

# AWAKENING MIND PART 3

## LIBERATION

### Transcription

Where should someone start who is at the very beginning of this understanding?

I would suggest asking yourself very simply, who am I really?

At the beginning the mind will exhaust every avenue to try and find out who we are. Who am I?

This question invites the mind in an unknown direction. Turn your mind inward and look at the "I". To actually have that experience of God realization.

Self realization. We've never left home. We've never left home anywhere on the journey.

And yet the journey seems to be necessary for most of us. A genuine seeker has no plan B. So ask yourself, who is the I who is aware of the thoughts?

A startling fact... I am not. I.

Then what am I?

It's like a riddle. We need to be aware of our Self as we actually are. We need to investigate our Self.

Ask yourself, who am I?

Ask yourself, who am I?

Enlightenment or liberation is not about adding anything whatsoever, but about finding what is already present. So some kind of investigation is necessary. Find out the meditator.

Find out who wants to meditate. Meditation and self-inquiry converge at a certain point so that when we find out who we are, then meditation is simply being who we are. Meditation is what we are, not what we do.

Do you truly want liberation?

If you truly want liberation, liberation is possible. But awakening is not enough. It's just the beginning.

What is liberation?

Liberation is the final stillness. Not an experience, not a state. You do not attain liberation. You remember or wake up to that which cannot be lost.

To awaken is to glimpse the timeless self. To remember what you are beyond the play of thought. But liberation is silence after the echo. The cessation.

Awakening is the end of seeking. Liberation is the end of the seeker. Liberation is not some new project for the ego. It's not an agenda to fulfill.

It's not realized by following a linear path or dogmatic steps to completion. But this does not mean that there's no development process or no spiritual maturation through time. Liberation is when we become a living bridge between the time bound and the timeless, so that the limited or separate self-surrenders all self-centered thought and action.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a revered Indian mystic and saint, used the analogy of a doll made of salt. Imagine that a salt doll decides to investigate the ocean, and as it gets closer to the ocean, it merges into it. It dissolves. What happens to the salt doll is analogous to what happens when the individual self merges with the true Self; Atman or Brahman, the ocean of pure Being.

The ancient traditions and spiritual masters have always described liberation, not in terms of acquiring something, but in terms of a stripping away of illusion, resulting in the cessation of egoic activity. Patanjali, the originator of the Yoga Sutras, has said that the goal of yoga is the cessation of the whirlpool of the mind.

There are many lenses that we can use to look at liberation with, such as Advaita Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, Dzogchen, Mahamudra, yogic systems and pointers that are born out of the insights of those who have realized their true nature. In every case, we find a continuum from relative to absolute, from identification with the limited self to an ever-deepening non-duality and embodiment of the truth. Let's begin our journey with Zen.

For over a thousand years, Zen has spoken in paradox. It points to the formless using form, to silence using sound, to truth through riddles, and presence through absence. One of the most enduring teachings in Zen is a series of ten simple ink drawings.

The ox herding pictures... originating in 12th century China and refined in Japan. These images depict a lone seeker and an ox, a metaphor for the pathless path of liberation.

The ox represents our true nature; the unlimited One Mind or the true Self beyond the little self.

The ox herder is the one who seeks it. Chasing after what cannot be grasped. Searching for something that was never truly lost. These ten pictures trace an arc from seeking, to finding, to the total disappearance of the seeker and the sought.

This is not a path in the conventional sense. There are no steps to follow. No end to attain. Zen calls it a pathless path.

A return to what has always been. Hidden only by the belief that we are separate from it. In this film, we explore the mystery of liberation, not as an idea, but as a living, breathing silence, that remains when everything else falls away.

## **Part One - Searching for the Ox.**

It begins with the sense that something is missing. An underlying sense of unsatisfactoriness. There is restlessness, a whisper in the soul, that this world of form, of 'becoming' cannot be all that there is. The first ox herding picture shows a young seeker wandering in a tangled forest. Eyes searching, heart uncertain.

This is the human condition. Looking outside... Some seek pleasure. Others seek knowledge, and still others in religion. But all searching for the same thing. The Truth, the Self, the source or God. The ground of Being. In Zen this search is not condemned. It is honored, for even in the confusion, there's sincerity. Even in the wandering, the scent of the ox is nearby.

Another lens to help us understand liberation is Advaita Vedanta. In Advaita Vedanta, moksha or liberation is not about gaining something in the future. It's not about achieving. It's the clear seeing that you are not what you took yourself to be. The time bound self. And it's about directly realizing that which is beyond the dualistic world of time.

What is Vedanta? Like all such questions in Indian history. It all goes back to a few thousand years. Vedanta is the source of spiritual knowledge called Upanishads.

The Upanishads have one central teaching. One central teaching throughout the entire Upanishads, which is know yourself. You are the supreme reality. If yourself, you will know God. You want to know God? Don't go looking for God out there. Go within. You will find God here. When you go within, you'll find God is everywhere.

One thing that is common to all the various schools and teachers of Vedanta is that wonderful vision of human life. All the Vedanta teachers teach the inner divinity of the human being. That we

are Spirit, that we are pure Consciousness. We are pure Being with a material and a psychological clothing.

The Upanishads teach that what you are is One without a second, one without another. There is nothing apart from you, One without a second. In Sanskrit this is called Advaita. Advaita means not two; Non-Duality. Dvaita means duality. Advaita means non-duality.

Now the central teaching of Advaita Vedanta can be put, thankfully can be put very simply and very directly. You are that. You and I and everybody else, we are this pure Being, this ultimate existence, the ground of this universe.

Duality seems to be the baseline of all living beings. There is the person, the self or entity, and there's all these objects of perception and we are separate from them. Something is missing and we want to achieve that to be fulfilled. So, a yearning, a desire emerges because of our sense of lack of incompleteness.

So, we are all seeking fulfillment, wholeness, happiness. This is a state of duality. State of the ego. State of separateness. Non-Duality is the complete opposite. Non-Duality is a unity, a lack of separateness. You have no ends. You are boundless. You are limitless because you are just not separate from anything. You are seamless, interwoven with reality, with the universe. Nothing is missing from you.

The felt sense of oneness is sometimes called direct experience. Many techniques and practices bring our attention to the somatic field, to the sensory field where you could say the field of changing phenomena itself. In practices like Vipassana meditation, meditators are trained to observe the body and mind without reaction. To watch sensations arise and pass away without grasping. Everything is observed... tingling, pressure, heat, emotions, everything is allowed.

We learn to stop chasing pleasure and avoiding pain. And a sort of alchemy happens when we open to everything as it is. We start to love everything as it is. We even love our pain. This is how we begin to understand impermanence, not as a concept, but as a living somatic truth. We keep going in our practice until we realize that which does not change.

There's only one thing that does not change, and that is the true Self, which is not a thing. Practices and techniques themselves are eventually let go because every practice, every technique is still a doing. It's still a part of the conditioned mind.

There are many different degrees and types of union experience possible, depending on the degree to which the body mind has dropped off. It can range from a subtle experience of energy, presence,

bliss, well-being, feelings of love and peace to radical, mystical, ineffable, non-dual experiences. What people refer to as Kundalini awakening is when this inner energy is particularly strong.

When this energy comes into an alignment there's a sense of union with all that is. If you don't know who you are and you have these types of merging experiences, the mind will almost inevitably become a seeking mind. The seeker is born. All experiences, all pain and pleasure come and go. But who is it that remains? Find out who remains.

## **Part Two - Seeing the Traces.**

The seeker begins to notice something. Not the ox itself, but traces of its passing. A glimpse of peace in meditation. A line in a sacred text that pierces the heart. A moment of stillness in the chaos of life. These are not the truth, but they point to it, like footprints in the fresh snow.

The traces suggest that something real has been here. Something beyond the grasp of the mind. The path takes on new urgency. Now the seeker is no longer wandering aimlessly. There's a scent in the wind, a trail through the underbrush. But be aware, these signs can become distractions.

Many mistake the traces of the ox for the ox itself. The finger for the moon, the map for the territory, the menu for the meal.

The problem in human life from which all of the problems stem is our suffering. Our struggles in this world, our unhappiness, our existential angst is because we do not know this truth about ourselves. That we are Brahman. We are absolute reality. We are pure Being according to Advaita Vedanta. This ignorance is at the root of our suffering and therefore the way to remove suffering, the way to attain fulfillment in human life is to remove this ignorance to realize what we truly are.

Right now we think I'm just this guy, this is my life and I'm struggling with it. Doing sometimes a not so good job, sometimes a slightly better job, and that's how it goes until I die. And then I don't know. Either I don't exist after that it's all over, or religions tell me there's some kind of post-mortem existence.

Advaita Vedanta tells us all of this present life which we seem to have, and a possible future life, all of these are appearances... they are not the ultimate reality about ourselves. They are not the truth about ourselves. The truth about ourselves is that you are or I am, all of us are Brahman. Existence. Awareness. Bliss. In-limitlessness.

So the pathless path said says, you are already an unlimited, ever present Being whose nature is peace and happiness. You don't need to do anything to get there. You are already that. Simply see that and be that knowingly.

But do you feel like that, though? Is that your living experience? Do your emotions express themselves based on that? Does your mind express itself based on that? Do you manifest that understanding 24-7? Are you a living expression of that?

The renowned teacher of non-duality, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj is recognized as a major exponent of Advaita Vedanta. His approach was not to teach any system, but to guide seekers to direct experience. He said, don't rely on words and concepts.

You may know everything intellectually, yet still not be free. True realization is not the same as knowledge, it is Being. He made a clear distinction between intellectual understanding, which is grasping concepts and realization; direct experience of the self...and liberation, which is the final irreversible abidance in the Self which is free from unconscious conditioned patterns.

Like Nisargadatta, Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was the embodiment of Advaita Vedanta. An Indian sage who, without preaching or trying to attract followers guided seekers beyond the "I" thought to the ever present Self, unborn and undivided.

Ramana's teachings center around the direct way to liberation. He didn't want us to go on any detours unnecessarily. He just gave us the simple way to liberation, the easiest way, the straightforward way. And what he said is the sure way. And all we have to do is discover what we are.

Most of us, we think we're a person. We think we're human being. Ramana says you are not a person and you are not actually a human being. We are something far greater, much deeper than this. You are something else, something divine, something wonderful. That is called in this way of speaking your true Self or the Self.

This true Self that we are, we all know in our hearts this truth. We all already know what we are. Bhagavan Ramana told us that the first thought we have is the "I" thought.

This, "I" thought, identifies as being a body mind and all other thoughts arise thereafter. So all we have to do discover our Self and discover the falsity of this root thought; 'I am the body mind'.

We need to be aware of our Self as we actually are, and in order to be aware of our Self as we actually are, we need to investigate our Self. Investigate our Self means we need to turn our mind our attention inwards to focus on our own Being.

Bhagavan suggests two questions we ask. The first question always has the same answer. The first question is 'to whom do these thoughts or do these phenomena arise?' The answer is always... 'to me.' And second question is, 'who am I?'

So ask yourself, who is the 'I' who is aware of the thoughts? And don't give any answer. Because if I give an answer that would be another thought. So without giving any answer, I ask myself, 'who am I?' And I just remain. Another thought may arise. And then I repeat the process. There comes a time when thoughts become less and less and less and just quieten out altogether, when one experiences the core of one's nature.

Meditation is... it is not meditation. It is inquiry. It is the quest. Bhagavan said, find out the meditator, he said 'find out who wants to meditate?'

Where you inquire, where from this 'I' thought arises because every day we find in deep sleep the 'I' thought merges in the Source. The Source where the 'I' thought merges is the Heart. And from there, when you wake up, the first thing that comes out is this 'I'. It is the first to sprout. Then the mind blooms. If it is partially opened, you will dream. When it fully comes out, you wake up. So the entire process of creation is happening inside. All the thoughts, they depend on the 'I' thought. And thoughts make the mind. In essence the I thought is the mind.

### **Part Three - Seeing the Ox.**

This is the moment of direct realization. The seeker has followed the traces, the teachings, the glimpses, the sense of the real, and now beholds the ox itself.

The Self. Pure Awareness. Buddha nature. Not conceptually, but directly. This is kensho... seeing one's true nature. The veil parts. There may still be thoughts, emotions and egoic patterns. But in the moment you are no longer identified with them. You see. And what you see is not a thing, but it is the seeing itself. In Zen they call this kensho.

Seeing one's true nature. Not intellectually, not as belief, but as a shock of clarity. A clearing of the mind that leaves no room for doubt. The seeker now knows, I am not this body. Not this mind. Not this name. I am pure, unborn, unbound.

The purpose of the human being is to know yourself. There is no other purpose. That's the goal of life. Self-Realization is the goal of life. To know yourself, to know who you are is that for which you have received this human body. It's a potential which when you find it Oh, my God, it was always there. There is a place in you to discover that.

It's not outside. It's within. That's the great discovery. And that's the whole teaching of Jesus...my Father and I are One. And that is true for each and every human being. So the human body gives you access to the life within, peace within. And that peace by nature is a river that brings you to the ocean that you are.

In the ancient traditions. Sages spoke of different paths to liberation. Some walked the path of Bhakti or the devotional path; their hearts aflame with longing, singing to the Beloved through every breath until the singer dissolved into the song. Others chose the path of karma yoga, the path of selfless action where every deed was an offering. Every act a sacrifice of the little me to something greater. And the direct path was for those who went the way of wisdom, of self-inquiry.

These paths should not be seen as separate roads, but rather can be seen as facets of a single jewel. Sadhana is an ancient Sanskrit word that refers to the practices and techniques or activities that lead to spiritual realization, such as meditation, yoga, qigong, or any consistent, focused activity or effort intended for realization.

Occasionally in human history, a new innovation arises... a technique or practice that creates effective conditions of no escape for the egoic mind. Here, we'd like to share with you a relatively new innovation that is one of the most powerful methods on the planet today.

The dyad process is a sacred mirror, as two individuals sit in silence not to fix or teach, but to listen and communicate with the whole Being. The witness says, 'tell me who you are.' Tell me who you are. The one inquiring turns inward, not towards ideas, but toward the direct experience of being.

It is not a conversation. It is communion.

When we inquire into the true Self, what we see first is the false self. The clearing process begins and all of the unconscious stories, beliefs, samskaras or condition patterns come to the surface to be witnessed without reaction. As the process unfolds, the mind is prepared for awakening through single-pointedness and deep surrender, and a sort of sensory clarity is realized. That which cannot be spoken begins to shine through between the words... whispered across the silence, between two hearts.

At the Samadhi Center and in the Awaken the World initiative. I've explored a lot of different techniques over the years and found that the most effective technique for specifically bringing about kensho in the most expedient way is this dyad technique from Charles Berner.

Charles Berner combined You could say the rigor of the Zen tradition, the Zen sessin, where they do these really rigorous periods of Zen meditation. in Zen they do work with koans, the most famous



koan is 'who am I?' He combined the 'who am I' koan and the self-inquiry that comes from Vedanta teachers like Ramana Maharshi, with the dyad technique that is utilized in modern psychology.

So he brought these worlds together and created this dyad process. There's an intensity of this technique that is very difficult to achieve in traditional meditation practices. The goal for a dyad and the goal for self-inquiry in general, is to awaken to our true nature. So you could say the goal is to find out who we are, the true Self beyond name and form.

My favorite teacher, Dogen, said, meditation is the dropping off of mind and body. And it's the same thing that happens in self-inquiry, there's a dropping off of mind and body. And who remains? When mind and body have dropped off, who is it that remains?

I found that these dyads are the most powerful experience that I've ever seen for people awakening right before my eyes. And even in my own experience I found the dyads to verify where I was on my own path. And I could see immediately if I was speaking from the person or if I was speaking from the "I" of my true nature.

## **Part Four - Catching the Ox.**

The spiritual ego may rise in disguise. And it is necessary to deepen our surrender. The fire of realization has been lit. But the winds of habit still howl. The ox has been seen, but it does not come willingly. The old self clings to its kingdom even as it knows its reign is ending. Thoughts rise like waves. Habits, fears, identities all return to reclaim the throne.

This is the struggle after awakening... the sacred friction between knowing the truth and living the truth. The seeker tries to grab the ox, to hold onto the glimpse, to stay in stillness, but the very effort becomes another trap. In this stage, many become lost. Some build shrines to the glimpse, mistaking the memory for the real. Others are lured by spiritual ego wearing robes of humility but secretly wanting to be seen as awakened.

The mind ox cannot be caught by force. It is tamed not by striving, but by surrender. Over time, a rhythm begins. The ox resists less. The seeking softens. Awareness deepens, and the line between the two begins to blur. To catch the ox is to stop chasing it, to realize the mind's grip, and to trust the unseen hand of grace. The path becomes a paradox.

Less doing. More Being. Doing-not-doing. The ox and the seeker begin to move as one.

In true non-dual teachings, you awaken to who you actually are. Yes. And then you continually celebrate. You continuously acknowledge consciously that recognition over and over and over again until it becomes more real, more tangible, more palpable, more undeniable than your reality of being a human being.

Most people believe and feel that they are a mixture of thoughts, images, feelings, sensations, perceptions, activities, relationships, and so on. And so involved are we with the content of our experience that we neglect or overlook our essential, irreducible Selves or Being.

In order to recognize our essential Self, the spiritual traditions elaborate pathways whereby we might trace our way back through the layers of experience until we recognize our essential Being. Now, having recognized our essential Being, there is nowhere else to go.

Once we have had a recognition of our essential Self it is no longer necessary to engage in these pathways or practices that take us all the way back to our Self. We can start with our Self, we don't end there. So in the pathless path it is recognized that in reality there is no distance from our self to our Self.

For many people who have an awakening... there seems to be a sense of getting the cosmic joke. Awakening seems to the mind like this mystery, and there's this thing that needs to be, uncovered. And, the report that comes back from people in that moment, especially there's this sense that 'how can it be this simple?' This is ridiculously simple. It's so simple that the mind will always miss it. And it's only when the mind really gives up that it's so obvious what we are.

Somehow there's this flip into, awareness. There's been all this talk about awakening and all these books and all these sutras and teachings and YouTube videos on, on this subject. And they're all pointing to something that's so simple, so self evident, that's always here.

It's it's almost absurd. So there's there's an absurdity. To searching for something that is ever present.

Ramana Maharshi, or Bhagavan to his followers, used a simple but profound analogy to describe spiritual awakening. He described awakening to be like pulling the plug on a fan. The fan is the momentum of the conditioned mind which perpetuates the "I" thought and identification with the character. Just as a fan continues to spin after the plug is pulled, the mind's conditioning and habitual patterns persist after awakening. In the moment of awakening or kensho, there's no more identification, no more witness, and witnessed.

But after this glimpse of awakening, the mind will return at some point. And often there's a sense that I had it. But then I lost it.

Awakening to something does not entail being the living expression of that something. It just means that you have a peak and then you come back to the default state. Something can change. But fundamentally speaking, you will still live your life based on conditioning. So in Neo-Advaita or in these non-dual circles, you are the Self. It's great.

You awaken the awareness. That's beautiful. And then what? Are you that living expression? No, that requires practice. That requires removing the deep rooted conditioning, the vasanas, that which makes it come back from our default state. And that's why I continuously hear... Oh, I had enlightening experience. And then the ego came back.

The vasanas or latent tendencies of the mind are what trigger samskaras, which are the old habit patterns of the mind which are operating unconsciously after awakening. There's an embodiment process that happens as we abide continuously in presence. There's nothing to do except realize the truth more and more deeply as unconscious patterns come to the surface. After awakening, a new form of sadhana emerges... a sadhana without any doer, which you could call non-dual sadhana. This form of sadhana is not separate from life. It is life itself.

Ramana said that through continuous vigilance, we learn not to plug the fan back in. But it is not vigilance in any normal sense. It is not a vigilance to do something, but simply a vigilance to abide as the Self. A significant point on the pathless path is when you have no preference towards one state or another... when you can look directly at the mind without resisting it and without getting snagged by it. Allowing the body mind to be exactly as it is.

Merely asking the question who am I? We can come to some sort of, some sort of conceptual understanding of what we are and what we are not. But that doesn't really solve the problem. We need to be aware of our self as we actually are. Bhagavan's path is a very, very simple path. It's extremely deep. It is the ultimate. It's the complete dissolution of our self as a separate individual. And, when we dissolve, we dissolve back into what we actually are, which is the infinite and eternal Being, which is pure Awareness. But merely saying that in words is inadequate. We have to experience that ourselves.

The goal of awakening, self-realization or God realization or enlightenment, or moksha or liberation or samadhi, whatever the path may be ultimately, the end goal is Oneness. Oneness. Oneness of experience, oneness of awareness, oneness of capital 'K' Knowing. That it's not just that I've read in a book that I'm divine, or I've heard someone say it so I know it intellectually, but I actually know it experientially. And that's the awakening.

## **Part Five - Taming the Ox.**

Who is the one taming and what is being tamed? The seeker begins to see that the ox was never separate. That every step of the journey was the true Self playing hide and seek with itself. The one holding the rope and the one being led are not two.

In the fifth stage, the honeymoon with awakening is over. It's no longer about the pristine clarity of kensho, but it becomes about the discipline and integration into everyday life. For many after awakening there's a spiritual no-man's land, which unfolds. A terrain of excavating shadows, facing grief, sadness, resistance, meaninglessness as the vasanas and the samskaras continue to arise within presence.

When I talk about post awakening, there are a handful of important points to bring up with people. One is that it can be surprising how much shadow work materializes, how much emotion work we have to do to really integrate that initial shift in identity.

I also find it's important to point out to people that a lot of this is about trusting your own intuition, your intuition that goes beyond thoughts, beyond concepts. More and more as this process unfolds. The more you trust that intuition, the more you know when it's time to do some specific work around beliefs, around emotions, or whether it's time to continue to just allow yourself to surrender to the process.

So it can be a bit of a dance you learn with the process itself... there are times when some intentional work is important. Some intentional inquiry or self-inquiry is important, and there are times when we just have to sit down and let the process overtake us.

So to have these types of absorptions, these types of deep samadhi, these types of deep, deep, undeniable discontinuities from the flow of consciousness, you need unconditional surrender. If an iceberg has 10% above the water and 90% below the surface, and I tell the iceberg, please surrender, that's going to surrender 10%, because that's all it knows. So what do you need?

You need to first recognize yourself below the surface. Slightly uplift yourself to the surface, to melt to the center of consciousness, to enough awareness. And then you can surrender unconditionally. And you have the type of surrender these 'experience-less' experiences become possible, which is an absolute absorption, let's say... absorption into complete dissolution of everything. But then something will come back or seems to come back. And that's where you have to pay attention and explore and inquire.

It is said that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. The teacher can take many forms, and it's important to understand the place of teachers or gurus on the pathless path. We don't push away the teacher when they appear, and at the same time we don't become dependent, idolize or project onto them. In Sanskrit, the term guru comes from the root 'gu', which means darkness or

ignorance, and 'ru' which means remover of that darkness. A guru is one who guides us on the path to liberation.

A true guru or teacher has only one objective. The teacher will point you directly to your own Satguru, or your own True guru, which is awareness itself. So it's true...

When the student is ready, the teacher appears, but when the student is truly ready, the teacher disappears and awareness is realized to be our true Self. It is at this stage of the fifth ox herding picture that the reliance on external teachers teachings and pointers falls away. And this doesn't mean that you don't have a teacher or utilize teachings in your life.

But now that all of these pointers are simply pointing to Awareness itself, which is ever present. Once we begin to love awareness above everything else, or you could say love the divine or God above everything else, then we no longer need thoughts, pointers, or teachings. We don't have to get rid of thought, but we see through it.

We become disinterested in it. We stop reacting and believing our thoughts, and we see all thoughts and sensation as empty of Self.

The pitfall here is subtle but insidious. It is believing that you are done. It is mistaking a calm mind for a free one. It's very common for one to cling to the memory of awakening rather than being in direct experience. In the fifth stage, there's nothing that we can force. It's about steady presence, firm, gentle, unwavering. Ramana called this vigilance.

Krishnamurti said, the ability to observe without evaluating is the highest form of intelligence. Here we see through the evaluating mind, which is based on the past, based on memory. We see through the preferences of the mind, which are based on the patterns of craving and aversion.

In Christian language, you could say that to give yourself fully means to make the journey from my will to God's will. In yogic language, you could say that when energy moves beyond the sixth chakra, the command center, as it makes its way to the crown chakra, it is the surrender of personal will to divine will.

Meister Eckhart said, completely surrender your will to God, and in return he will give you his Will so fully and without reserve, that it will become your own will.

## **Part Six - Riding the Ox Home.**

There's no more struggle. The rope is loose. The herder sings. The ox walks on its own. The path is effortless. The destination forgotten. Joy arises. Not the joy of gain, but the joy that flows from

abidance in the self. Sat-chit-ananda... the bliss that flows from an undivided mind. A mind in which the I thought has given way.

The mind no longer dominates. Yet it is not denied. Thoughts come and go like birds through an open sky. Feelings rise and fall like waves. But the ocean is still in its depths. This is not yet final liberation, but the Self is now a trusted companion. A taste of the truth is no longer rare. It is the very world as it arises. There's less separation or judgment between this and that, and seemingly separate, contradictory paths are allowed to coexist without resistance, without a problem. Life becomes one taste; increasingly non-dual, integral and embodied, as one aligns with inner intelligence. The pranic field, or conscious Spirit that dances as all things.

There is an intelligence in the universe. And if we are open to it, it will flow through us in the same way that intelligence shows caterpillars how to become butterflies and seeds, how to sprout into trees, and trees how to give fruit. Somehow there is a knowing. For me, it was really just grace that I found myself here. That I found myself here with an open enough heart. And it's a question I get asked a lot, you know... You're a scientist. You're an academic. How do you have faith in God from a scientific perspective?

And for me, it's actually not a dilemma or a conflict at all, because science's truth is only as good as its tools. And that's fine as long as science doesn't try then to claim jurisdiction over that for which it has no tools to measure. And that's the realm of spirituality. And so what you have is people... sages, saints, yogis, rishis, mystics who actually developed their own tools.

Not beakers and Bunsen burners, not telescopes and microscopes. They developed tools of going inward. And what they discovered inward in some cases overlapped with what scientific tools teach us. It's always funny these days to hear Western science, quote unquote, discover something that the Vedic scriptures have been telling us for thousands of years. The idea that we are all interlinked, interconnected, that we are not separate, that this separateness is an illusion. So today we talk about quantum entanglement. We talk about string theory.

The highest goal of the human birth, the human experience, which is to know the truth of who we are. To actually have that experience of God realization, Self realization, not just intellectually or academically, but really touch and know that truth of themselves, that divinity of themselves, that inseparability of themselves from the divine, from the universe.

It is not about choosing science or religion, this or that. It's about this AND that. Quantum particles live in superposition. They are this and that until measured. In spiritual terms, before a thought arises, you are nobody and everybody. Both form and emptiness. As soon as you say, 'I am this body', I am this role, or I am enlightened, you collapse the field into the ego, the mask is chosen and the play begins again.

## Part Seven - Ox Forgotten, Self Alone.

The ox is gone. There is no longer a need to seek. Nothing left to tame. No rope, no rider. Unmoving. Unborn. Unnamed. Even the idea of enlightenment falls away. This is the stage that the sages speak of in riddles and mystics convey through their silence. Ramana called it the Heart, Nisargadatta called it the Absolute. Zen calls it no mind. There is no doer, no thinker. No one left to awaken. Just this vast, naked, direct knowing, untouched by the rise and fall of worlds.

When we awaken to something, it's like we discover the reality of our Being. But awakening is not enough. It's just the beginning. When intention turns back into itself, the first thing you'll recognize is. Oh, there's something different here. For the first time, you're not going to objectivity, to objects.

So there will be an innate knowing of self-awareness in you. Like you just know. You know it on a level, beyond the mind completely beyond the mind.

And it's not something you can doubt. You just know it. How will the mind, how will your vehicle translate that?

Usually it is as a sense of spaciousness, a sense of emptiness, a sense of well-being or tranquility or just a sort of innate knowingness beyond the mind. It's as if you're recognizing yourself in thoughts for the first time. You used to refer to yourself as an object, as an ego, as a person, and now you're finding your subjectivity, who you truly are.

When you tap into it, there's an undeniability of having touched something that has never been affected by anything. That does not age, does not die, was not born. That innate knowingness that cannot be conveyed through words is the first type of recognition that usually seekers have.

And then as they marinate and get acquainted with that, it starts to radiate as a sense of space, weightlessness, lightness, subtle delightfulness that then can become joy, or bliss. A sort of love... Which are very important fundamental qualities.

Because even when you recognize yourself, then the mind will come in and will just push your attention away. But if you have a sense of well-being, a sense of love and joy, it will be much easier to marinate and rest on yourself than if it's just dry, empty self-awareness. This type of non-dual sadhana does not require any sort of imagination. It does not require the use of the mind for anything. No. You have to let go of everything.

Let go of imagination. Letting go of the mind. Letting go of the one wants to surrender. Letting go of effort. Letting go of effortlessness. Letting go of letting go. It's like consciously dying while remaining alive. It's not being afraid of facing existential death, even though you're not literally

dying. When you go to sleep at night you go into this discontinuity every night in deep sleep, every night. But you do it unconsciously. Now you have to do it consciously. And that's the difference.

We are talking about non-dual practice. Non-dual practice is so different from dualistic practice, because non-dual practice does not imply that something is missing, that you need to get or need to pay attention to some object. It's just about reposing or resting on your own Source, on your own Being, just being... not doing anything. Turning the arrow of attention back to yourself. Resting in awareness, your own Being. So this is not a practice. It's a practice-less practice. And it's very much required.

## **Part Eight - Both Self and Ox Forgotten.**

The circle, the sacred Enso... not nothingness, but everything ungraspable. Luminous emptiness, or an emptiness dancing as all things. The place where the "I" thought dissolves forever. In Zen they say there's no one to attain and no attainment. This is not an end. It is the vanishing of the need for beginnings and ends. Awake as that which was never born.

In non-duality, the ones we are most concerned about are the last three stages. Last three pictures... in the eighth one. It's nothing. It's just an empty picture. There's nothing going on there. And for a lot of spiritual traditions, non-dual traditions, that's the pinnacle. It's like you go beyond all duality and find the absolute true dissolution. You find what lies beyond the light of awareness. You find the lightless light. You find the unmanifest, the unborn. So this is beautiful, but... but this is eighth picture. There's still the ninth and the 10th picture.

## **Part Nine - Returning to the Source.**

T.S. Eliot said, We shall not cease for exploration, and at the end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

In Zen there's a teaching called 'mountains and rivers'. At the beginning of the path mountains are mountains, and rivers are rivers. Upon some realization, mountains are no longer mountains rivers are no longer rivers. But upon full liberation mountains and rivers are.

The concept of the mountain and river has been dropped. The filter is gone, revealing the great reality. The mountain, the river... is revealed as Shiva. The great Tibetan non-dual teacher Longchenpa said 'Everything arises as the play of awareness.'

The ninth one shows the world without anyone in it, which means you are not self referencing yourself to anything anymore. Not to a self, not to awareness, not to anything. You are complete



groundless intimacy. You don't need to refer to yourself as anything. Not even a self, not even a transcendental self. Nothing whatsoever. You are free from all types of self references. The world continues without any self reference. It unfolds in whatever way it needs to. The whole reality just plays. A bird sings, a leaf blows in the wind, a dog barks. A person talks. A supernova happens in space. There's no need to have any self reference as an identity, as a person. Even a transcendental one.

## **Part Ten** - Entering the Marketplace with Open Hands.

The mystery of the non-dual reaches its culmination in the 10th picture. To be liberated beyond freedom and bondage is to abide in your true nature, which was never bound.

But then the biggest change, the biggest shift, happens on the 10th picture, which shows the marketplace and the farmer is back in the marketplace. This is remarkably important because otherwise we would believe that we have to be saints to manifest and embody some degree of realization and insight, which is not the case. You are free to do whatever you want. And how can any type of expression not be an expression of that?

So in spite of what you do, however, anything flows... it doesn't make any difference. You are free. Where is reality found other than here, in this moment, in your current experience? What else could it be? How can you not be a pure manifestation of reality? Whatever your manifestation is.

Moksha, Salvation, Nirvana, Liberation, Self-Realization, Satchitananda, Freedom, Nirvana, Enlightenment, Manonasa and so on... are only concepts.

What do they mean to You? They have significance because you believe that you are bound. They have significance because you believe you are ignorant. Removed that one who believes. Remove that "I" and you will truly see.

But as long as bondage exists, freedom, or the concept of freedom or the yearning for freedom will exist. When you are free, you are free from both bondage and freedom. When you are liberated, you are liberated from both liberation and bondage because they are a dualistic interplay, interdependent, that coexist. Liberation is everything. There is no life without liberation. There is no joy without liberation. There is no freedom without liberation. But at some point, even liberation is left behind because it is a concept. We are interested in the raw, direct experience. As the saying goes, we should never mistake the finger for the moon. The finger points to the moon. But it's not the moon.

To be free beyond freedom is not to rise above the world, but to walk barefoot through it with nothing to gain and everything to give. Let me leave you with a story... not as a teaching, but as a wink from the mystery.

In a bustling marketplace where the sacred and mundane mingle without separation, a man approaches a strange figure. Round bellied, radiant-eyed, clothed in rags and laughing for no reason at all, It is Hotei, the so-called Laughing Buddha. Not a teacher, but a question mark.

The man bowed slightly to this figure. He recognizes something in Hotei. Please, he says, 'What is the meaning of Zen?' Hotei steps forward, smiling wide. He opens his arms and draws the man into a full, warm embrace. No words, just the absolute intimacy of the present moment.

The man exhales a long exhale. Deep inside, something softens. Another question arises... 'What is the highest wisdom?' Hotei says nothing. He bends and lifts his old cloth bag, turns and walks away into the crowd without looking back, and disappears.

This was his answer. An embrace, a departure. Presence and disappearance. The fullness of love, the freedom of non-attachment.

This is the pathless path. Not to be understood, but to be lived.