Transiting Aspects (to natal planets):

Moon sextile Saturn (exact)
Moon square Uranus (exact)
Sun conjunct Midheaven
Mercury square Sun (exact)
Mercury conjunct North Node (exact)
Venus conjunct Midheaven (exact)
Venus square Jupiter (exact)
Mars conjunct Neptune
Jupiter trine Moon (exact)
Uranus conjunct Neptune
Neptune conjunct North Node (exact)
Neptune square Sun (exact)
Pluto conjunct Neptune (exact)

Note: planets within 1° aspect are considered to be exact.

In examining the composite of charts in Chart B, the first thing that stands out to the trained eye is the highly significant progression of both the Sun and the Moon (middle wheel) to exact conjunctions with natal planets (center wheel). The Moon's progression to an exact conjunction to my natal Saturn is a conjunction which occurs only once every twenty-eight to thirty years; while the Sun's progression to the natal position of Neptune occurs in one's chart only if one's natal Sun position is within 60° or so, clockwise, of Neptune's position—and then, only once in a lifetime. The likelihood of both the Sun and Moon forming progressed conjunctions to (major) natal planets simultaneously is obviously very remote, and when it *does* occur, is highly significant of an extraordinary event.

Neptune, to which the progressed Sun is conjoined, figures quite prominently in my natal chart, as it forms there a conjunction to Mercury and a trine to Uranus. In my early deliberations about my own chart, I had come to look on it as a representation of a certain mental receptivity to poetic inspiration. But Neptune represents much more than that; with beneficial aspects from other planets, it can represent an access to the very subtlest of spiritual realms. One astrologer, Robert Hand, who is a recognized authority on astrological symbols, says about Neptune:

Neptune symbolizes the truth and divinity perceived by mystics. (*Keep in mind that the planet is an agent or a representation of an energy, not the source of the energy.*) At the highest level, Neptune represents Nirvana, where all individuality is merged into an infinite oneness of being and consciousness. ⁴

In Chart C, you will notice that the massive conjunction of transiting Mars-Uranus-Pluto (outer wheel) is precisely over my natal Neptune, along with the progressed Sun, and that the conjunction of transiting Mercury-Neptune is precisely over my natal North Node of the Moon. There were, on that night of November 18, 1966, two exact conjunctions of *progressed* planets to natal planets, and ten exact aspects of *transiting* planets to natal positions, five of which were conjunctions. The concentration of energy over my natal Neptune position was clearly intense—intense enough for even a thick-headed person like myself to catch a glimpse of God.

If it could be shown that, in all cases, the mystical experience of Unity coincided with progressed solar and/or lunar aspects to Neptune in the charts of all the experiencers, we would be in possession of a neatly consistent formula for anticipating mystical experience. However, that does not seem always to be the case. When one examines the charts of known mystics of the past progressed to the date of their transcendent experience, one encounters a very inconsistent collection of varied influences, although aspects to the natal Neptune position do seem to figure strongly.

For example, in the chart of Sri Aurobindo (born August 15, 1872), at the time of his reported enlightenment (January 15, 1908) the progressed moon is exactly conjunct his natal Neptune, and the progressed Sun is exactly quincunx Neptune's position. In the chart of Sri Ramakrishna (born February 18, 1836), progressed to the date of his first *samadhi* at the age of twenty-nine (February 1, 1865), the progressed moon is exactly sextile his natal Neptune's position, while there are no major aspects from the progressed Sun. And in the progressed chart of Sri Ramana Maharshi (born December 30, 1879), who became enlightened at the age of sixteen (September 15, 1896), the progressed moon is 3° past a conjunction with natal Jupiter, and the progressed Sun makes only one aspect: a trine to natal Pluto. Even with so brief a sampling, it is clear that there is a wide range of variation in the progressed solar and lunar aspects occurring at the time of enlightenment.

Strangely enough, the one modern mystic whose progressed aspects at the time of his enlightenment most closely resemble the planetary aspects present in my own enlightenment chart is someone who was personally known to me—Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri. Swami Muktananda's natal horoscope reveals him to have been an immensely powerful personality, but it only hints at the tremendous personal power he came to possess through the legacy of *shaktipat* transmitted to him by his guru, Nityananda, and through his lifelong retention of that power. He was totally unique in his masterful attainment, and his life of sharing his spiritual realizations was also amazing and unique; but *his experience of the Self was the common experience of all the enlightened.*

While our paths to enlightenment, our visions, our circumstances, personalities and destinies (as symbolized in our individual horoscopes) were very different, the enlightenment experience which revealed the eternal Self to Muktananda was identical (by definition) with that which I

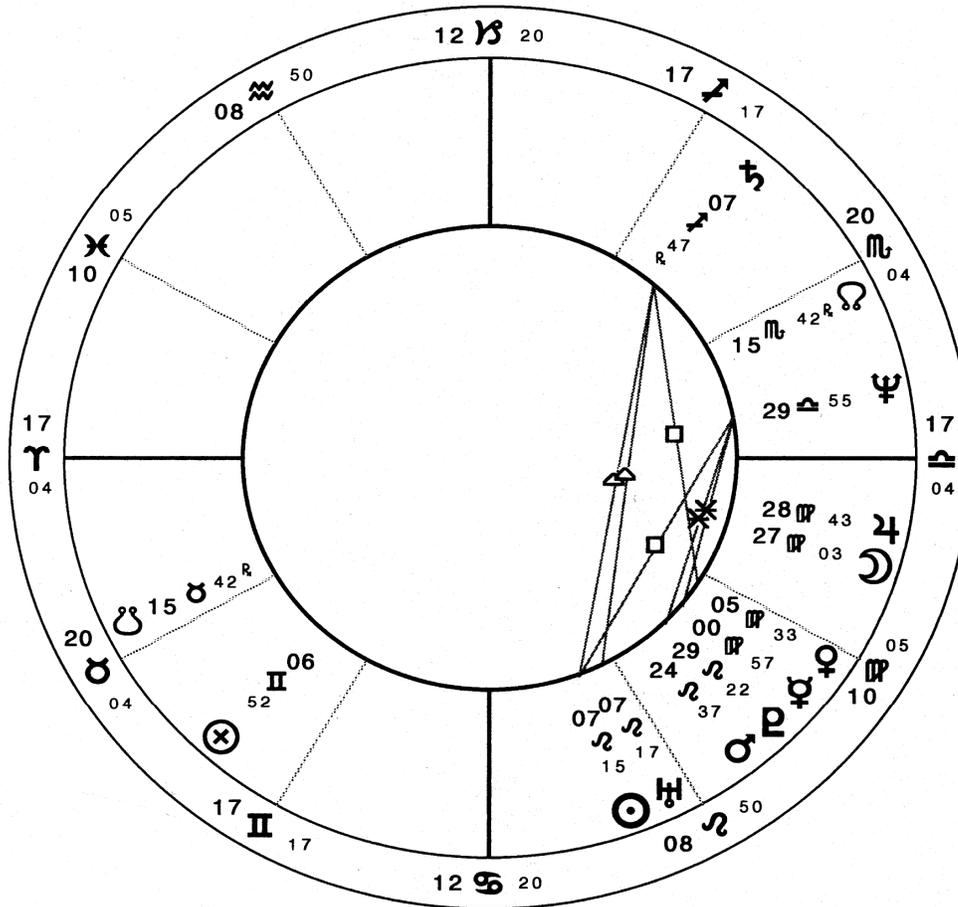
experienced. What's more, the planetary signifiers of enlightenment were nearly identical in both our cases.

Despite the unique elements of Muktananda's *sadhana*, which differed considerably from my own experience, both of our actual enlightenment experiences, though nearly ten years apart, coincided with a strong aspect of the progressed moon to one of the outer natal planets, at the same time that *the progressed Sun was forming an exact conjunction with the natal position of Neptune*. There was also, at the time, an extraordinary and significant array of transiting planets in the heavens in both cases. Here (on the next page) is Chart D, showing the positions of the transiting planets on the day of Muktananda's enlightenment (determined to be July 30, 1957):

Chart D

S. M. Transit7-30-57

Jul 30 1957	11:00 PM INT
Yeola	India
19N00	72E50
Jul 30 1957	17:30:00 GMT
Tropical	Placidus True Node



And here is a composite chart, Chart E, for the time of Mukthananda's enlightenment (the inner wheel is his natal chart (May 16, 1908, at Mangalore, India; 6:00 AM INT); the outer wheel is the *progressed* chart for July 30, 1957.

Chart E

Inner Chart

Swami Muktananda

Saturday, May 16, 1908 6:00:00 AM

Mangalore, India

Time Zone: -05:30 (IST)

Longitude: 074° E 53'

Latitude: 12° N 52'

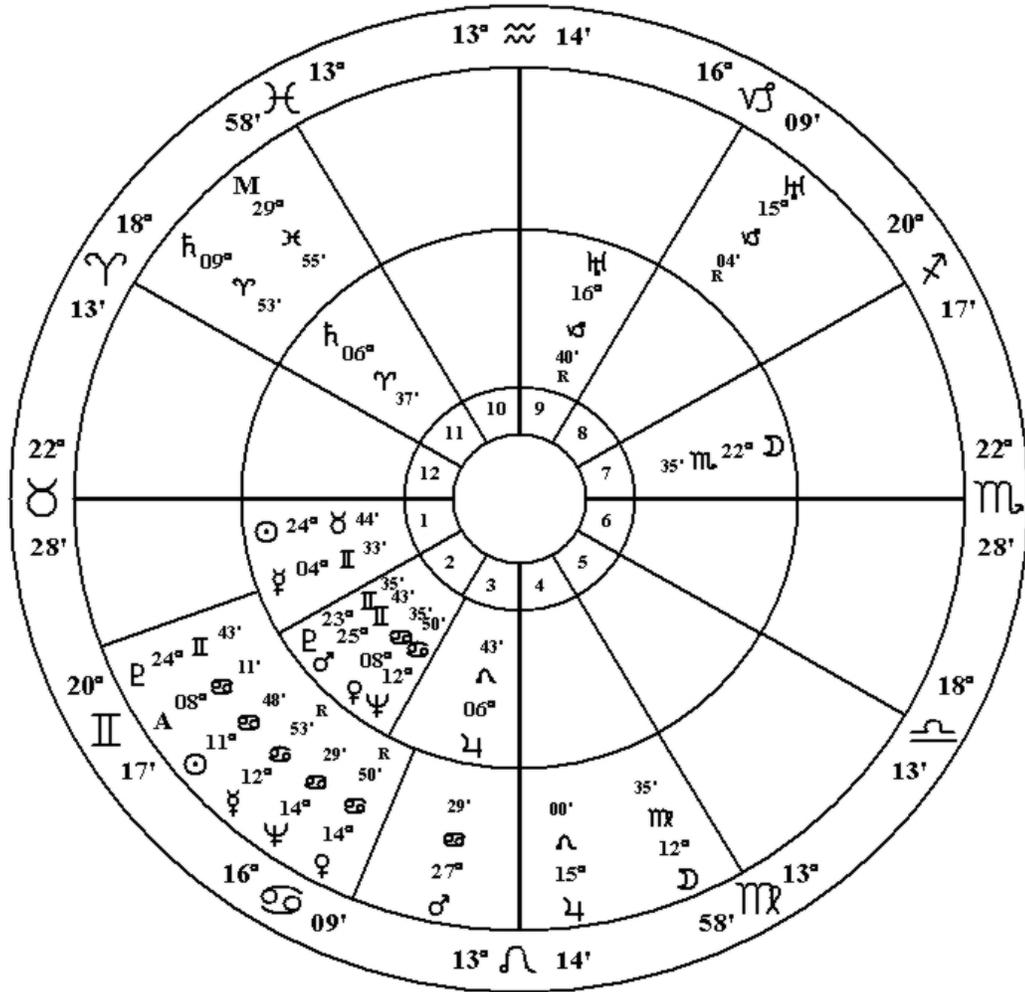
House Cusps based on chart of Swami Muktananda

Muktananda_Swami Prg to 7/30/1957

Saturday, July 04, 1908

2ndary Prog, Solar Arc MC

Yeola, India



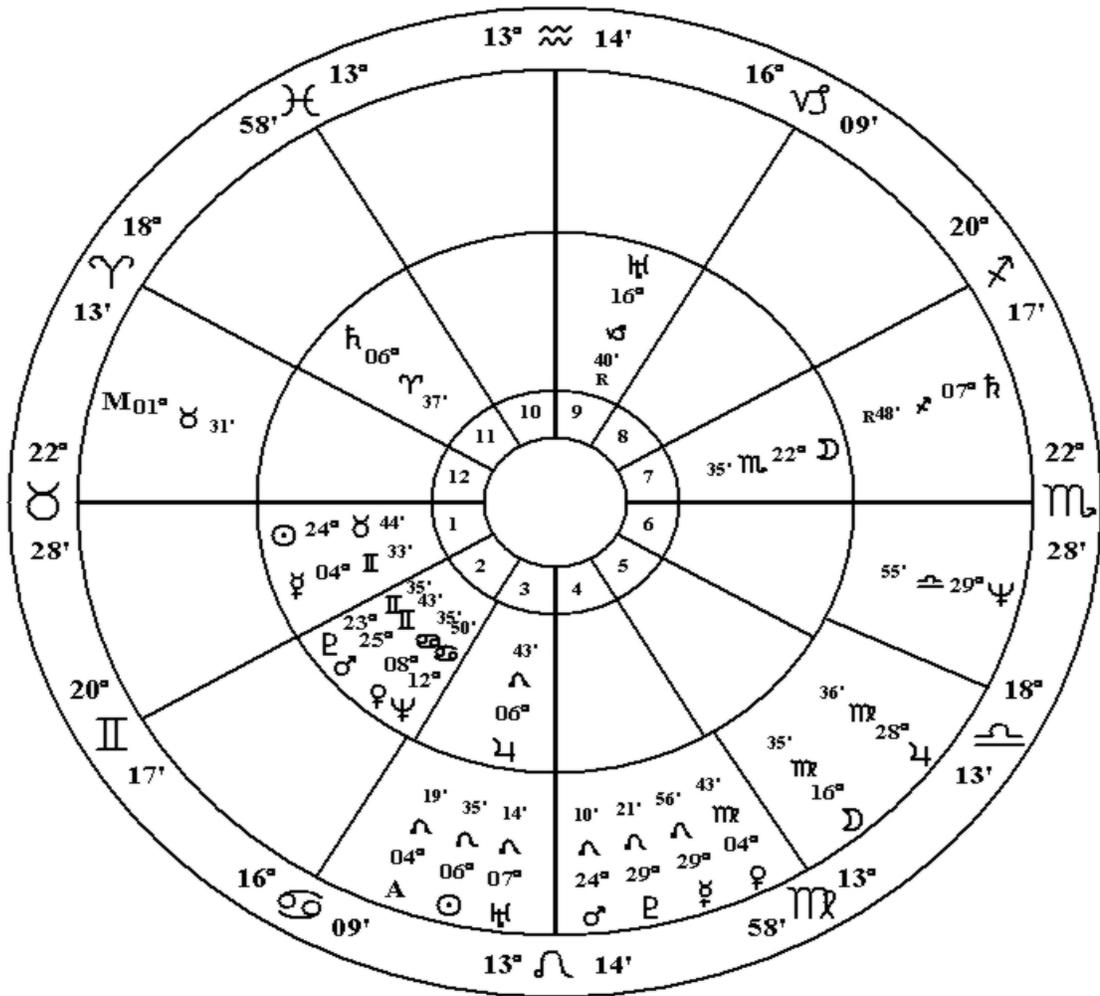
In Chart F the inner wheel is his natal chart, and the outer wheel represents the *transiting* positions of the planets on that day, July 30, 1957:

Chart F

Inner Chart
Swami Muktananda
 Saturday, May 16, 1908 6:00:00 AM
 Mangalore, India
 Time Zone: -05:30 (IST)
 Longitude: 074° E 53'
 Latitude: 12° N 52'

House Cusps based on chart of Swami Muktananda

Outer Chart
Swami Muktananda
 Tuesday, July 30, 1957 6:00:00 AM
 Yeola, India
 Time Zone: -05:30 (IST)
 Longitude: 074° E 29'
 Latitude: 20° N 02'



Natal Aspects:

Sun conjunct Ascendant
 Sun opposite moon
 Mercury sextile Jupiter
 Venus conjunct Neptune
 Venus square Saturn
 Mars conjunct Pluto
 Jupiter trine Saturn (exact)
 Uranus opposite Neptune

Progressed Aspects (to natal planets):

Sun-Mercury conjunct Neptune (exact)
 Moon sextile Neptune (exact)
 Jupiter quincunx Uranus

Transiting Aspects (to natal planets):

Sun-Uranus conjunct Jupiter
 Sun-Uranus trine Saturn
 Moon-Jupiter trine Sun (moon exact)
 Mars-Pluto square Sun
 Saturn trine Jupiter
 Saturn trine Saturn

Note: Planets within 1° aspect are considered to be exact.

In Muktananda's *natal* chart, notice the powerful stellium of planets in the 2nd House, along with the Sun-moon opposition closely conjunct the 1st-7th House cusps. Mars conjunct Pluto, and Venus conjunct Neptune give some indication of his spiritual evolution and the great forcefulness of his personal energy. Jupiter in the 3rd House shows his learning and speaking ability, and Uranus on the 9th House cusp relates both to his advanced philosophical views and his amazingly broad travels.

The *progressed* chart shows the progressed Sun and Mercury in exact conjunction with his natal Neptune, and the progressed Moon in exact sextile to natal Neptune. In addition to these highly significant aspects, Jupiter is progressed to an exact quincunx to natal Uranus.

The *transiting* aspects are equally notable: a transiting Sun-Uranus conjunction is conjunct natal Jupiter, forming a trine aspect to natal Saturn, while transiting Saturn is forming a grand trine with natal Saturn and Jupiter. A transiting Moon-Jupiter conjunction is trining the natal Sun, while transiting Mars, Pluto, and Mercury are in close square to that natal Sun position. All in all, it is a remarkable set of circumstances, signaling a remarkable occurrence. Clearly, it is *as* uniquely powerful a set of progressed and transiting aspects as those which occurred in relation to my own chart in November of 1966.

It is my opinion that this discovery of the correlation of celestial dynamics and mystical experience is a breakthrough in knowledge comparable to those brought about by Copernicus and Galileo and has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of “spiritual” experience. However, it requires so bold a departure from traditional ways of thinking that it is unlikely to have a great influence on the understanding of any but the most discerning. In fact, many so-called “spiritual teachers” will find this information embarrassing and will reject it, for it makes a folly of their contention that it is practices and techniques which bring about Self-realization. For without God’s celestial grace, without the timing of God’s heavenly motions unfolding in one’s life, no illumination will come.

The present-day understanding of how astrology ‘works’ is as far from a comprehensive resolution as is the science of microphysics. It was a mystery to the ancients, and it is a mystery today (although the concept of the immediate interconnectedness of everything within “the unbroken Whole” put forward by the physicist, David Bohm, hints at the way ahead). And while “the science” of the astrology of enlightenment is in its infancy today, I am hopeful that the data that is here provided will point the way to greater exploration and understanding of the relation of astronomical phenomena to mystical experience in the years to come.

NOTES:

1. Abhayananda, S., *Thomas á Kempis*, 1992; pp. 74-75, 78
2. Plotinus, *Enneads*, II:3:6
3. *Ibid.*, II:3:7
4. Hand, Robert, *Astrological Symbols*, Rockfort, Mass., Para Research, Inc., 1980.

* * *

SEVEN: AS ABOVE, SO BELOW¹

An experienced astrologer, familiar with the language of astrological symbolism, can look at the natal horoscopic chart of Isaac Newton and easily discern the primary features of the soul who bore that name, and recognize in these features the historical man; or he may look at the chart of Ralph W. Emerson and discern the soul tendencies impelling that kindly figure, and recognize, as by an interior photograph, the very blueprint of the man's soul. And likewise, with every notable character with whom we are familiar: to those conversant with the language, each birth chart is a faultless portrait of the man or woman thus represented. The charts are faultlessly accurate portraits because they represent the cosmic factors involved in the makeup of those souls in the space-time moment of their embodiment. They stand, indeed, as illustrative proof of the interconnection of the soul's qualities and the heavenly environment which accompanies its incarnation.

We are able to see the concentration of genius in the chart of Einstein; we can see the concentration of harmony in the chart of Beethoven; the concentration of madness in the chart of Manson, the concentration of artistry in the chart of Sinatra, the concentration of poetry in the chart of Swinburne, the concentration of Spirit in the chart of the contemporary saint, Amma Mata Amritanandamayi. And we must ask, 'Were all these manifestations of God's life brought to light instantaneously *solely* by the happenstance of the architecture of the heavens at the moment of their birth?' If we answer "yes" to this question, we have rejected the evolution (reincarnation) of the soul, self-effort, karma, and the efficacy of the individual will, and relegated our personhood to the fiat of the stars. No; that cannot be. We must recognize that all souls pass through lengthy preparations and development in previous incarnations, and bear in their present incarnation the results of that development and are called to take their place upon the world's stage in correspondence with the mirroring spectacle of the heaven's design.

Those souls whose purpose sets them apart, whose aims are strong and focused upon the accomplishment of their destined role, are brought to birth in concert with the starry pattern that portrays their gathered wealth of wit or wisdom or vision or art. All come into life at the intended moment, in concert with the perfect unfolding of the universal array in the Divine Mind and at the behest of the one all-encompassing Soul, which is its manifest activity. "All things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain." The positions and angular relationships

of the planets, the necessity of the times, and the appearance of the souls of the great and small, all live and move and exist, entwined together, by that one assent, and of that one accord.

Here, then, let me present to you the planetary pictures at the birth of some well-known historical figures in chronological order. I believe the cumulative effect of these examples will enable you to perceive and comprehend some of the wonders of the incomprehensible Soul and its creative diversity: ²

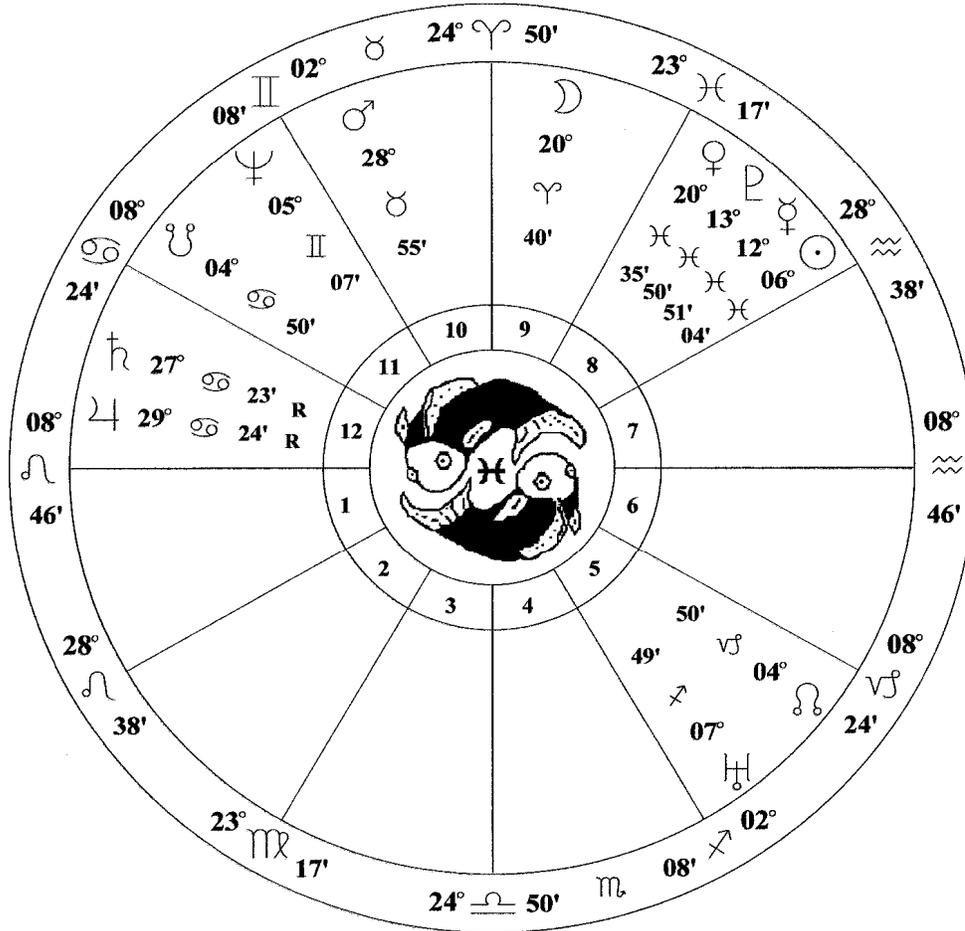
First, the soul of one of our early great scientists, **Galileo Galilei**. Here, on the opposite page, is the planetary chart of his birth.

If you are new to astrological symbolism, you will need to become familiar with the basic symbols; I will not be presenting a beginner's course in astrological interpretation. Those who are already proficient will recognize at a glance the following major planetary aspects:

The Sun, Mercury, Pluto, and Venus conjunct; The Sun in T-square to the Uranus-Neptune opposition; Jupiter conjunct Saturn sextile Mars; Uranus conjunct the North Node, and Neptune conjunct the South Node.

Galileo Galilei
 15 February 1564 03:14:25 PM
 Astronomer, physicist
 Pisa, Italy
 Time Zone: -00:41:32 (LT)
 Longitude: 010° E 23'
 Latitude: 43° N 43'

Placidus Houses
 Tropical Zodiac
 Mean Nodes



The next chart is that of the brilliant French philosopher, **René Descartes**:

One cannot help noticing at first glance that this is an extraordinary chart. Firstly, The Sun, North Node, Uranus, Jupiter, and Pluto are conjunct in Aries; followed by Mercury, Venus, and the Moon conjunct in Taurus. The first multi-conjunction is in trine aspect to Neptune, and the second multi-conjunction is trine to Saturn; and the Jupiter-Pluto conjunction is sextile to

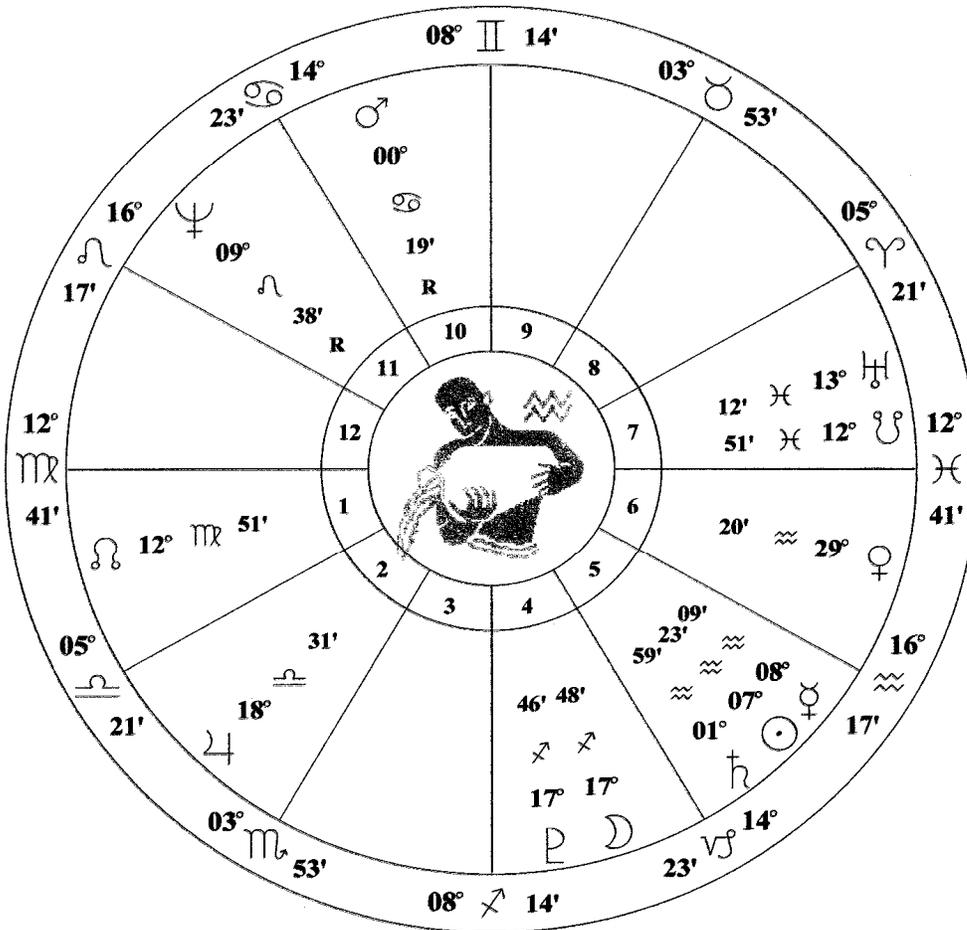
The next chart is that of famed musician, **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**:

Here, again, a strongly emphatic chart; the major planetary aspects include:
The Sun, Mercury, and Saturn conjunct in Aquarius opposing Neptune;

The Moon exactly conjunct Pluto and sextile Jupiter; Venus trine Mars; and
Uranus conjunct the South Node.

Wolfgang Mozart
Tuesday, January 27, 1756 8:00:00 PM
Musician; Composer
Salzburg, Austria
Time Zone: -00:52:08 (LT)
Longitude: 013° E 02'
Latitude: 47° N 48'

Placidus Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes

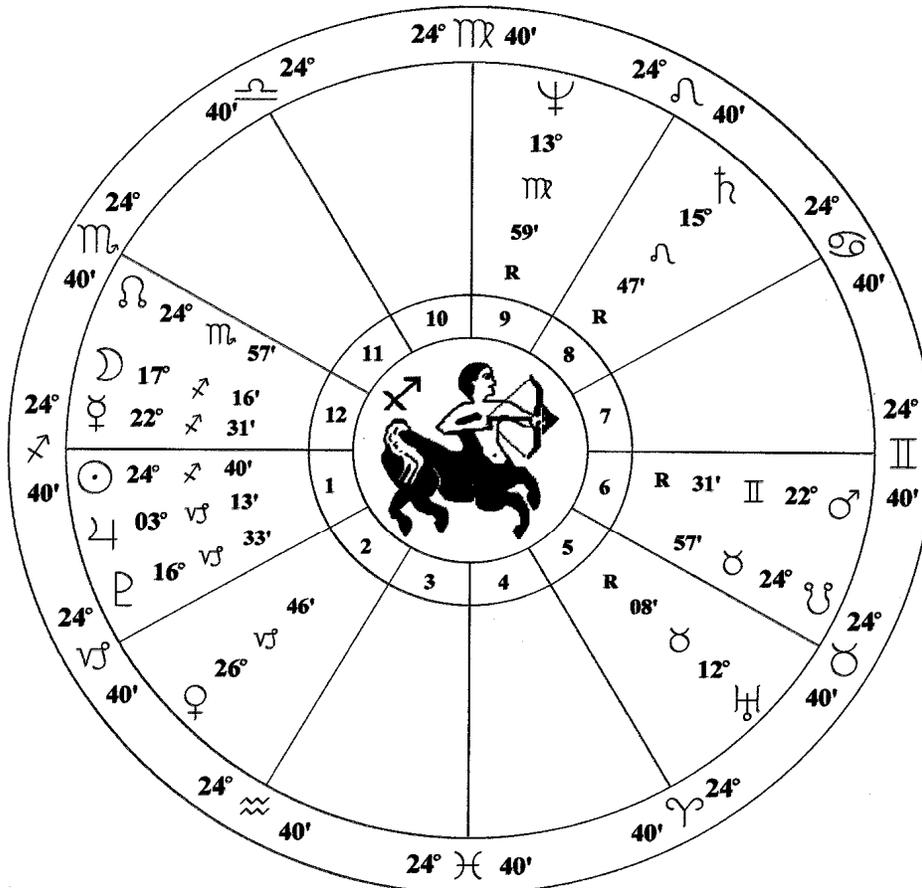


Next, another famed musician, **Ludwig van Beethoven**:

Beethoven's chart is equally grand, containing the following major aspects: The Sun, Moon, and Mercury conjunct in Sagittarius; The Moon and Mercury are forming a trine to Saturn, and squaring Neptune; Mars is conjunct the South Node; but most spectacular is the Grand Trine between Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, only one of which was discovered during his lifetime: Uranus was discovered by Herschel in 1781, but of Neptune and Pluto Beethoven knew nothing. Neptune was not discovered until 1846, and Pluto in 1930.

Ludwig van Beethoven
Sunday, December 16, 1770 12:00:00 PM
Musician; Composer
Bonn, Germany
Time Zone: -00:28:20 (LT)
Longitude: 007° E 05'
Latitude: 50° N 44'

Noon Solar Chart Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes



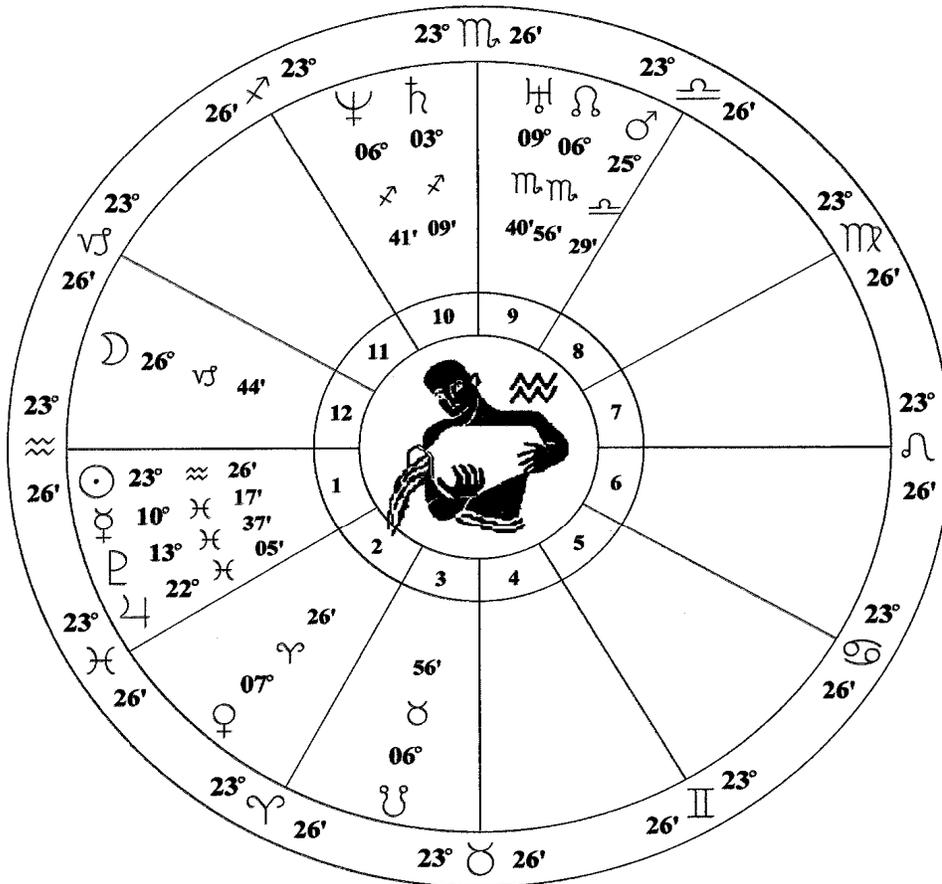
Next, we have the father of the theory of biological evolution, **Charles Darwin**:

Charles Darwin was obviously destined for great accomplishments; among the planetary aspects in his chart are: The Sun in trine aspect to Mars; The Moon in square aspect to Mars and sextile Jupiter; Mercury conjunct Pluto in trine to Uranus; Saturn and Neptune conjunct, and forming a trine aspect to Venus;

And Uranus conjunct the North Node.

Charles Darwin
Sunday, February 12, 1809 12:00:00 PM
Naturalist
Shrewsbury, England
Time Zone: 00:11 (LT)
Longitude: 002° W 45'
Latitude: 52° N 43'

Noon Solar Chart Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes

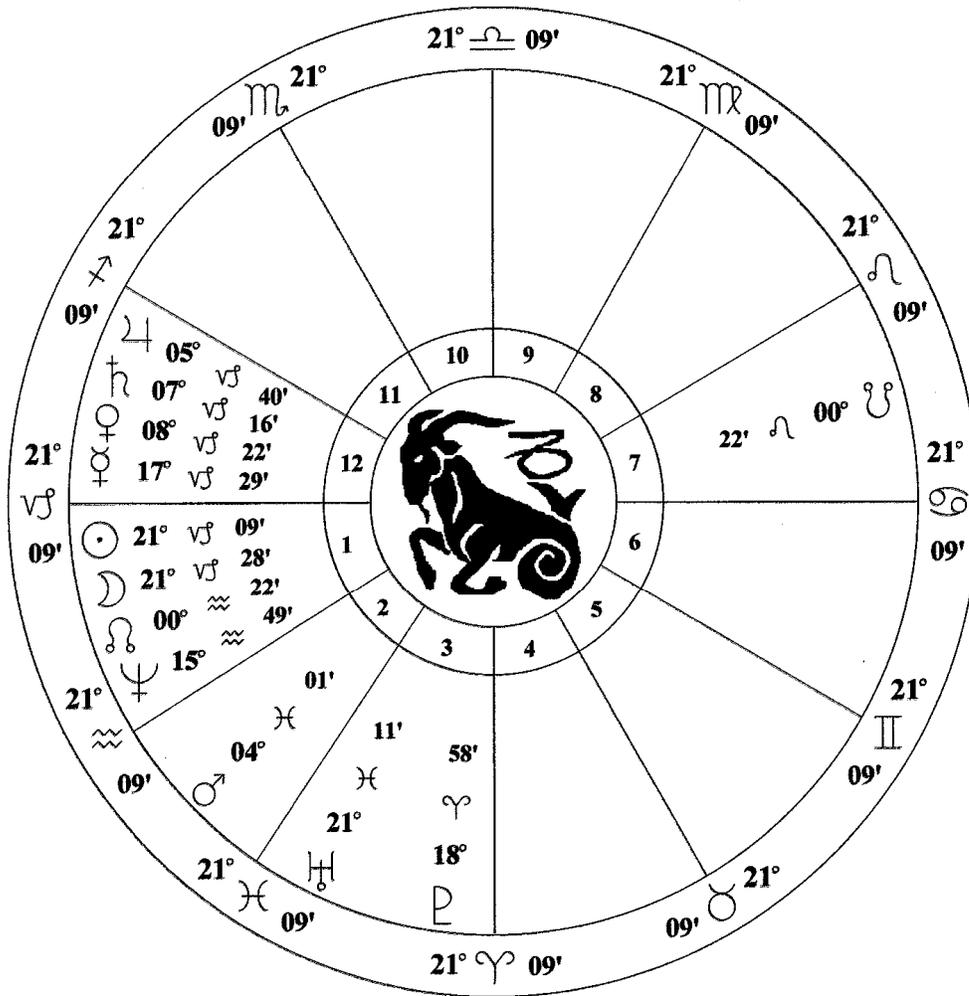


Next, we have the chart of the eminent American psychologist, **William James**:

James' chart contains the following major planetary aspects: The Sun, Moon, and Mercury are conjunct, forming a sextile aspect to Uranus, and squaring Pluto; Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn are conjunct; and all three form a sextile to Mars.

William James
Tuesday, January 11, 1842 12:00:00 PM
Philosopher; Psychologist
New York, New York
Time Zone: 04:56:02 (LT)
Longitude: 074° W 00' 23"
Latitude: 40° N 42' 51"

Noon Solar Chart Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes

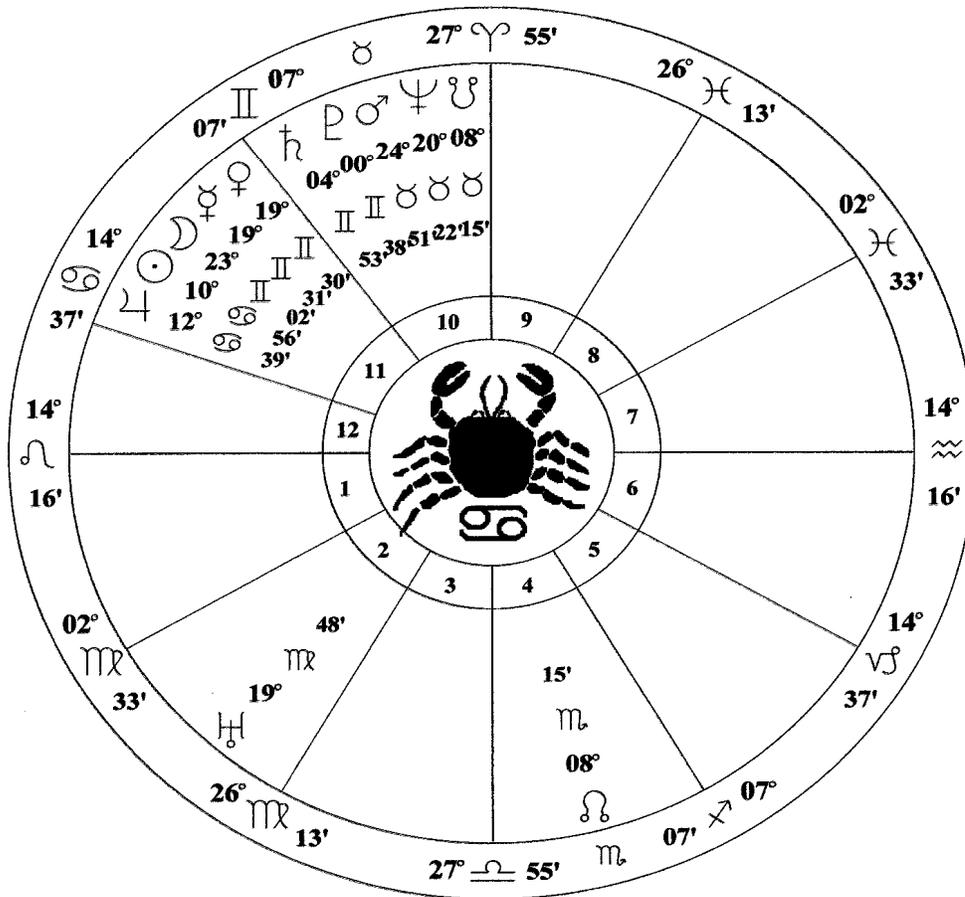


Another highly focused chart is that of storyteller extraordinaire, **Franz Kafka:**

Kafka's chart contains the following major planetary aspects: The Sun is conjunct Jupiter; The Moon, Mercury, and Venus are conjunct and all in square aspect to Uranus; the Mars-Neptune conjunction is trining Uranus; and Saturn is conjunct Pluto.

Franz Kafka
 Tuesday, July 03, 1883 7:00:00 AM
 Author
 Prague, Czechoslovakia
 Time Zone: -00:57:43 (LT)
 Longitude: 014° E 26'
 Latitude: 50° N 05'

Placidus Houses
 Tropical Zodiac
 Mean Nodes

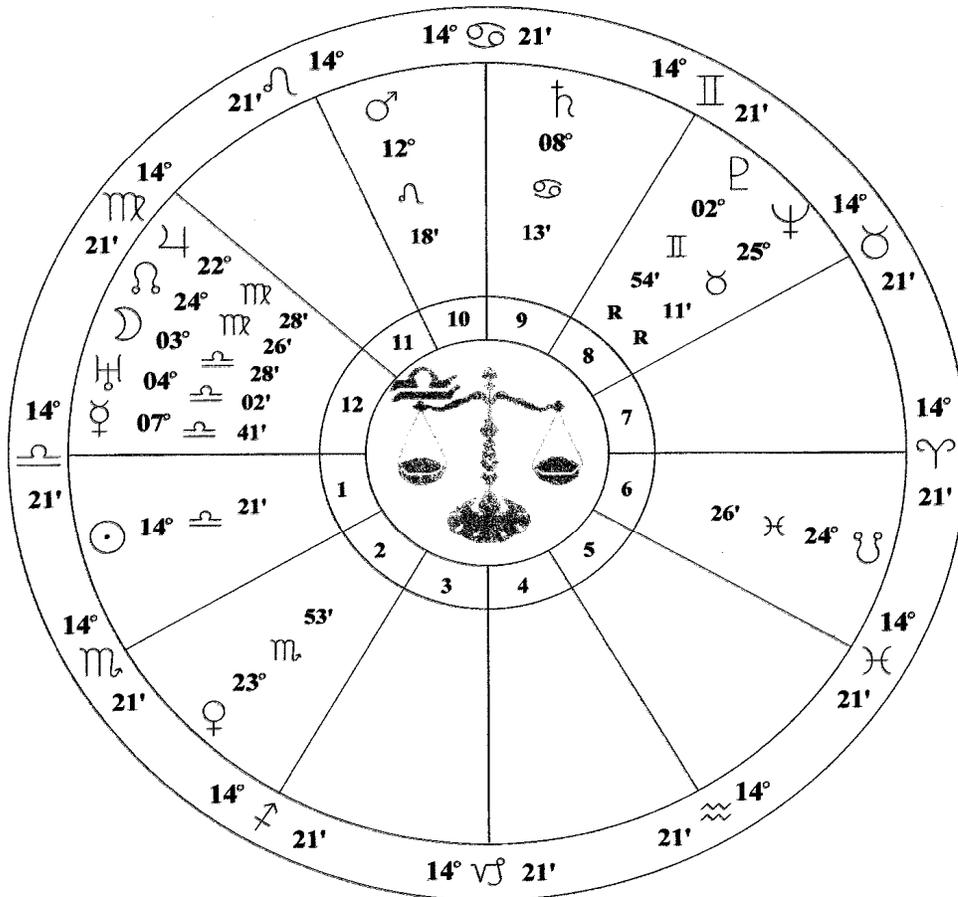


Our next chart is that of legendary physicist, **Neils Bohr**:

Bohr's chart contains the following major planetary aspects: The Sun is conjunct Mercury and sextile to Mars; The Moon is conjunct Mercury and square to Saturn; Jupiter is conjunct the North Node, trine to Neptune and sextile Venus; and Venus is in opposition to Neptune.

Neils Bohr
Wednesday, October 07, 1885 12:00:00 PM
Physicist
Copenhagen, Denmark
Time Zone: -00:50:20 (LT)
Longitude: 012° E 35'
Latitude: 55° N 40'

Noon Solar Chart Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes

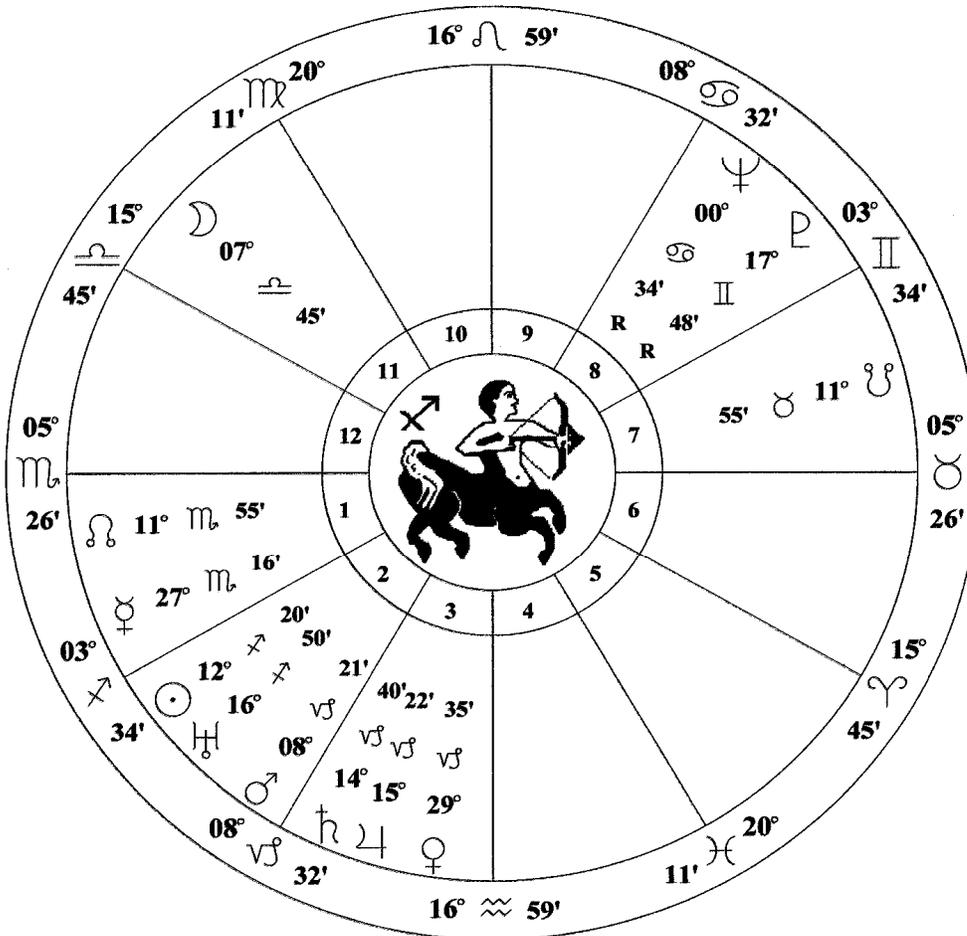


Next, we'll look at the chart of Bohr's co-revolutionary in physics, **Werner Heisenberg**:

Heisenberg's chart contains these major planetary aspects: The Sun is conjunct Uranus, both of which are opposed by Pluto; The Moon is in square aspect to Mars; Mercury is sextile Venus; and Jupiter is conjunct Saturn.

Werner Heisenberg
Thursday, December 05, 1901 4:45:00 AM
Physicist
Wurzberg, Germany
Time Zone: -01:00 (CET)
Longitude: 009° E 56'
Latitude: 49° N 48'

Placidus Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes

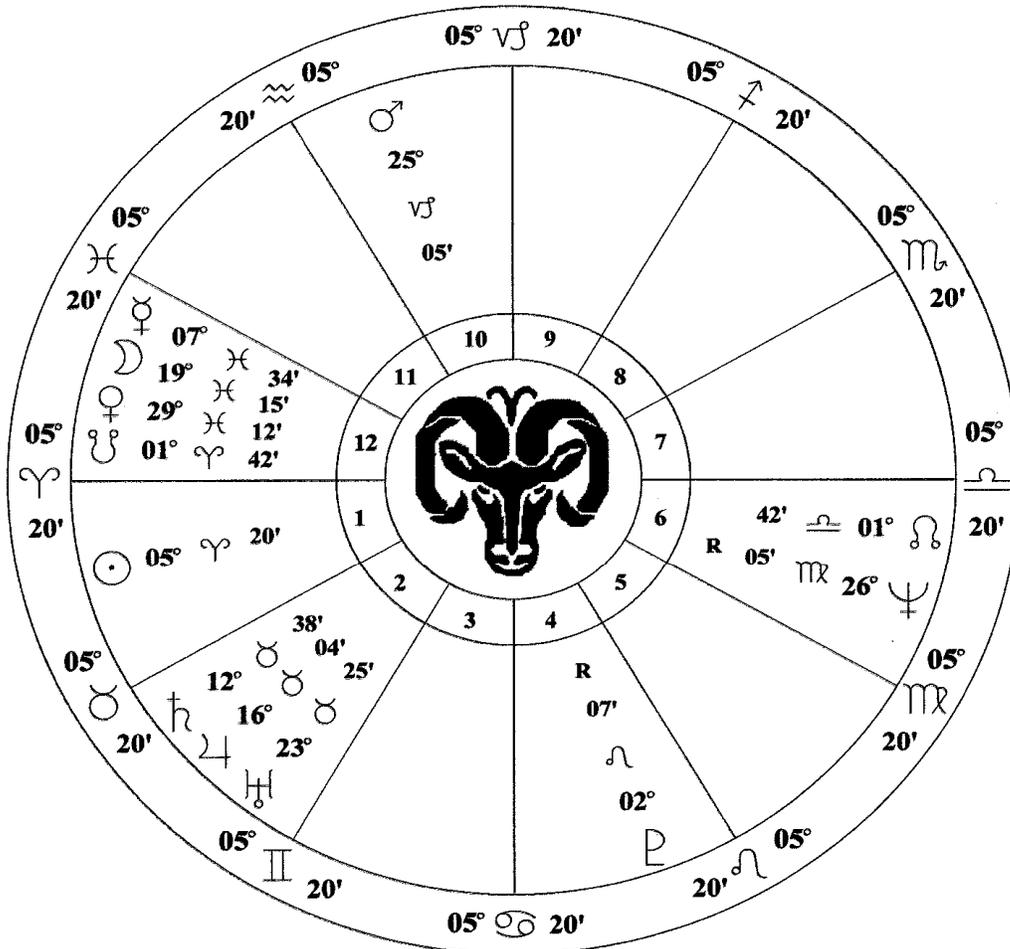


Next, as we reach contemporary times, let us have a look at the chart of evolutionary biologist and atheist theorizer, **Richard Dawkins**:

Richard Dawkins' chart contains the following major planetary aspects: The Sun is trine Pluto; The Moon is sextile Jupiter and Uranus; Jupiter is conjunct Saturn and Uranus; Venus is opposing Neptune; Mars is trine Neptune; and Neptune is conjunct the North Node.

Richard Dawkins
 Wednesday, March 26, 1941 12:00:00 PM
 Science author, ethologist
 Nairobi, Kenya
 Time Zone: -02:45 (BEAUT)
 Longitude: 036° E 49'
 Latitude: 01° S 17'

Noon Solar Chart Houses
 Tropical Zodiac
 Mean Nodes



The next chart is that of renowned physicist and author, **Stephen Hawking**:

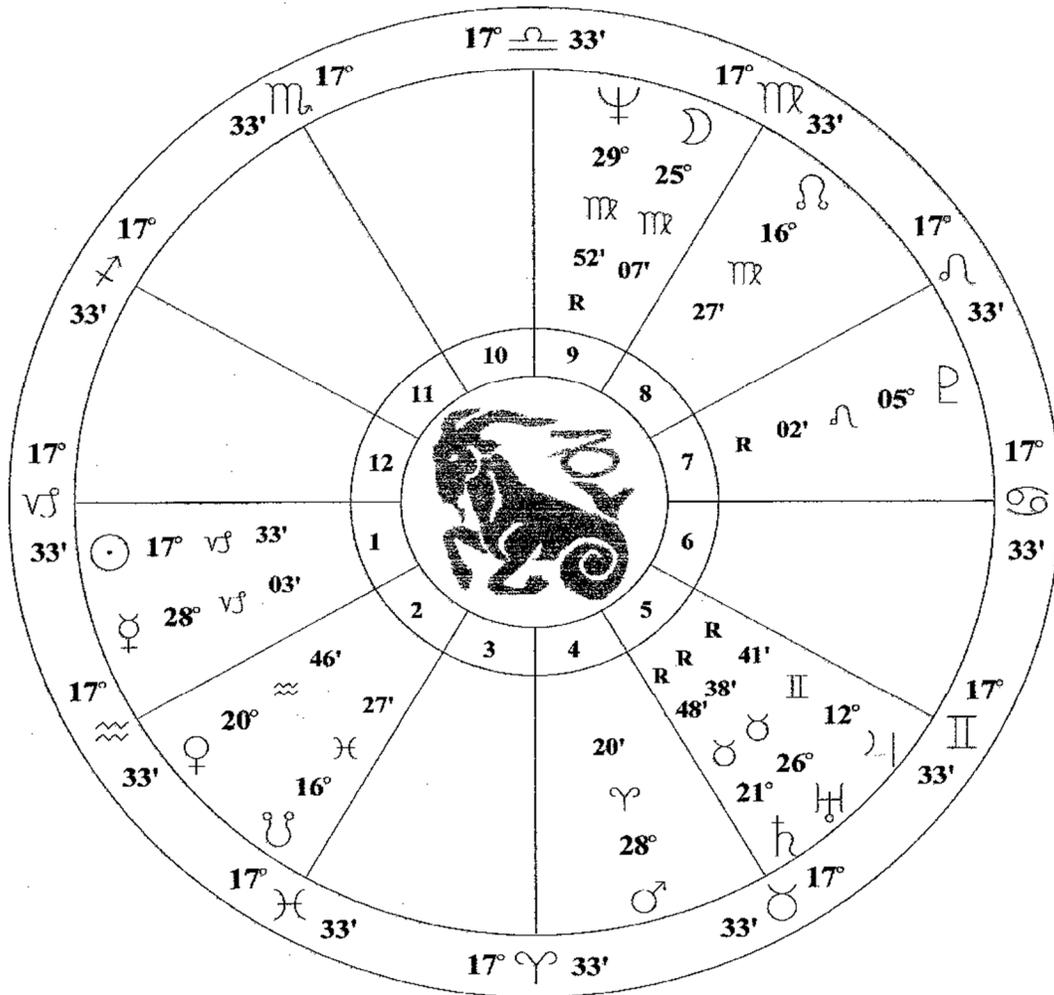
Hawking's chart shows the following aspects:

The Sun is trine Saturn, trine the North Node;

The moon is conjunct Neptune, trine Mercury, and trine Saturn and Uranus; Mercury is square to Mars and forms a grand trine with the Moon-Neptune conjunction and the Saturn-Uranus conjunction; and Venus is squaring the Saturn-Uranus conjunction.

Stephen Hawking
 Thursday, January 08, 1942 12:00:00 PM
 Physicist; Astronomer
 Oxford, United Kingdom
 Time Zone: -01:00 (CET)
 Longitude: 001° W 15'
 Latitude: 51° N 46'

Noon Solar Chart Houses
 Tropical Zodiac
 Mean Nodes

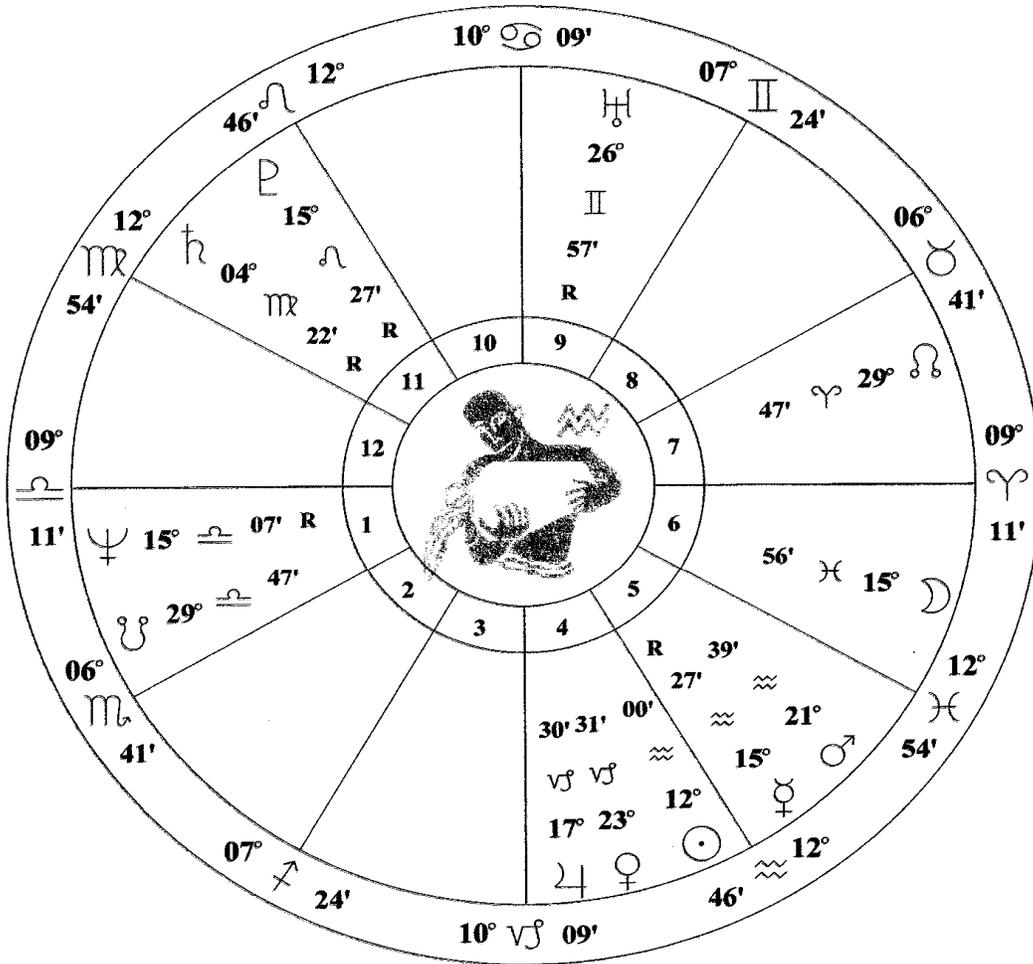


The following chart is that of the mystic-philosopher, **Ken Wilber**:

The following major planetary aspects appear in Wilber's birthchart: The Sun is conjunct Mercury, and the two are forming a trine aspect to Neptune and opposing Pluto; The Moon is sextile Jupiter and trine Pluto; Mercury is conjunct Mars; Venus is conjunct Jupiter; and Neptune is sextile Pluto.

Ken Wilber
Monday, January 31, 1949 10:30:00 PM
Mystic philosophy psychology
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Time Zone: 06:00 (CST)
Longitude: 097° W 30' 58"
Latitude: 35° N 28' 03"

Placidus Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes

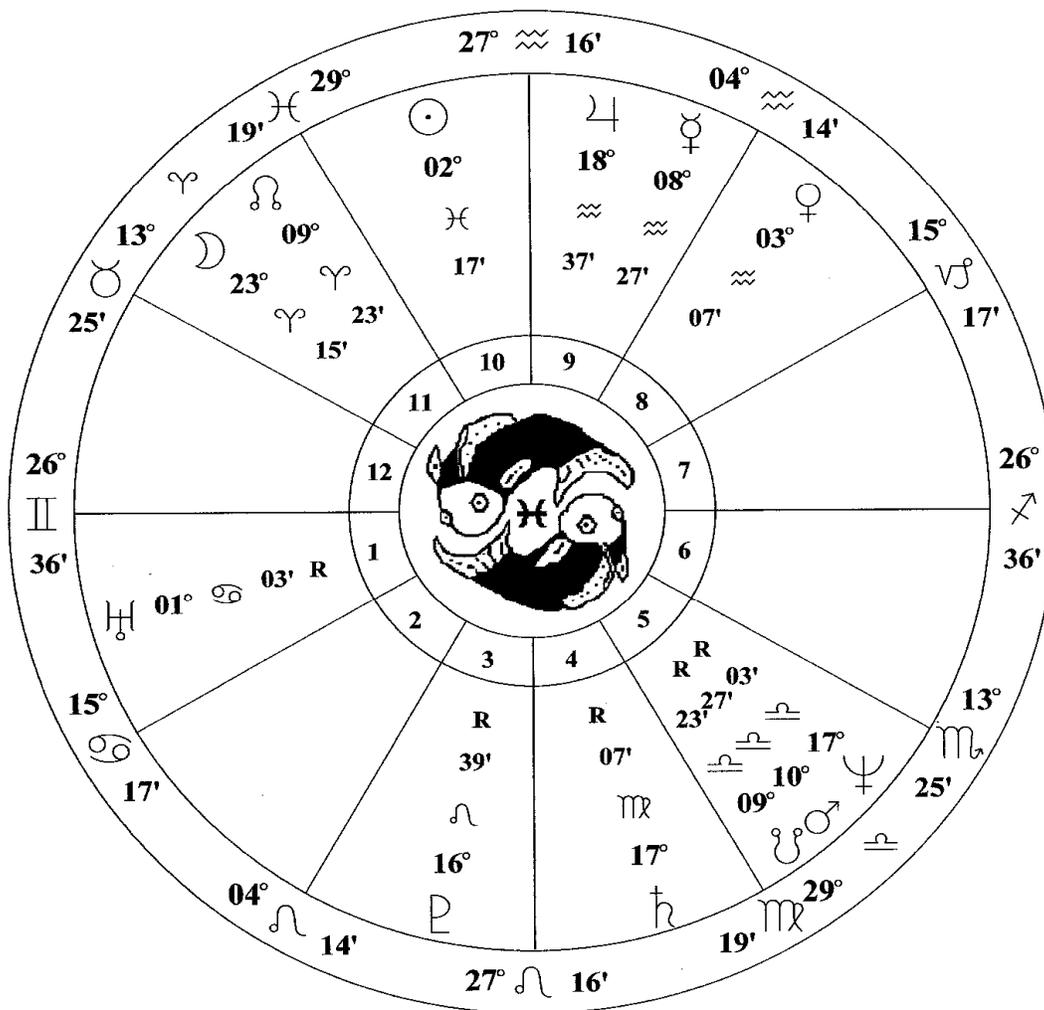


The next chart is that of astrologer and cultural historian, **Richard Tarnas**:

Richard Tarnas' chart contains the following major planetary aspects: The Sun is trine Uranus; The Moon is sextile Jupiter, trine Pluto, and opposing Neptune; Mercury is conjunct Venus in trine aspect to Mars; Mars is conjunct the South Node; Jupiter trines Neptune and opposes Pluto; and Neptune is sextile Pluto.

Richard Tarnas
 Tuesday, February 21, 1950 12:30:00 PM
 Geneva, Switzerland
 Time Zone: -01:00 (CET)
 Longitude: 006° E 09'
 Latitude: 46° N 12'

Placidus Houses
 Tropical Zodiac
 Mean Nodes



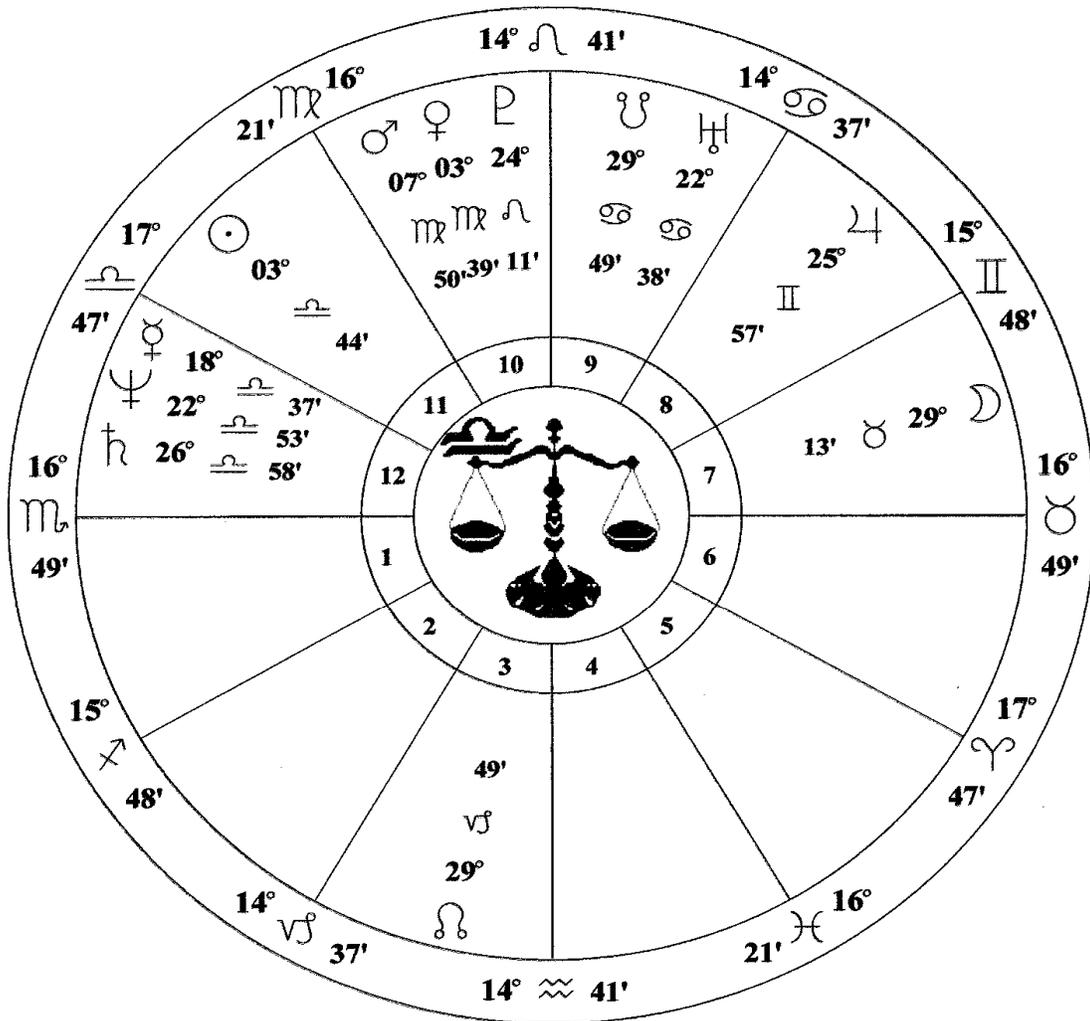
Next, is the chart of the charismatic spiritual leader, **Mata Amritanandamayi**:

The chart of this highly esteemed female saint contains the following major planetary aspects:

The Moon is trine to the Sun, and square to Pluto; Mercury is conjunct Neptune, trine Jupiter, and square Uranus; Venus is conjunct Mars; Saturn is conjunct Neptune, sextile Pluto, trine Jupiter, and square Uranus.

Mata Amritanandamayi
 Sunday, September 27, 1953 9:10:00 AM
 Indian Saint; AKA Ammachi
 Vallickavu, India
 Time Zone: -05:30 (IST)
 Longitude: 076° E 31'
 Latitude: 09° N 10'

Placidus Houses
 Tropical Zodiac
 Mean Nodes

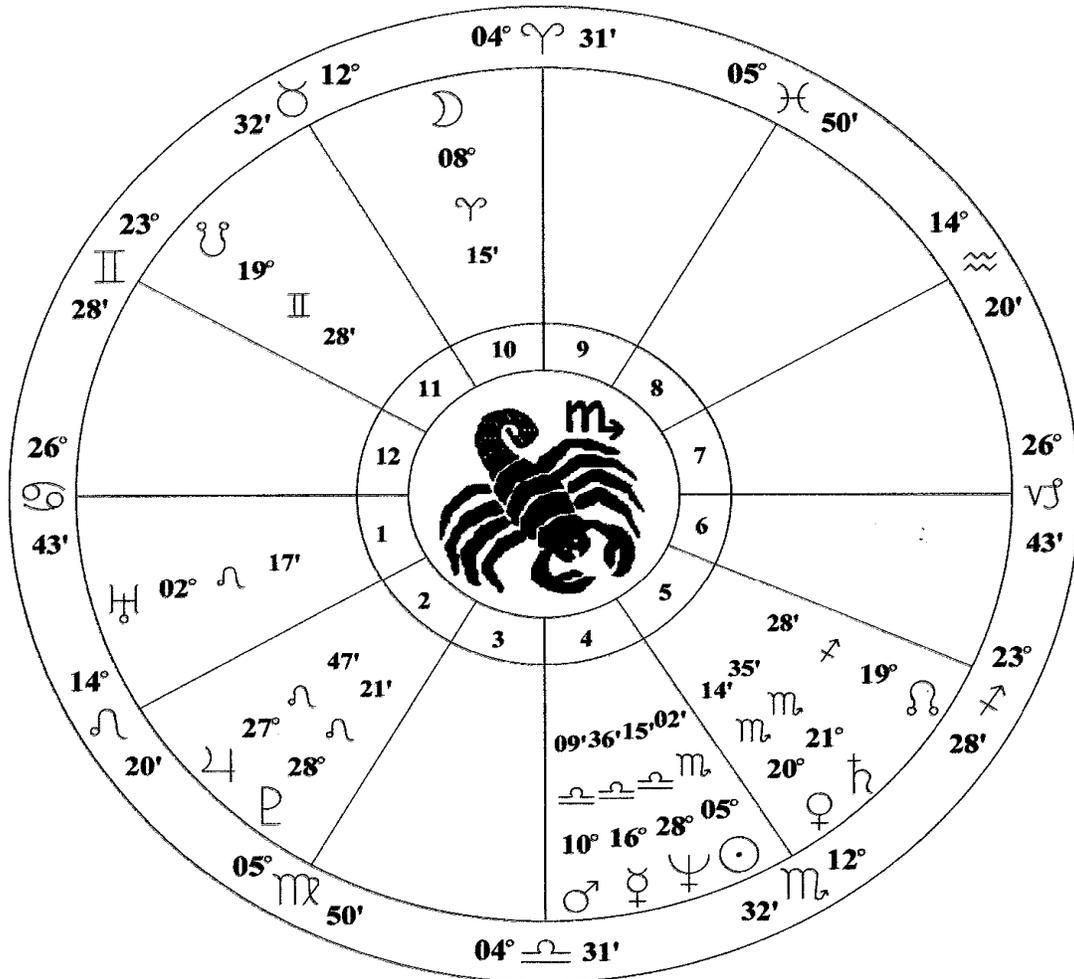


And now for the last of our eminent representative's birth-charts: Here is the chart of software entrepreneur and philanthropist, **Bill Gates**:

And here are the major planetary aspects that appear in his chart: The Sun is conjunct Neptune, and square Uranus; The Moon is opposing Mars, and trine to Uranus; Mercury is conjunct Mars; Venus is conjunct Saturn; and Jupiter is conjunct Pluto.

Bill Gates
Friday, October 28, 1955 10:00:00 PM
Software entrepreneur
Bremerton, Washington
Time Zone: 08:00 (PST)
Longitude: 122° W 38' 54"
Latitude: 47° N 35' 12"

Placidus Houses
Tropical Zodiac
Mean Nodes



As in all of the other charts, I leave it for the reader to make his or her own in-depth interpretations; but in light of our knowledge of the lives and contributions of these very creative men and women, their charts speak volumes regarding the many harmonious as well as conflicting elements that make up their psyches. Above all, these charts provide abundant evidence of the soul qualities contained at birth in these individuals whose varied talents and proclivities have been revealed in the activities of their lives. The qualities of the soul come first; then come the actions that reveal those soul-qualities. As Heraclitus observed, “character is destiny”.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. All of the charts reproduced here were generated by the Astrol Deluxe Report Writer software by John Halloran, at www.halloran.com, and are used by permission.
2. In this article, I have made little use of the Astrological signs; nor do I utilize or seriously regard the House cusps in any way. My primary interest is in the aspects (angular relationships) made by the planets in the natal planetary maps. It should be clear, therefore, that so long as I am consistent in my use of a particular Zodiacal format, the choice of Tropical or Sidereal is totally irrelevant; since one may translate back and forth between the two systems, and the aspects remain the same.

For those unfamiliar with the distinction between the Tropical Zodiac and the Sidereal Zodiac, the following clarification is offered: Both Zodiacs are synonymous with the apparent path of the Sun (remember, it is the Earth that changes position, not the Sun; but the Sun appears from the Earth’s vantage point to move through 360° in the course of one year). The *Tropical* Zodiac begins with 0° Aries at the point of the Vernal Equinox, the beginning of Spring; it is a season-based system. The *Sidereal* Zodiac is based on the Sun’s apparent path through the actual positions of the star-constellations in the heavenly background; so that, 0° Aries is based on the apparent conjunction of the Sun with a Fixed Star in the constellation of the Ram, designated Aries by the Greeks over two thousand years ago.

At the time that it was so designated, around 2600 years ago, the Vernal Equinox coincided with the beginning of the constellation Aries; but since that time, due to the slight wobble in the Earth’s orbit, producing what is called “the precession of the Equinoxes”, the Vernal Equinox no longer coincides with the constellation of Aries, but has slipped backward into the

constellation of Pisces. In fact, today the Tropical Zodiac is about 24° off of the Sidereal (star-based) Zodiac. When it comes to making interpretations based on sign positions, this is a crucial difference; and advocates of the Sidereal system (used in the *Jyotish* system of Vedic Astrologers in India and elsewhere) often make much of the authenticity of a star-based Astrology as opposed to a solar seasonally based system such as the Tropical Zodiac. But all this, as I mentioned, is quite irrelevant if, like me, you are only considering the effectiveness of the aspects produced by the natal planets and lights, which remain the same regardless of the Zodiac system. (Also, regarding the dispute between the astrologers who use the Tropical system and those who use the Sidereal system, see the quotes of Christopher Warnock, Esq., in Chapter Two: “The Science of The Soul” (page 15) in this Article.)

* * *

7. WHO WE ARE

by Swami Abhayananda

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If we rely solely on empirical observation, we must conclude that we live in a universe of material phenomena—stars, planets, nebulae, gas clouds, black holes, and all that is manifest to the human senses. But the mystic’s vision reveals that, at a subtler, more primal level, we are living in a universal Consciousness in which all the individual constituents are interconnected and possess the same universal identity. That Consciousness—which we refer to as “God”—is an integral noumenon (Mind) underlying the phenomenal universe and is the Creative Source and substance of all that we experience as the material universe and its contents, including the bodies we regard as our own as well as all the objects in our environment.

Science has shown that the phenomenal universe of time, space, and individual forms is a result of ‘the Great Radiance’ or ‘Big Bang,’ that released an immense amount of particulate matter in the form of high-frequency electromagnetic radiation some fourteen billion years ago. This resulting universe of form is the manifestation of that ‘Great Radiance’ projected by and within the one universal Consciousness. And because this universe exists *within* the universal Consciousness, it is thereby imbued with, permeated by, and fully participant in that all-pervading universal Consciousness.

That universal Consciousness, which is our sole primary reality, is therefore, also our primary *identity*. And since every one of the individual constituents of this universe are participants in the one universal Consciousness, each individual entity within the universe operates in accordance with the coordinated movement of the entire system. In other words, as is revealed in the mystic’s vision, “all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.”¹ So, while we may regard our separate individual selves to be independently free to act in accord with our individual wills, at a subtler level, it is apparent that we are all governed in our being, in our willing, and in our actions by the single omnipotent and all-embracing will of the one universal Consciousness.

That universal Consciousness is One; It is the eternal Source, who, by Its Creative Power, creates and contains “all things.” And all those *things*—including us—are moving together of one accord, interconnected in one intricately coordinated Whole. So, do you have free-will? Yes. Of course, you do! The more pertinent question is, ‘*Who* are you?’ There is only one here. That One is the sole identity of all; It is who you are. That One is both the Mover and the moved, both the Governor and the governed, both the Determiner and the determined.

But how do we understand the paradox that, while we are manifest as constituents of the Divine Consciousness that is God, each individual believes that it has the freedom to choose his or her own course of action, and feels responsible for his or her own actions, good or bad? The answer is that we have the sense that our individual will is free because, in fact, it is! Remember, we are not merely an individual soul manifested in the world of time and space; we are the one Consciousness who is determining everything, and that one Consciousness truly *is* free. In other words, while we may believe ourselves to be separate individual entities responsible for our individual actions, the fact is that our true, eternal, identity is God, the one divine Consciousness, who, alone is responsible for every action. It is He who is doing everything.²

Here is another way to understand this paradox: When we sleep, as dreamers, we (subconsciously) create our dream characters and their roles in our dreams, and yet, while dreaming, we *identify* with the dream-character in the dream, and, as that dream-character, we feel that we are free to choose our actions within the dream. The truth, however, is that we, the dreamer of the dream, create the dream-roles of those characters, so that the characters and their roles are wholly determined by us. Free-will only *appears* to exist in the dream world; in fact, all the dream-characters and their actions are entirely determined by us, the dreamer.

Likewise, in the phenomenal world, it is God—the one Divine Consciousness—the Creator of this universe, who is the *real* Identity of everyone, and who is determining every action and every outcome. It is He who projects this heated drama, with all its twists and unforeseeable turns, and it is He who will bring it to its fitting conclusion. The notion of an *individual* self apart from the one eternal Self, is merely an illusion. It is only because we are, in fact, the eternal Self, the one Consciousness who is determining everything, that we are aware of our illimitable freedom.

The ‘ego’, or ‘I’ awareness, is not an exterior *thing* that afflicts us; it is simply a false or illusory perspective in which one believes oneself to be a singular and independent being among a multitude of beings and objects—as opposed to the perspective in which one identifies with the indivisible Self underlying all of existence. From that illusory perspective, we convince ourselves that we are self-determined individuals; but it is ‘mystical experience,’ or ‘the grace of God,’ that provides a glimpse into the egoless state, where there is only the one conscious continuum, where there is only the One Being, who is seen to be our sole everlasting identity! “Ego” simply means “I,” and “I” can signify a distinct individual soul associated with a particular body or it can signify the universal Divine Spirit. One of these I’s is the eternal Reality, and the other is merely a transient appearance imaged forth by the Divine Mind. Which of these “I’s” are you?

We do need to acknowledge that, while we exist within the manifested universe of space and time, we possess a distinctly unique body and soul/mind, but our underlying identity is the absolute Self, or Consciousness, from which the body and soul are produced and in which they are contained. So, who are we? What are we going to identify with? If we identify with the body, we are identifying with an entity that is transient. If we identify with the individualized soul, we are still identifying with a transient entity, though the soul’s duration is somewhat greater than that of the body. But if we identify with the Self, we identify with the eternal truth; we acknowledge that we are the one immortal, imperishable and invincible Reality.

Listen to these words of Sri Shankaracharya:

“The fool thinks, ‘I am the body;’ the intelligent man thinks, ‘I am an individual soul united with the body.’ But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as the only reality, and thinks, ‘I am Brahman.’”³

Jesus of Nazareth had also realized this truth:

“If you knew who I am,” he said, “you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father, and the

Father is in me.”⁴ “I and my Father are one,” he said.⁵

At another time, identifying with the transcendent Consciousness, the eternal Self, Jesus said:

“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.”⁶

And here are the words of the great Sufi mystic, Ibn Arabi:

“When the mystery of the oneness of the soul and the Divine is revealed to you, you will understand that you are no other than God. ... For when you know yourself, your sense of a limited identity vanishes, and you know that you and God are one and the same.”⁷

The one Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is the *only* One. There *is* no second. All the illumined seers have realized this same truth, and they wish you to also know and realize this truth in yourself.

NOTES:

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2. The all-embracing will of the universal Consciousness governs the life of every soul throughout its many incarnations as it accrues the results of its individually evolving karma. Eventually, each soul becomes purified and awakened by that Divine will to the knowledge of its eternal identity and knows itself as the One. For more, see my article, “The Astrologer’s Vision,” at my website, “The Mystic’s Vision” (www.themysticsvision.com).

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7. Landau, Rom, *The Philosophy Of Ibn Arabi*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1959; pp. 83-84.

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8. “The Changing of The Gods”

On February 22, 2022, a ten-part video debuted online with great fanfare. It was a free presentation publicized to an audience of people with some familiarity with and interest in the astrological writings of Richard Tarnas, the famous astrologer, cultural historian, professor of philosophy and depth psychologist. The video series was called “The Changing of The Gods,” and was based on Tarnas’ monumental ground-breaking book, published in 2006, entitled *Cosmos And Psyche*. Based on thirty years of research, *Cosmos And Psyche* was the first book by a widely respected scholar to demonstrate the connection between planetary movements and the archetypal patterns of human experience.

The video series, “The Changing of The Gods,” playing over ten evenings, and featuring Richard Tarnas and Rick Levine among others, faithfully and vividly portrayed the vision of *Cosmos And Psyche*, telling the story of the tumultuous periods of human history in the context of the hard astrological aspects between Uranus and Pluto. It was a very thorough and artful presentation, I thought. But when the ninth episode ended on the question, “Do we live in a cosmos saturated with consciousness?” I thought that this should have been posed, not as a question, but as the overwhelming conclusion: that we live in a universe not only saturated with consciousness, but a universe created, pervaded and sustained by a universal Consciousness that we must acknowledge as the Divine, as God.

A full metaphysical philosophy of the cosmos was never provided in this series, or even discussed, though in the tenth episode, and also in an additional eleventh question and answer episode, Richard Tarnas made clear his own conviction that there exists an *anima mundi*, or world-soul, that permeates the entire physical universe. It should be noted that Richard Tarnas and his associates did not have the advantage of mystical revelation; they are simply highly educated academic scholars. And ordinarily, academic scholars who are scientifically oriented are notoriously shy about using the word, “God,” or about even suggesting a supernatural or spiritual causality in their writings or public statements. And so, the producers and participants of “The Changing of The Gods” who live under the influences of those same academic restraints, are to be congratulated on their courageous work in publicly sharing Richard Tarnas’ excellent vision of a

consciously unified universe. Surely, the release of this video-series to a wide general public must be acknowledged as an epoch-making event.

In closing, let me say that the study of astrology, the knowledge of the correlation between the motions of the planets and the events in the inner and outer lives of human beings on earth, is a wondrous knowledge indeed, as it provides not only a tried and true means of investigating the depth and breadth of one's own individualized soul as well as of whole societies, but, on an even broader scale, it provides a conclusive confirmation of the immanent presence of God operating throughout the cosmos. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the study and practice of astrology is not to be thought of as the end of one's spiritual journey; rather, it is but a signpost along one's way toward the God-revealed knowledge of one's own divine Identity, the incomparable bliss of knowing one's own eternal Self.

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-End of The Astrologer's Vision-

7. WHO WE ARE

by Swami Abhayananda

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If we rely solely on empirical observation, we must conclude that we live in a universe of material phenomena—stars, planets, nebulae, gas clouds, black holes, and all that is manifest to the human senses. But the mystic’s vision reveals that, at a subtler, more primal level, we are living in a universal Consciousness in which all the individual constituents are interconnected and possess the same universal identity. That Consciousness—which we refer to as “God”—is an integral noumenon (Mind) underlying the phenomenal universe and is the Creative Source and substance of all that we experience as the material universe and its contents, including the bodies we regard as our own as well as all the objects in our environment.

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