

Seeing Things as They Really are

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A modern guide to meditation based on the teachings of Anagarika Munindra and Osho,
and their presence in my heart.

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Chapter 1

Why meditate?

The Wheel Of Life

Adam is a discovery channel ‘myth buster hero’ who says the following with a big smile on his face: “I reject reality and substitute my own”.

The unfortunate truth is that this is exactly what we are all doing! And this is likely to go on forever, unless one is lucky enough to meet a meditation Master and after the appropriate period of time, experience for the first time, a full stop: Nirvana. When that happens, you experience the first glimpse of enlightenment and you enter the stream.

If you are not familiar with Buddhist Science, you will need to be convinced of a few things before you can understand the precarious situation you are in.

The first one is rebirth.

Western conditioning tells you that you have one life and that's it. This has a number of implications. For example it is thought that when you execute a dangerous criminal you are getting rid of him forever. Or, soldiers who die in a battle are thought of as having disappeared once and for all. What happens with the remaining mental energy is not considered, because the science of the mind is still very underdeveloped in the occidental societies.

But what if after death there is rebirth? All these soldiers would be coming back, with nightmares and all, creating all kinds of problems. James Redfield in his “The Celestine Prophecy” describes how he sees in a vision, soldiers killing each other, getting reborn and doing it all over again, life after life after life. This is also what Buddha describes in a vaster vision. He said he saw all of humanity doing stupidities, dying and repeating the same stupidities, for thousands and thousands of years. Because humans do not remember their past, this can go on for eternity.

Osho keeps repeating the same thing. Although the body is only a space suit that can be used for a hundred years or so, consciousness never dies. A Buddha is a highly evolved being who doesn't need a body anymore. In his life he has eliminated all desire to be in a body and therefore lives on forever and everywhere, in universal consciousness. This is the ultimate goal of meditation.

That's why Osho says you can meet the Buddha always and everywhere, if you know how of course.

The body exists somewhere; when the body disappears, the soul, the consciousness exists everywhere. You can meet the Buddha everywhere; wherever you go you can meet him.
The Body is there because the mind seeks desires through the body; desires cannot be fulfilled without the body. You can be completely fulfilled without the body, but desires cannot be fulfilled without the body. Desire needs the body; the body is the vehicle of desire.

Osho, a bird of the wing, cap.7: The Severe Teacher.

The same is the case when you enter a womb, enter into a fresh body, and start the journey of desires. But if you die alert, in that alertness not only the body dies, all desires evaporate. Then there is no entering into a womb. Then entering the womb is such a painful process, it is so painful that consciously you cannot do it; only unconsciously you can do it.

Osho

Another point to understand is what Buddha calls anatta, or absence of soul (as opposed to personality belief, or wrong view).

This is a little difficult to understand in the beginning because in our culture exactly the opposite is believed to be true. You are somebody, you are responsible; you are the doer. You are innocent or guilty. You are the author of your work; you have copyrights. And if you think you are the author of your deeds, you will also think that everybody else is the author of his deeds and so starts the endless circle of blame and claim.

The reality is that we cannot blame anybody for what they do because they are not the author. They are only the manifestation of the effects of certain causes. You can never claim anything from anybody because that body cannot even control his own life, being subject to the same chain of cause and effect as everybody else, much less satisfy your expectations. Those in a relationship will understand what I mean.

Absence of soul means there is not anything fixed, unchanging, within a being. In truth a "person" consists of five aggregates. Just as a car consists of a chassis, an engine, a gearbox, etc., so a being consists of five "things" put together. When we look inside of ourselves we do not find a soul anywhere, but we do find a body, a consciousness (witness), mental contents, perceptions and feelings. Each and every one of these parts are subject to the same law of cause and effect and don't have any "soul" nor permanence of their own whatsoever.

The question then arises: if I am not the doer, who is?

This gets us to the question that Osho has called the only valid religious question: "Who am I?"

So, why meditate?

For those still caught-up in the ego and its fear, life is sooner or later going to be painful.

After birth, the outlook is that we will get sick and we will die. Unavoidable!

And if you look a little closer you will see that it is an unending phenomenon, because after death it does not end! YOU will not be reborn, but the desire remaining at the moment of death will not simply disappear. It will cause another life to start.

So at some point in the evolution of a being, there arises the desire to know the truth. Who am I? What am I doing here? Who is in charge here? How the bleep does it work?

Understanding the laws that govern the functioning of the outer and inner world is the next point: understanding the Dhamma.

J. Krishnamurti says: "This law of cause and effect explains that *samsara*, the process of repeated existences, is perpetuated by a chain of interconnected links of cause and effect; it also reveals the way of breaking this chain and putting an end to the process. Man has been continuing in this *Samsara* since millennia - through countless eons - millennia upon millennia."

The Buddha said: The man with craving as his companion has been flowing in the stream of repeated existences from time immemorial. He comes into being, experiences various types of miseries, dies again and again, and does not put an end to this unbroken process of becoming.

This is *samsara*, the world of suffering, as explained by the Buddha.

J. Krishnamurti

The universal law that governs the world is called the Law of Dependant Origination. It is not only the fundamental teaching of Buddhist science. It is also the only scientific explanation *ever* given for our great voyage through time and space and it is therefore amazing that so very few people seem to know about it.

For the sake of clarity I would like to state here that I call Buddhism "the science that has enlightenment as its goal and meditation as its method" as opposed to the "religion" that started with the Buddha.

Science is science because its truth is verifiable and repeatable and these are characteristics that are fully applicable in the case of the science of Buddhism: anybody who sincerely applies the meditation will sooner or later experience Nirvana, thereby initiating his final deliverance of the wheel of life, death and rebirth.

Religion on the other hand requires belief, rituals, abracadabra and the result if any, is not obtainable by one's own efforts but only through the "grace" of "God" and the mediation of priests, who thereby disempower the "followers". (The religion called Buddhism also has these characteristics.)

The Buddha, (the expression: "the Buddha" means "the fully enlightened one". It is not a name. There have been many Buddhas), gives the Law of Dependant Origination not only as an explanation, but, more importantly, as the way to escape from the endless circle of cause and effect, of death and rebirth. It specifically explains how and at which point it is possible to get out of this vicious circle.

The wheel of Life consists of an outer circle with 12 divisions, where each division is a cause of an effect, which in turn becomes a cause for the next effect. Then there is an inner circle with six divisions, where the six worlds are depicted, into which a being can get reborn. They are the worlds of the humans, of the animals, the hungry ghosts, the warriors, the devas and the hell worlds. Each one is again subdivided in six.

There is some discussion as to how literally we have to see these worlds, but that is outside the scope of this manual.

This is the law:

Because of Ignorance, conditioning arises. (Mental objects like thoughts, emotions, dreams)

Because of conditioning, consciousness arises.

Because of consciousness, mind-body arises.

Because of mind-body, the six senses arise.

Because of the six senses, contact arises.

Because of contact, feeling arises.

Because of feeling, craving and aversion arise.

Because of craving and aversion, clinging arises.

Because of clinging, becoming arises.

Because of becoming, birth arises.

Because of birth, aging and death arise

Together with sorrow, lamentation, physical and mental sufferings and tribulations,

Thus arises this entire mass of suffering.

This can be said in many different ways. Lets start with birth because that has already happened and cannot be turned back.

More accurately the beginning is conception.

Conception is the cause, the development of the six senses is the effect.

Because of the six senses, perception of sense objects is possible.

Because of perception of sense objects, there arises feeling.

Because of feeling, desire arises.

Because of desire, thirst for pleasures arises.

Because of this thirst for pleasures, there follows a process of becoming.

This process of becoming is the life of the "ego" and has aging, disease and death, and the whole mass of suffering as effect.

What keeps most of us going in spite of all this, is the capacity to dream of a better future, which is of course an illusion.

The life of someone who has experienced at least the first stage of enlightenment, is completely different because this new human being now starts to live in the present, seeing the reality of the situation.

As an illustration I would like to introduce here the view of some of the Tibetan Buddhists on this rebirth process.

They say that when one dies, the body-mind dissolves, but as a result of ignorance, there is a residual desire, which is the last moment of the previous life. This desirous-mind-moment floats around looking for what it wants and begins to see couples making love. There are always thousands of couples making love and through attraction and repulsion it approaches a couple that it feels close to and begins to feel more attracted to either one of the couple. If attracted to the male, it becomes female and if attracted to the female it becomes male. (Exceptions are there due to confusion). The whole process is of course governed by ignorance, lack of awareness, therefore one has no control over it.

So as one begins to see the reality of this eternal never-ending gauntlet, naturally the question arises: how to get out of this?

Now, Buddhist science is totally unique in that it is based on the discovery of the greatest enlightened Master who ever walked the earth.

Here is what U Bha Khin, the Burmese teacher of Goenka, has to say about the Law of Dependent origination:

The origin of each link depends upon the preceding one. As long as this chain of twelve causal relations operates, the wheel of becoming keeps turning, bringing nothing but suffering. This process of cause and effect is

called the Law of Dependent Origination in forward order. Every link results in misery, as a result of absence of awareness, which is at the base of every link.

We have to emerge from this wheel of suffering. Explaining how to do so, the Buddha said that when one of the links of the chain is broken, the wheel of becoming comes to an end, resulting in the cessation of suffering. How can that be achieved? Which link of the chain can be broken?

Through deep insight, the Buddha discovered that the crucial link is Feeling. (Feeling is the translation of the word *Vedana* that means specifically: feeling good, neutral or bad.) Feeling is the cause of thirst, which gives rise to suffering. In order to remove the cause of suffering, desire, one must not allow feeling to result in thirst, in other words, one must practice *Vipassana* meditation at this juncture so that *absence of awareness* becomes *mindfulness* or wisdom. One has to observe *feeling*, to experience and to understand the truth of its arising and passing away, in other words one has to see the *impermanence* of it.

In this way, by the breaking of one link, *Vedana*, the whole process is shattered and the wheel of repeated existence is broken completely.

If we want to advance on the path of liberation, we have to work at the level of *feeling* because it is here that the rotation of the wheel of misery can be arrested. With *feeling* starts the turning of the wheel of becoming, leading (because of absence of *awareness*) to thirst, which causes suffering. That is the path, which ignorant persons follow, since they react to *feeling* and generate *thirst*. And from here also the Wheel of Dhamma or the wheel of cessation of suffering can start to rotate, leading to the eradication of feeling and thirst: the end of craving, as a result of *awareness of impermanence* or *wisdom*, leading to the cessation of suffering. This is the path, which wise persons follow by not reacting to *feeling*, because they have developed awareness of impermanence by the practice of *Vipassana*.

Many of the contemporaries of the Buddha held the view that craving causes suffering and that to remove suffering, one has to abstain from the objects of craving.

In order to develop detachment, the Buddha tackled the problem in a different way. Having learned to examine the depths of his own mind, he realized that between the external object and the mental reflex of craving, is a missing link: *feeling*. Whenever we encounter an object through the five physical senses or the mind, a *feeling* arises; and based on the *feeling*, *thirst* arises. If the *feeling* is pleasant we crave to prolong it, and if it is unpleasant we crave to be rid of it.

U Bha Khin.

That Buddhist monks are told the same nonsense – that in order to get enlightened you have to prevent the seducing objects from entering the doors and so “catching you” - is shown in an old Zen story:

Two monks were arriving at a river crossing in China and seeing that a woman had difficulty crossing the water. One of the monks picked her up in his arms and carried her to the other side. The monks continued their walk but after some time the other monk could not hold his outrage anymore: “How could you do that! You know we are not even supposed to look at a woman!”

The monk who had carried her across said: “I left her at the river, are you still carrying her?”

We interrupt the chain of cause and effect by becoming aware of the feeling. (There are 5 kinds of feeling: good body feeling (called pleasure), bad body feeling (called pain), good mental feeling, indifferent mental feeling, bad mental feeling. This is generally what people mean when they ask: “How are you?” In reality this constantly changes from moment to moment and one should try to always know what feeling is there.

In fact being aware of the feeling that is actually present in the moment, is the same as that experienced by a driver, who is constantly aware (ideally!) of the traffic lights, green, orange or red - even though he is driving, talking, smoking - and this applies to the outside as well as the inside. (Outside being the traffic, and inside the technical condition of the car).

Whenever you go into a negative zone you experience a red light; you have to pay a little more attention. When you are on the path of the green light, you can relax a little. Orange is when you don't really know what's happening.

Understanding the Law of Dependent Origination is considered difficult but essential to get the insight leading to enlightenment.

So why meditate?

I once came across a text that enumerated all the possible ways in which life is painful. It was methodically put together and it was awful. It scared me.

It went something like this.

You get born and already you are lucky if your spacesuit is working well. Then you grow old, get sick and die, only to get caught in a womb again.

In the meantime, even if you're lucky enough to maintain all your senses more or less intact, the objects hitting them are regularly too much and there is nothing you can do about it. You are associated with others you hate and you are separated from the ones you love. You maybe in constant fear of being abused, robbed, raped, murdered or getting involved in an accident. The diseases you can get are more than you can remember. You'll probably get involved in at least one war, a mutiny, revolution or a coup d'état. Death will take away all your beloved ones if you don't die at a young age. You can get arrested for deserved or undeserved reasons, falsely accused, tortured by the government or by pirates. The fruits of your labor can be robbed; your children can rise up against you...

It went on and on for pages and I gradually became aware that this text was very old. In fact nothing had changed in thousands of years and all our 'progress' had meant very little so far.

Something needed to be done.

I started on the path of meditation because my father was killed in the war and I could not understand why. I used to think that I had a wonderful life. There was no problem whatsoever. But once in a while out of the blue this anguish would come up, again and again, until I began to understand that I needed to find someone who understood the meaning of life, if any.

I had read "Zen Flesh, Zen Bones", a compilation of short Zen stories by Paul Reps, a few years earlier in Istanbul, so I decided to go to the East where the Masters were supposed to be, with my wife, by local transport, overland!

After many adventures and expeditions I found out that the Master was not sitting high in the Himalayas. Instead a friend sent me to Bodh-Gaya where I arrived on full moon day in October 1970. This was where Munindra lived.

I was convinced that my marriage was perfect and that it would be difficult to find a happier couple than us. The first thing Munindra did was talking to my wife about jealousy, as if it were some kind of disease. We were shocked at first but soon I began to see that he was right and that he had seen a problem we didn't know existed, way before us.

Two years later she had her first serious attack of manic-depression as it was called at the time.

Munindra had been trying to make it clear to us that things were not so "hunky-dory" after all. Around that time I began to see that I carried a lot more hidden pain inside than I was willing to admit.

We stayed three weeks there, meditating for about two hours per day. Then we had to go back to Holland and we were totally convinced that we had found the solution to all problems and indeed our trip back was twice as fast, very smooth, without misadventures, like clockwork. We meditated one hour in the morning before going to the bus station and this gave us a degree of protection we had never experienced before. Remember we were traveling by public transportation through Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and these were never very stable regions.

Before meditation I had tried the way of psychiatry, but it only got me deeper in trouble. It only managed to rub in the question of why there was always war, but did not give me any answers. The difference with meditation is that in meditation you don't have to expose yourself, but you spend a lot of time with yourself, and you have time to be friendly to yourself and get deeper into whatever needs your attention in that moment. Even though the teacher never told me to do this, I spent many hours, days, weeks, consciously reliving memories, thinking about problems, remembering what happened yesterday, the day before and the day before that, until I was back at age one, amazingly enough never missing even a day! This idea came from somewhere in the Buddhist scriptures, and I decided to try it out to check the scriptures. I am telling this because the word Sati (mindfulness) also means remembering.

I also spent weeks watching sexual fantasies until one day I realized that this was all very nice but it was not meditation.

Munindra was indeed the door to all these new insights so these three weeks in India were absolutely essential. It became clear that everything I did in this meditation was healing, effective, giving great clarity.

Nevertheless there was something I didn't get, and in the years to come, that was to become the cause of a lot of despair.

By now my life had begun to unravel. My wife was admitted in a mental hospital three months per year. I abandoned my university studies. I could not see the sense of it. I had dropped tobacco, alcohol and drugs, but I was still not happy.

Worse, I was actually getting more and more unhappy. It seemed that nothing could make me happy even though all the material needs were fulfilled and superficially our life was going very well indeed. I thought I was ready to get enlightened and planned to let it happen soon: "Six weeks should be enough".

I was of course unaware that these insights need to ripen by themselves in the underground of the unconscious. I made all the mistakes. I was trying to be good, making too much effort, trying to plan my own enlightenment. It almost hurt. I was going nowhere and after eight years I realized I had unsolved sexual problems. I could not apply what Munindra said about this. The problem was that deep inside I wanted to make love to many women but could not even admit it to myself because I was trying to be "goody goody", and, I was married.

So after another ten-day course where instead of meditating, I spent my time reading Osho's book: "The Way of the White Clouds", I told Munindra I was going to see the well known "sex guru" Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, later known as Osho.

Chapter 2

Buddhism: the Science

Thinking of the Buddha, terms like “The Four Noble Truths” and “The Eightfold Path” come to mind.

The Four Noble Truths are:

1. This life is suffering.
2. Desire is the cause of suffering.
3. Dropping desire leads to the extinction of suffering.
4. The Path leading to the extinction of suffering, is the Eightfold Path:
 1. Right Understanding
 2. Right Thought
 3. Right Speech
 4. Right Action
 5. Right Livelihood
 6. Right Effort
 7. Right Concentration
 8. Right Mindfulness

The First Noble Truth is called the truth of suffering:

Life is painful.

This is, strangely enough, not always very evident to people. Many are hypnotized into believing that “life is beautiful”. There are always a number of people who, for example under the influence of hormones, are in love, on a biochemical high, and they believe that life is so beautiful!

But if you look around with open eyes for just a moment, you’ll immediately see that life is in reality immensely painful. Just look at the short list of all the things that can go wrong! And as we all know, Murphy’s Law says if things can go wrong, they will.

However this is only true for those who are trapped in their egos. The ego consists of a central wrong view together with a list of opinions based on this wrong view. If you identify yourself with this ego, thinking that this body is ME, that this collection of ideas is MINE, you are living a life trying to be in accordance with ideas based on false truths.

There are several wrong views but the most important one is the wrong view that thinks that “I” AM SEPARATE FROM EXISTENCE. This means that I have to constantly be on the lookout and defend myself against the whole world because if “I” don’t do it, who will? It means that I am responsible for all my actions and all that happens to me. “I” am guilty of my mistakes and so is “everybody” else. (All societies are obsessed with tracing faults and blaming them on a guilty “person”.)

These so-called truths are passed on by society through socialization, by parents, schools, peer groups, religions, and even through rebirth.

There is just no way that these pseudo truths can result in happiness. When you are sleepwalking, you are not protected from getting hurt if you “ignore” the laws of nature, by stepping off the balcony. Whatever your dream may be, the laws of nature don’t change to oblige you and your beliefs.

The Second Noble Truth:

Desire is the cause of suffering.

Buddha states that desire is the cause of all suffering.

We think that we have just a few unsatisfied desires, and we cannot be happy because that happiness can only come after a few minimum desires have been fulfilled.

“If only this, that and the other would materialize, then I will be very happy”. Fill in your own words! But the truth is that this moment will never come, because we project into the future and the future doesn’t really exist. Tomorrow never comes because it will always be today.

It is like when you are walking and looking at the horizon imagining all these good things that are going to happen to you once you get there. The problem is that the horizon never comes any nearer and you are forever craving for just that one something more that will never come.

Existence is like a wish-gem. You desire something, you rub the stone and existence will try its very best to produce it for you. The only problem is that it cannot do it instantly and by the time your wish materializes, chances are you have forgotten the original desire and now you desire something else, which in turn will be satisfied later, and you will have forgotten again, and so on and so forth. Or your desire materializes but now *you* have changed and want something else again.

Desire is a kind of insanity rooted in ignorance. We are identified with the list of requirements that the ego projects, without understanding existence, thinking: without this, that or the other “I” cannot be happy. And then we don’t understand

why we are not happy. We create fictitious requirements and when they are not fulfilled soon enough, we have created our “own” unhappiness.
As soon as this is understood, desire disappears and bliss arises, without any cause, without any requirement.

The Third Noble Truth:

The cessation of desire is the end of suffering.

That is the beauty of the Buddha: he is so scientific and very practical. He only tells you what you need to know in order to get out of the trap, to liberate yourself.

Simple: your life is a mess because of your desire and it can be fixed by dropping desire. Now: how does that work? What can be done?

Nothing can be done because the ego thinks of itself as the doer. Whatever we do, will be done by the ego and that won't do any good, because you are asking the ego to nullify itself. And that it will never do, because it quite mistakenly thinks that without it, you will die almost immediately. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Ego is neurosis personified. Ego cannot stop being busy for one moment for fear of annihilation. All thinking is a product of that fear. Therefore thinking never stops as long as we identify with the ego.

But then Buddha comes with the famous Maha Satipatthana sutra. The sutra of the great remembering of the four pillars of mindfulness. He gives us:

The Fourth Noble Truth:

The way to get rid of desire is The Eightfold Path.

To get the ego to finally relax to such a degree that we will no longer believe this ego is “I”, is “mine” or it belongs to “me”, it is necessary for the mind to come to a full stop. In this moment there is nothing, no object, no person, no consciousness. Nirvana. No Pain.

And immediately after that, the real truth is revealed and the ego is forever changed: we now know ‘who’ we are; we know we are not the ego, we are just the witnessing. All the opinions of the ego-list are revisited and changed according to the new insight. We have become a transformed being, never again to fall into the trap of wrong view.

The Eightfold Path is the quintessence of Buddha's teaching. It is the heart of Buddhist meditation.

- 1 Right Understanding
- 2 Right Thought
- 3 Right Speech
- 4 Right Action
- 5 Right Livelihood
- 6 Right Effort
- 7 Right Concentration
- 8 Right Mindfulness

It is not a succession of steps but rather a spiral where each aspect is reviewed again and again and, at each passing and reviewing, more understanding arises. The Eightfold Path is considered as one path with eight aspects. It can be seen in any order.

For example a little understanding is needed for the disciple to even begin to meditate. Therefore right understanding is seen as number one. This understanding leads to right thought, which leads to more meditation. This in turn again leads gradually to right speech, right action and right livelihood. Meditation leads to more concentration and mindfulness which again leads to more understanding and so on and so forth until all aspects are equally developed and in balance. When all the conditions are fulfilled and balanced, the mind becomes totally equanimous and then stops for a moment. A kind of implosion happens and Nirvana is realized.

This leads to a great flash of understanding after which the disciple enters in a totally new world of being. It is called supramundane, otherworldly. When it happens for the first time it is called “Entering The Stream” and from then on there is no turning back. Sooner or later the next three stages of enlightenment will happen.

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Munindra said: “Of course but go with open mind!” He had met Osho personally a few times in the last decade. He saw I needed a change. He must have seen that I was unable to solve this problem of sexual desire only through meditation.

Osho's Tantra teachings helped me to forget meditation for some time and concentrate for a while on the mysteries of sex, love, adultery, faithfulness, and relationships. Clarity was gradually growing.

Yet the truth was still as elusive as ever, while I faced my hang-ups with marriage and the fairy tales that we receive with our mother milk. In fact I had to go through three more ‘marriages’ before I became so desperate that there were only two options left: suicide or sannyas, and to me sannyas meant enlightenment. But how the bleep?

It was with a great sense of wonder that I began to see the true religion that Munindra was teaching. All you had to do was watch what was going on inside you. He never spelled out anything in particular. All he did was give you a method, which you had to practice in the privacy of your own interior. What was going on in there was your own business. The Master would never ask what you were really doing. Your privacy was always guaranteed. The only thing Munindra would ask, were questions like: “how long can you keep your awareness on the breathing?” or “is the process of seeing clear to you?” “Do you see the difference between mind and matter?” (Name and form).

In the true religion the Master is very careful to leave your freedom intact. You can think what ever you like, you can talk about any subject without fear of being condemned and you can do anything as long as it doesn't hurt anybody else. Later on Osho said many times that freedom is the highest value, even higher than love.

This is the true approach to the science of transformation, which is not based on the teaching of one founder or one prophet, but as in any science it is based on discoveries of a long line of contributors, of which Buddha was the most important one because he invented Vipassana. Many enlightened Masters have contributed to the science of Buddhism of which Osho was the most recent one, but none of these are considered lower than Buddha in any way. There is no difference in degree between fully enlightened beings. There is however a difference between their capacity to explain the Truth to those who are still caught up in their egos.

At Osho's ashram we learned so much more about the difference between the true and the false, because unlike Munindra, Osho likes to call a spade a spade. I remember being in a discourse, seated next to a group of Indian Catholic priests, who had come innocently to listen to the phenomenon “Bhagwan Rajneesh”. They were proud of themselves for their open minds and so they were there, with frozen smiles, trying not to hear what the Master was saying, while Osho was making jokes about “il Papa di Roma”, and “Mother Theresa the Terrible!” He liked to rub it in so as to thoroughly destroy whatever unconscious beliefs we might still harbor. I wanted to disappear, sinking into the marble floor, feeling ashamed for these poor people.

Chapter 3

Reality: Vipassana

Vipassana means deep insight,
Vipassana means to see things as they really are.

So what are these things?
And what is this reality?

We have to become aware that “our reality” comes to us through our senses, which are the doors through which comes all our information about “reality”. Each door is specialized in only one kind of reality, so that what we receive is just 6 kinds of objects coming through 6 sense-doors, producing 6 kinds of consciousness.

The first 5 senses can receive light, sound, touch, smell and taste. These objects hit the sensor in each corresponding sense and produce an electric current that goes to the sixth sense-door (the brain) and produce consciousness of light, consciousness of sound, consciousness of touch, consciousness of smell and consciousness of taste. (In other words, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting).

So, what Buddha calls reality, is not the solid, concrete world that we think surrounds us.

We should always be aware that there are two kinds of reality, the ordinary reality and the ultimate reality. The ordinary reality is the world we live in, where we are persons with names, who have possessions, bank accounts, who are seemingly caught up in social networks of duty, responsibility, expectations, where tables are flat hard surfaces and where birth and death are considered “good” and “bad”. The ultimate reality appears when we look at the world inside ourselves. It is like the world of atoms and molecules, where a table consists of 99.9% of emptiness in which “matter” turns around itself at the speed of light and occupies only 0.1% of space. In this inner world there are no persons, nothing lasts longer than a milli-second and hence cannot lead to any kind of satisfaction. Buddha says every single thing is impermanent (anicha), impersonal (anatta), and unsatisfactory (dukkha). The world of meditation talks exclusively about this ultimate reality.

A friend of mine was a disciple in Thailand: He is sitting in his bamboo hut and getting wet, because his roof leaks. He thinks: “Oh, everything is impermanent so I'll just watch it” until his teacher, the abbot of the monastery, passes by and sees what is going on, listens to my friend's explanation and then rebukes him for mixing up the two levels of reality: “Never use the truth of the ultimate reality to explain away the ordinary daily truth. And fix this roof first!”

In the mind, the perceived objects are immediately and automatically categorized as good, bad or neutral (feeling). Then in the next split-second a reaction occurs. We want to keep the “good” ones (attachment) and we want to get rid of the “bad” ones (aversion). We don’t pay much attention to the neutral ones (ignorance or absence of mind), because they are less prominent.

Here is where desire starts - desire to have more of the “good” and to get rid of the “bad”. It is this desire that keeps us firmly rooted in the world and leads to nothing but suffering.

Osho says that the only thing that keeps us from being happy is the desire to become happy.

By the way I believe that evolution as defined by Charles Darwin, is not the result of random (accidental) changes in the genes of species, but rather a result of desire of the individuals of the species. Desire in other words, is the motor of evolution. I don’t have the means of scientifically testing this hypothesis at the moment, hence my use of the word *believe*, which in itself is not a bad thing. It just indicates a temporary state of not yet knowing for sure.

Ordinary human beings cannot perceive Ultimate Reality, because they have been conditioned, (hypnotized), taught by the parents, schools, society, to perceive things in a certain way, making it very difficult to see them in a more truthful way.

This reminds me of a hypnosis session I once saw in a theater show that was filmed as a commercial. On the stage two volunteers sitting in armchairs, already hypnotized into thinking they are in a bar, are drinking what is obviously lemon juice. They think it is a fresh cold beer and with the public laughing loudly in the background, are drinking it with obvious relish, licking their lips and immediately ordering “two more of the same please”.

This was only a beer commercial but the parallel is obvious: we smoke tobacco hypnotized by thousands of commercials, publicity campaigns and in many cases by our parents. We are seduced into thinking that this cigarette is really something worthwhile that gives you something great, when in reality all it gives is a good cough if you are lucky.

But even more desirable things can be viewed in the same light. Love, relationships, drugs, consumer goods, possessions, are all seen as very attractive, but only because of a certain conditioning.

So Vipassana is in fact a re-education of mankind, a process of de-hypnosis where, slowly, slowly, you will be deconditioned and will begin to see things as just what they are, without condemning, judging, evaluating or commenting them. Just see color and form, sound, taste, smell, movement, temperature, hardness and softness, and thoughts (here used in the generic sense meaning mental formations that enter the mind door, like thoughts, emotions, dreams, feeling, visions, imaginations, etc.)

What normally happens, is that the unconscious process works according to past conditioning. Things are not seen as they are, but they are immediately classified as desirable or undesirable as they enter the mind door. Then follows desire or aversion. They are classified by comparing them to a database, which consists of memories of the past. Since these data are heavily biased or prejudiced by conditioning, the classification is basically controlled by the collective unconsciousness of society and, therefore is based on wrong view and cannot lead to happiness.

Desire is what traps us. From birth to death we live without ever becoming aware of the dynamics we are caught up in. And this can go on for eternity. This is what the wise ones call Samsara, the world of desire, the world of pain.

Vipassana says: “Look at the world with bare attention and see the naked truth. Bare attention is the most important tool the Buddha gave us to observe and understand the naked truth. It means looking without any preconditions, without any prejudice, without condemning, judging, evaluating nor commenting. Slowly one becomes aware that all that is happening, is 6 kinds of objects entering through 6 doors and resulting into 6 kinds of consciousness: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking.

Note the way the term consciousness is used. In the documentary “What the bleep is going on” some interviewees are asked, “what is consciousness” and none of them comes up with a satisfactory answer.

As in any science it doesn’t really matter what you call a phenomenon. What matters is to agree on a definition that makes sense and is easily verifiable and repeatable so that we know what we are talking about.

Sooner or later however, the fortunate ones begin to realize that the truth of our civilization is not the universal truth.

The word truth (Dhamma in Pali, the language of the Buddha, or Dhama in Sanskrit, the language of the scholars) is here defined as Natural Law. Just like the law of gravity, for example, discovered by our old friend Isaac Newton, where an apple just always falls onto the earth, there exist laws that govern the phenomena of mind, which are all part of the Dhamma, the way things are. They do not depend on the observer; they are universal.

At that point one usually becomes depressed because when the truth slowly dawns on one, the problem becomes: “What are we going to do about it?”

Vipassana is the way, the way to your innermost self, the way to a place where you are alone with your most intimate self, where you can finally spend time with yourself, to start the great quest to find out and understand who you really are, so that you can finally become what you always wanted to be: yourself!

This is the ultimate cause of happiness.

The false truth we go on living in, makes life very painful and therefore we are always looking for relief, right or wrong.

Through practice of Vipassana, the “only way”, we begin to walk the path of truth and insight as we pass through the eight aspects of the path, again and again understanding more clearly at each round.

The only way? Why?

Since without insight we cannot understand the way things work, and the word Vipassana implies understanding, you could say that the only way to get out of samsara, is through understanding, or Vipassana, “the way things really are”.

When you want to build an airplane, it doesn't matter which religion you want to call yours. You will have to obey the universal laws or the thing will never fly. In the same way, if you want to get enlightened you will have to obey the laws or it will never happen. That's why it is said: “the only way out is the only way in”. And of course the only way in, is turning all attention inwards and just observe with bare attention to see what the bleep is happening. This happens to be Vipassana meditation.

Come to think of it, it is such a miracle that this teaching is still available in spite of all the efforts to root it out. So many Masters have been murdered, poisoned, or worse, that it is a wonder they are still coming back to teach us.

I had never heard of Vipassana before I was 26 years old. In the beginning it was very difficult to understand. All the concepts seemed so new, so strange.

I started to become aware of the fact that it is very difficult to explain these ideas to others in the west (the “Christian World”). I had made this great discovery and I wanted to talk about it to my friends and realized that none of them had any idea what I was talking about. In this way I had to learn that not many people want to hear this message. I remember long nights of discussion with my co-students in university, where I was trying to explain the basics of the Buddha's teachings. Sometimes, after many drinks, one of them suddenly seemed to understand it and my ego felt great. The next day in the morning he said: “You know, actually I don't believe a word of what you said last night”.

Naturally the only thing left to do was to go back to Bodh-Gaya to meditate some more. So then starts this intermediate stage of not yet being in the new and realizing that the old has become obsolete. This is a difficult phase: you are forced to accept that those you used to think were your friends, don't want to follow this path. They prefer to stay in their dream of this beautiful world where there is no pain. “Life is beautiful”, or another comment that I heard a lot on those days was: “this is very egoistic” and in this way I learned the answers to many questions, bit by bit.

When I discovered that everybody is responsible for himself ONLY, people came up with the reaction: “Oh. That is easy!” Basically what I want to say is that it's a very different point of view. What I experienced during that time was that I needed to go back to Munindra, because at that point it is extremely helpful to be with somebody who has done the work, who has walked the path, and is speaking from experience, not knowledge.

So I went back to India, by air this time, and did another two months course, learning different kinds of Vipassana (Goenka).

Chapter 4

Meditation: The Method

Think of meditation as music:

By will power you cannot make music.

No matter how strong your will is, you will never be able to sound beautiful, because, yes, it depends on practice, practice and practice, but in the end you will have to let go of all effort and relax in a kind of loving space, if you want your sounds to ever become music.

The same can be said about meditation. You can practice all you want but that doesn't mean you actually get it. It is a knack. It is an art.

After some time you may suddenly “get it”, but the next day you can't remember how you came to that conclusion. It may feel like this “awareness never happened”. It may fluctuate beyond your control, on the other hand it still happens according to certain rules. It seems that if you practice, sooner or later results *will* start to happen.

Also sooner or later, “understanding has to marry with love”.

The science of music is complicated. You have to study it or else there is no hope. But at the same time a certain vibe has to be there or else the thing doesn't fly!

The tantricas have always said that you have to fall in love with your own inner woman or man (or self, if you prefer). This love affair is forever. It generates love and understanding all around. That's the same as practice, practice, practice and then jump in love! Suddenly it is music.

There are thousands of methods called meditation. Many religions like to call their method meditation, but here we consider meditation the effort of turning the attention inwards and watching what is happening there, without any preconceived ideas, with an open mind in order to understand how this whole phenomenon called "I", actually works. (It has nothing to do with concentrating on a fixed object like a mandala, a mantra, or praying or listening to music, or doing good works, or making efforts to be good, etc.) Sometimes it is called contemplation.

Looking at ourselves superficially we think we are a person, meaning a kind of autonomous entity and in the beginning, we tend to consider ourselves to be the body. The word "person" originally means "mask" in Greek, and that should already point to the fact that we are not the persona, the mask.

The word person implies a unit more or less permanent, doing things. This is the normal dual way of thinking. The same illusion becomes apparent when we say for example: "God did this or that to me; God saved my life". In reality there are only thoughts that each depend on the last one and will result in the next one. There is nothing but a string of thoughts. I saw this guy on TV, who was condemned to 4 years in Chilean prison for violence in a football stadium. He said: "I am not the bad person you all think I am" and he is right of course. Within these strings of thoughts and opinions we call a person, nobody knows really why suddenly there is such an accumulation of hatred or greed that it leads to criminal behavior. Now, in spite of all that, we have to learn to somehow influence this process. How? With awareness and mindfulness.

What we discover little by little, as first taught by the Buddha, is that we consist of some combination of a body, a mind, mental contents and feelings. And none of these categories are us, because they do not belong to us, and we have no control over them. They are the four things we have to observe. We have to observe them as a traffic checker watches the traffic, making notes as follows: "a car, one truck, 3 bicycles, 2 pedestrians", etc without getting involved in what passes by, lest he loses track of the traffic. He does not get identified, he does not say: "Oh, a woman with red hair wearing high heels going to the supermarket", but just: "Aha, one pedestrian". He is just a witness who keeps track of the traffic and roughly puts it in a category. He only makes note of the characteristics that interest him and are necessary to his research. (Which in our case is: "who am I?")

Similarly we will have to learn just to be a witness, without getting identified or involved in what is happening to our body, our mind, our mental contents and our feelings. Making notes helps us to remind ourselves that we are supposed to watch without interfering in any way. We do not want to change ourselves; we just want to observe.

In the beginning we find this being called "I", to consist of a body and mind. Upon closer examination, the mind then is seen as consciousness (that which knows the object), and mental contents, the objects that are being known.

According to the Buddha there are only 52 different mental objects that combine into millions of different thought- and emotion-patterns (in the same way as there are a relatively small number of physical elements, 92 originally, in the outside world that as a result of millions of combinations produce a seemingly endless variety of phenomena). Two of those 52, feeling and perception, are set apart from the other 50 because they play an important role in this message of deliverance. As said earlier, in the vicious circle we are trapped in, the objects enter the sense doors, resulting in perception, resulting in feeling. Whether this is a good feeling or a bad feeling will determine the next result: either desire, or aversion, thereby trapping us in another round of life and death.

So it is said that all we have to do is to be aware of at least one of these four "pillars of awareness" (sati-patthana), namely: body, mind, mental contents and feeling. (Due to this instruction, Buddhists have come up with a variety of methods that use any of these 4 pillars or combination thereof. For example the well-known teacher Goenka uses sensation in the body as his single object of meditation. Since they are all connected one will end up watching all 4 of the pillars of course, but in the beginning the student in that school concentrates on sensations in the body only.)

Mahasi Sayadaw and, later, Munindra based their observation on choice-less awareness, meaning that the meditator does not take anything in particular as his object of observation. He watches *that object* which is most prominent at the *present moment*. If nothing is clearly jumping out of the endless sequence of objects, he goes back to watching the breathing in and breathing out, which is always present.

In the seventies whenever anyone came to learn Vipassana in Bodh-Gaya - the place where the Buddha became enlightened - the teacher, Anagarika Munindra would give him a small booklet that explains in simple text the method of meditation. I have never seen anything better so far, so I include it here without any change (See Appendix 1).

Munindra's teacher, Mahasi Sayadaw, who rediscovered Vipassana, after it was lost during a few centuries, wrote it in his forest hermitage. Buddhists at that time believed it was no longer possible to become enlightened.

After having gone to the forest for years of deep intensive meditation, Mahasi Sayadaw became enlightened and started teaching the Buddha's original instructions, (written down as "The Maha Satipatthana Sutra") again.

I became Munindra's disciple in 1970. He had been one of the many who were invited by the then president of Burma, U Nu, to come to Rangoon to meditate and become enlightened, because: "The path had been rediscovered!"

Although the instructions given in Appendix 1 are in themselves enough to "get it", Munindra used to give us many more tips, so our progress would be easier.

His beautiful teachings still resound in my mind as if he delivered them yesterday. I am forever immensely grateful to him for thinking it over and translating it for us “lost westerners” who came to visit him from the far west.

The Five Hindrances.

There were a number of topics Munindra used to repeat again and again, and the first was the phenomenon of the five hindrances.

These five hindrances always come up, especially at the beginning of the journey and it is therefore very useful to know them in advance to neutralize their influence. They all work in the same way, trying to convince the student that he should stop meditating and, since the beginner is still very much identified with his mind and mental contents, it effectively stops the process until the hindrance is recognized and thereby cut short.

They are: doubt, restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor, irritation or anger, and sensuous desire.

Doubt is when the disciple thinks: “what am I doing here? This is a useless exercise, I don’t believe a word of what this guy (or gal as the case maybe) is saying”.

Restlessness is when the disciple feels very restless, worries about things he has to do, can’t sit still for 5 minutes. He thinks: “I have many important things to do, I’m losing my time here. I’m getting out of here!”

Sloth and torpor make the disciple think: “I just want to lie down and sleep”

Irritation or anger leads to thoughts like: “I hate this stupid exercise”.

Sensuous desire makes the disciple wanting to indulge in beautiful sights, sounds, tastes, smells, touches and thoughts (or emotions etc.). Imagining foods, music, sexual situations and so on are common at this point. It may seem the student is meditating well for long periods of time, but in reality nothing is happening except imagination, usually without being aware of it.

So what can be done? The best is to recognize them immediately as “hindrance, hindrance...” but if this is not possible, the general advice is to get up and start walking briskly and mindfully in order to stop whatever hindrance is causing the distraction, by forcefully taking the attention away from the thought that causes it.

And then sit down and proceed, after the power of the hindrance has diminished.

In the case of doubt it may also be helpful to read some texts about meditation, talk to the teacher and think about the predicament the disciple is in.

During a meditation course any reading or writing, talking or thinking, is strongly discouraged but in general (after the course) it is highly recommendable to not only spend time in meditation but also to learn from the words of the Masters by reading, discussing with friends, and thinking about it.

“Meditation is not thinking and thinking is not meditation”, Munindra used to constantly repeat. On the other hand he also said that thinking becomes very effective after some time of meditation and it may be that the disciple finds his thoughts much deeper, clearer and to the point. In fact if you have to write an important letter, for example, the best way to do it is to first meditate (without purposely thinking about anything), and then sit down and watch the letter writing itself!

So, this is the most important aspect of the ‘technique’ of meditation: to recognize thought as thought, emotion as emotion, feeling as feeling, right at the beginning of their arising, before they start to have an influence over us. In the case of anger for example, if you see it coming before it has had the time to poison your blood, it is very easy to recognize it, but a few seconds later this mental content has already poisoned you and then it is increasingly difficult to counter its influence by seeing it for what it is!

If he doesn’t see it right at the beginning, the disciple begins to identify with it and starts to believe in the content of his thoughts.

Instead of going on with the process of de-hypnosis, he temporarily stops re-education.

In the beginning the disciple will constantly hear the teacher say: “It is not *you* thinking, *thoughts* are thinkers, not you.

These thoughts (and emotions and visions etc. etc.) are not yours; they do not belong to you. You have no control over them, because they are just like clouds moving through the sky. If you want to keep them or push them away, you are setting yourselves up for a lot of trouble, because it can’t be done. It’s just the way things are. Things are anatta, anicha and dukkha, impersonal, impermanent and unsatisfactory.

It is not very useful to invent your own reality, if you don’t like reality the way it is.

And, don’t judge, don’t condemn, don’t evaluate, any object. Don’t even comment or think about them, just watch them with bare attention, just as the objects enter the sense doors and are first perceived. Watch the feeling they are associated with, and then cut the desire by *becoming aware*. This is what ultimately leads to enlightenment.

It is not “I doubt”, or “I am restless”, or “lazy”, “angry”, or “I desire”, but doubt, restlessness, laziness, anger, or desire arise due to some past causes that are not even interesting, because we don’t need to know them.

So we have to notice them by repeatedly noting: “doubt, doubt” or “restless, restless”, to remind ourselves what this exercise is about.

You are not in control, as is always said. That means you cannot order it to go away. It does not listen to you. Conversely you cannot will it to come to you.

It is like driving in the traffic: you cannot control what is happening outside your car. You note what’s happening but just enough to navigate through the chaos of traffic.

There are a lot of details not interesting to the process of driving.

Likewise, what you are trying to do is to see only the three characteristics of every thing, every phenomenon; life, in short. It is impersonal, impermanent and inherently unsatisfactory.

Well, somebody had to say it.

But what about love, friendship, sunrises, mountains, laughter, beauty?

Well of course that is also always there, but it really can only be enjoyed *after* the first stage of enlightenment!

When the ego is cleaned up to a certain degree - ironically as you are on your way out - you begin to enjoy life for the very first time. Just like when you are on vacation in your own hometown because you were supposed to go somewhere on some important mission - but it didn't happen - and you find yourself on a holiday in your own town, and suddenly you really love it!

One thing at the time.

Another important point that Munindra used to always mention, is that we can only be aware of one thing at the time. This may come as a surprise, especially in the beginning, because we all claim we can do many things at the same time, and sometimes we are even proud of it.

Nevertheless the truth is:

At the time of seeing there is no hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking.

At the time of hearing there is no seeing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking.

At the time of smelling there is no seeing, hearing, tasting, touching or thinking.

At the time of tasting there is no seeing, hearing, smelling, touching or thinking.

At the time of touching there is no seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or thinking.

At the time of thinking there is no seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching.

Remember if you are doing 10 things at the same time, only one will be done with full awareness. The other 9 will be done on automatic pilot, with all the danger that this implies. For example if you are driving a car, smoking a cigarette, talking on the phone and maintaining a conversation with a passenger, three will be done on automatic pilot, and the traffic police will certainly consider this very dangerous too.

Things we do on automatic pilot, robot-like, without being aware of what we are doing, are called mechanical acting. Things we do mindfully, with full awareness, when each step of the action is known from moment to moment, are called dynamic acting.

The purpose of being aware in all actions, like when you do the walking meditation, is to experience this dynamic acting. Meditation in action is another way to say it. It is very important to try and change your habits and eliminate as far as possible the automatic pilot use.

The reason why this mechanical acting seems to work, is that the mind door receives short messages from the doors in very rapid succession, so as to not let any thing be on automatic pilot for longer than a few seconds. Still, the ultimate result will be that each different act is happening with only ten percent of the total time in awareness.

Suppose you are watching a movie, looking at the screen and listening to the sound track, and smoking and eating popcorn, all at the "same time" of course. In this case you don't want to see the reality (that you are staring at a big bed sheet where some lights flicker). No, you want to be deluded into believing you are experiencing "another reality", the story of the movie.

If you want to discover what this phenomenon called movie is, you will have to closely watch one sense door at the time, for example, seeing.

You will then discover that rapid still images are projected with a speed of say 30 per second and that this creates an illusion of real life, if you are unaware enough; and that there are gaps of a few mili-seconds between each image.

In the case of a television you may become aware that even a single image consists in fact of a single point of light traveling at tremendous speed over the screen.

You would also discover that if you concentrate intensely on seeing, you would probably miss the dialogue completely. It also points to the fact why we love to watch movies so much. While watching movies, we are temporarily so occupied with some sense-doors, that there is a relief from our never-ending thinking process! By concentrating totally on something outside, we are blissfully unaware of what's going on inside.

This becoming aware in detail of what is actually happening, is exactly the idea of watching very closely, sense door by sense door, when we think, speak or act.

We want to discover the reality as opposed to remaining under hypnosis, the way we have been living up till now.

Becoming aware of each and every occurrence in small detail, will shine a bright light on all our actions and we will slowly becoming aware of details we didn't even know existed before.

Motivation.

Another important thing to watch is motivation.

Each action is always accompanied by feeling, leading to desire, and also by will, as in "I want". Be aware of the "color" of this volition moment, or motivation. It can be good, bad or neutral. Motive is the cause of the effect of the action. If the motive is good, the effect will be good, and the other way around. This is what constitutes karma.

The Law of Karma is the law of cause and effect and this is how it works. The motive determines the effect. (If someone accidentally kills somebody, not only the human law takes it into consideration. The effect of the act will be much less painful if the motive was good - even though unawareness is not an excuse since ignorance is the cause of many bad results. Again: if you are a sleepwalker and one night you walk off the balcony on the second floor, without knowing what you are doing, the effect will be broken legs, whatever your motive in your dream may have been.

So it is particularly important to know what motive accompanies your "I want" in order for you to stay out of trouble, karmatically speaking.

Another booklet Munindra would distribute to those who proved themselves interested, is "*The Progress of Insight*".

In this other small instruction manual written by Mahasi Sayadaw, everything that can happen to a disciple from day one to the end of the course, is discussed.

The seven stages of understanding leading, to the first experience of enlightenment, the four degrees of enlightenment, and a lot of intermediary states are explained in some detail.

The end of the course is defined as the first degree of enlightenment. So there is no question of how many days a course lasts. It is different for each disciple, since it depends on his previous training, his sincerity, his intelligence, his karma and so on.

It is helpful for the student to know what may happen to him even though he may only understand it in hindsight.

It also means to clarify what things are part of the training, and what things are not. In the beginning many disciples experience beautiful, pleasant phenomena that maybe mistaken for enlightenment for some time, until the teacher corrects this wrong view, or if the teacher is not present, the disciple discovers by himself what is going on by reading Mahasi Sayadaw's manual. In general it can be said that the new disciple has to first get his morality together, then his concentration, and then his meditation.

Morality.

Don't confuse wisdom with morality.

In the context of a meditation course, morality usually means taking the five precepts, at least for the duration of the course, so as to relax the mind and get the most obvious problems out of the way.

Contrary to what is sometimes thought, morality cannot be taught nor learned. In the end it appears as an effect of enlightenment, not as something acquired by practice.

The Law of Karma says that whatever you do to others, will be done to you; hence the next step is: don't do to others what you would not like to happen to you.

All thoughts, speech and actions done with will, have a result. The good ones will have good results and the bad ones, bad or painful results.

In order to already minimize the painful ones, the disciple is asked to abstain from five actions, namely, stealing, lying, killing, sexual misconduct and intoxicating oneself.

On the positive side, one needs to practice generosity, honesty, loving kindness, abstinence and soberness. Even though morality cannot be cultivated, keeping these simple rules helps the practice of awareness.

And, because ugly mind moments cannot coexist with awareness - only beautiful ones can - the presence of awareness will ensure that only the beautiful ones can arise. This is called guarding the doors.

Religions generally say you have to cultivate morality, but here we don't bother too much about it precisely because if you cultivate awareness you are already protected. The results of previous actions cannot be undone but at least here we don't create any new bad causes. This quiets the mind and helps concentration.

Concentration:

If you are constantly worrying about some bad actions of the past, it is very difficult to concentrate and if you cannot concentrate, it is very difficult to meditate. That's the importance of morality: if you want to get enlightened, you have to check your morality, then develop concentration, before you can even start meditating.

So, here we take care of the first part by taking the five precepts.

Then we do a concentration exercise.

Concentration is the ability of the mind to be fixed on one point. It is also called one-pointedness. Any thing can be used as an object, and virtually any thing has been used: things that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted, thought, said, visualized.

The Buddha, however, started with watching the breath, because it has many advantages over the other objects.

In the first place it is always there. You can't lose it. You don't have to look for it.

In the second place breath is intimately connected to thought and emotion. Each type of thought or emotion has its corresponding pattern of breathing associated with it.

If you experience an emotion, say anger or fear, you'll experience that it goes together with a certain way of breathing.

If you experience a certain kind of breathing, you'll know what the associated emotion is.

The first thing we tell our mind is that now we are going to watch the breath as it enters and exits the nostrils, forcibly repressing all other things that may arise. We ignore everything else. Many Masters always say it: "Don't repress anything". But here we temporarily repress with as much force and effort we can manage, to the point of almost getting in a trance, but not quite. (Therefore it is called neighborhood concentration, i.e. almost trance). Trance is the state where there

is only the object, the knowing of it, and these two have become one. There is nothing else happening because everything has been forcefully pushed away. It is a very powerful state of mind. It can lead to superpowers, but not to wisdom. Only meditation leads to wisdom.

Here suffice it to know that when you feel that your breath, and the knowing of it, are close to becoming one, that's when you are ready to start meditation.

Try to stay in one point at a moments notice, and then allow all the so-called distractions back in again, in order to notice them one by one, as they cross the threshold of our consciousness.

We do this concentrating of the mind first, because without it, the speeding objects and chaos that appear at our mind's door in the beginning would probably overwhelm us. But actually it is good practice to always start a meditation session with a short effort to concentrate by ignoring any other object.

Meditation:

This concentration is then used to maintain awareness of anything that becomes prominent at any of the six doors. There is no need to choose any thing. We are trying to develop choiceless awareness, leaving it to existence to make that choice for us. In this way we "see" that which we need to see. It's like watching the moon on a clear night. We are concentrated on the moon but that does not mean we don't see the stars; they are just less prominent.

The purpose of watching objects arising and disappearing, is to see the three characteristics that all objects have in common: they are impersonal, impermanent and ultimately unsatisfactory. All things are anatta, anicha and dukkha.

Anatta means no soul. Nowhere will we find some thing which is permanent inside ourselves and which we could call our self, or a person. So far nobody has been able to find such a thing but students are encouraged to see for themselves and not just believe it. So the question arises: who are we then? Or should we say what are we? After experiencing Nirvana the disciple knows.

Anicha

means no-permanence. Everything we watch inside ourselves arises and passes away with tremendous speed. The closer we look the faster it seems to come and go. We normally experience thoughts as things that last a couple of minutes, but looking closer we begin to see that they are much faster than that and the objects we look at, fall apart increasingly into their components. It is not that the meditation makes them disappear faster. It is rather that previously due to density we just did not see it like it really is. Everything is composed of objects rising and falling with great speed and in between there are gaps of nothing. It is a constant flux of empty phenomena rolling on due to causes of their own. (Density is what prevents us from seeing the individual images in the movie theater. It is a kind of insensitivity that is the result of our being hypnotized and not wanting to see the reality as it is. The word empty in Buddhism is used to mean that there is no person. There is nobody to be found anywhere!)

A single thought turns out to consist of hundreds of bubbles appearing and disappearing. Likewise the body is in constant flux. Atoms and molecules are moving at the speed of light and not two consecutive moments are the same. There is nothing to hold on to. No past, no future, just an eternal present and nobody has any control.

Dukkha:

Because nobody is in charge and everything lasts just mili-seconds, it is obvious that nothing can give lasting satisfaction. Dukkha means suffering or that which is difficult to carry, unbearable. That which is easy to carry is called Sukha, happiness. Note that this suffering is caused by desire. As soon as desire disappears after enlightenment, so does the suffering. The disciple suddenly sees that almost all of his pain was in fact imaginary. He is no longer attached to anything and can weather all the change existence throws at him. For the first time life becomes truly beautiful!

So again the whole work consists of seeing the three characteristics in any object. The three characteristics are of course intimately interconnected. There is nothing fixed which could be called "I" *because* there is nothing permanent and because of that, it can't give satisfaction. Or, one could say that nothing is satisfying because everything changes all the time and no one is control. And so on. This means that seeing any of the three fully is seeing them all, and in practice a disciple will in the end concentrate on one of them and this will lead him to enlightenment. Therefore it is said that there are three types of disciples depending on which characteristic they use to become the door to their enlightenment.

Although disciples may experience different things in their meditation, the path one has to walk is identical for all. As discussed in "The Progress of Insight", there are seven stages from the start to the realization of the goal of the course, which is realizing Nirvana for the first time and enlightenment to the first degree. They are different insights that each meditator has to go through. The Buddha used the simile of the seven stages coach that has to first arrive at the finish of the first day before it can go on the second leg of the journey and so on. It is impossible to start from say, the start of the fourth day and then go to the finish of the second. It can only happen in the linear order of the places the coach is supposed to visit.

The seven stages are:

1. Purity of morals
2. Purity of mind
3. Purity of views
4. Purity of overcoming doubts

5. Purity of vision in discerning what is path and not path
6. Purity of vision in discerning the method
7. Purity of vision regarding intuitive wisdom.

How?

1. By establishing pure morals taking the five precepts.
2. By developing concentration
3. By seeing and understanding mind and matter, their characteristics, function, mode of appearance and proximate cause.
4. By understanding the causes of those very mind and matter.
5. After understanding these causes, the meditator may begin to experience auras, joy, excessive faith, effort, happiness, wisdom, mindfulness, equanimity and a liking for those states. Sometimes he may think that he has become enlightened. Gurdieff used to call these experiences “imagination”, to make it clear to his disciples that although beautiful and attractive they may be, they are still just hindrances on the path. As soon as he understands that these experiences are in fact impediments to the progress of insight, he has attained purity of vision of what is path and non-path.
6. By then continuing to contemplate on the three characteristics he will soon get a quick succession of nine insights that happen in a continuing stream.
 1. As the meditator contemplates the three characteristics he now sees everything arising and passing away without any difficulty and gradually things seem to pass away almost before they have arisen, so soon
 2. He will experience the dissolution of all things. Wherever he turns his attention things disappear and then
 3. He will become aware of the fearfulness of all conditioned phenomena. The sine qua non of the ego is fear and here the disciple experiences for the first time the fearfulness of all things. The ultimate consequence of his wrong view is here experienced for the first time. He feels that he is still in charge of his life but sees that in fact reality is very very fearful and he begins to see that there is no hope that he can do anything to protect himself. He does not yet understand the complete truth of the situation he is in, hence the fear!
 4. Soon he will see the misery inherent in the situation. Although the fear is intense there seems to be nothing he can do about it. Whatever he has learned in the past does not seem to apply anymore. The meditator is now meditating with real concern and he can go on for hours on end.
 5. Then for the first time arises knowledge of turning way: “Is this addiction I have with life, really worth it?” “My life may actually be better off without desiring things and persons”.
 6. He no longer finds delight in them and truly desires deliverance from all conditioned things thereby attaining to a state of perfect equanimity leading to
 7. Reflective contemplation
 8. Equanimity
 9. Adaptation-knowledge
7. Purity of vision regarding intuitive wisdom.
This means experiencing Nirvana.

Buddha says:

There is no person inside you. Everything is impermanent. Therefore everything is painful.

Now, I think that if you believe in a person, you dislike change and everything becomes a nightmare. If on the other hand, you see that there is nobody in there, it is easy to accept that everything is in constant flux and that there is nothing to hold onto. Then, life becomes very beautiful and fun, and full of love...

The difference is only in the point of view.

So why are we so attached to a point of view?

See that the ego is sometimes called the four-year-old. Our point of view was established at age four and it is still totally rooted in fear. The rest of our life is then spent in a huge cover-up effort in order to not let anybody see that you are hiding behind a wall of adulthood so that nobody sees that you really are just a four-year-old baby.

Finishing the first course is therefore like becoming an adult for the first time: emotions don't overwhelm you anymore, because now you know who you are.

In fact the most important thing that these teachers were saying, was that “there is no person”

Or as Buddha says: “There is no soul” (anatta). This in the beginning is very difficult to understand for most people. For me however, having already taken hundreds of LSD trips, it was totally obvious because every time you take acid or LSD, one of the most obvious effects is that “you” as a person explode. Yet on the other hand after each trip, the ego always returns to its old defenses. So even if it gives you a certain insight, it is never permanent.

At this point I was still very much attached to a few concepts, like love and person. But I didn't realize it because I still very much believed in the dream of marriage, etc.

Imagine a tree with leaves and every leaf thinks of himself as a separate unit. They are unaware that they are all part of the tree and they all want to reunite with the tree and then the Buddha comes along and says: “You are already part of the tree!”

But they don't believe it because when they think of themselves as persons, their sense of self-importance increases. Even though they are miserable because they are living in a false reality, they are not prepared to give up that idea. The important thing to realize is that this idea of being separate is what makes them miserable. They are already inseparably part of the tree. In other words, enlightenment is already the case. All that needs to be done is to give up this old idea of being separate.

Meditation is not a method to get enlightened. It cannot be, because you already are! It is a method to get rid of all these old opinions of being separate from the tree, of being in charge of yourself. It is only a way to get rid of the garbage in your head.

I gradually began to find out that what I considered holy truths, were in fact just opinions that had no value at all. Nevertheless I could not give them up because I was very attached to the supposed pleasures that would result from them. (Love, sex, marriage, career, prestige, fame, fortune) Like so many of us I was prepared to suffer rather than give up these ideas.

At this stage I understood the theory of enlightenment without being prepared to give up the old garbage, which for me was all treasures. In this way we can postpone enlightenment "as long as we want" until we come to the point where living a lie becomes so painful that we have to give it up.

The moment you say to existence "I can't figure it out, I give up", the greatest realization happens and you discover that you are already connected to the tree. Suddenly you figure that all these pleasures that you were expecting are absolutely meaningless. Nothing can be expected from them. This simple waking up produces a happiness that is a million times more beautiful than any pleasure you can ever experience.

Chapter 5

The Community of enlightened disciples: The Sangha

It is a tremendous feeling of relief. There is no problem whatsoever, there never was and there never will be!

- OSHO

The path knowledge is manifested. Nirvana is realized for the first time. The first course is over. The second one starts. There are four in total. The first is called stream-entry. It is the dividing line between the worldly or mundane beings, who believe in persons, permanence and satisfaction on the horizon, and the unworldly or supramundane beings, who know there is nobody doing anything, that nothing lasts longer than one thousandths of a second and that therefore there is no inherent satisfaction to be got from any 'thing'.

It is like washing a white cloth that is severely stained: the first time a lot of the stains are cleaned, but a few remain. It will take four washes to make the cloth completely white.

They say there are 10 stains or fetters or chains tying you to the world of senses:

5 are the lower:

(1) personality belief, (2) skeptical doubt, (3) Attachment to rules and rituals, (4) sensual greed, (5) anger;

and 5 are the higher:

(6) greed for fine material existence, (7) greed for immaterial existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness, (10) Ignorance.

Now! After the first time the first three fetters or chains have disappeared.

Personality belief is gone. Forever. Skeptical doubt is obviously gone too since now you know how 'things' work. You have seen it for yourself. And you will never again believe in rituals and ceremonies as tools of deliverance. They maybe fun but that's it. Don't think like the disciples of Bodhidharma, that these things can help to attain enlightenment.

Although only the first three are gone, the next two, sensual greed and anger, have seriously been diminished. They don't even show on the outside anymore, but they are still objects of meditation. Occasionally they may show for a short time but usually they are soon followed by an apology.

So. What is nirvana?

It is not a thing, so nobody knows; nobody can say anything about it.

When you have had a very deep and resting sleep you know that that has happened, but you cannot say anything about that deep sleep, precisely because in deep sleep, by definition nothing happens, and you don't know anything about it. You do feel tremendously rested.

It usually happens for just a split second. A little bit like when you experience a jump in awareness and you suddenly see things that you didn't see before. These quality moments are known to all of us.

It is a complete system reset. The actual moment cannot be described, but the moments after certainly can. You realize you are not you and that for the first time there was no pain! (Nirvana). Then the great flash of understanding! (Ramesh Balsekar) The inner pain you didn't know you had inside, is no more there. You realize it was there only because it is no more there now. The contrast makes it clear.

And who was this "I"? You know you have met yourself. You know who you are.

A kind of reviewing of the ego starts to happen. The central wrong view of the ego-list-of-opinions is now eliminated. The rest of the opinions are in themselves intact, but in view of the new insight most of them are uselessly outdated. They quickly get updated because your old ego has now become your best friend, happy to help you out from your new point of view. Inappropriate opinions get dropped. Some of them stay intact, but become more refined, all based on understanding.

Enlightenment not only means something having to do with light, but also as something having to do with weight. It's like dropping a lot of unnecessary luggage.

The word enlightenment is highly likely to be misunderstood in western societies because in these societies we are all consciously or unconsciously conditioned by Christianity which is not a true religion and cultivates many wrong views. First we have to get rid of that conditioning. It is said that meditation cannot lead to enlightenment but it certainly can get rid of the garbage that you carry inside and consider to be treasures. This is what Osho calls "holy bullshit".

It can take a lot of effort to just get rid of old wrong opinions because so many of us have suffered in past lives at the hands of over-zealous priests who tortured us to teach us "the true meaning of Christianity". And now we are still afraid to question our beliefs.

The ego has become such an efficient system that we just don't let anything in that contradicts our beliefs, thereby shutting off the possibility of understanding new truths.

Even the remote possibility of having to reject the old can provoke panic. Then we get stuck until the moment we are finally faced with the unavoidable and allow ourselves to give up the old.

In this way, we protect ourselves from experiencing enlightenment. This means we are in no danger to becoming enlightened without wanting it...

Sangha means the community of disciples. In the time of the Buddha it meant community of enlightened disciples, in other words you needed to be at least a stream-enterer to become part of the community. Nowadays this is no longer the case. You can find a lot of non-enlightened Buddhist monks all over the world.

A meditator needs only one thing and that is other meditators, ideally enlightened ones. Imagine, at the time of the Buddha, when you went to see Him you would not only meet the Master but also a group of 500 hundred enlightened disciples! This was extremely helpful because none of these people had any of the conditioning that makes it so difficult for us to see that we are actually already enlightened without knowing it. Remember that an unenlightened being is not someone who is lacking something, but someone whose eyes are covered with something. It is not a case of too little but too much.

In Goa, in February 1998, for the first time and for a full moment: the mind stopped: "I" was not!

I was absolutely at the end of my tether: I wanted to commit suicide. I tried but I didn't know how. I managed to convince my girlfriend to move to the next bamboo hut. I remember going to bed, turning off the petrol lamp. The boards on the bed were very rough and painful but I began to feel very comfortable, listening to the waves of the Indian Ocean as they rushed onto the beach with the roar of a freight train.

The next thing I remember is that there was something sitting on my heart chakra. I plucked it off and put it on the floor and while I lit the lamp, I realized something had changed completely. The continuous pain in my chest was gone and at the same time I saw a scorpion lying on the floor. There was this tremendous celebration going on in my heart without any reason. It was like suddenly discovering the secret of existence.

For hours I lay there, listening to the ocean. I realized the real meaning of the word Nirvana: it means no pain.

The next few days I spent visiting local hangouts and I felt totally and completely in love with everything and everyone to such a degree that I forgot my girlfriend was living next door. She suddenly stood in front of me saying: "And what about me?"

She became the first student in my first Vipassana course

Perhaps it went like this:

The reality of that “terrible” relationship-suffering I had been going through, then became: “I have never been dependent on anybody nor has anybody ever been dependent on me. I don’t need anybody and nobody needs me. True Aloneness at last”. Absolute freedom!

All I had been trying to do so far was to recreate “the mother-space-in-the-beginning”, just a feeling to which I clinged with childish obsession, a hangover from the past, trying to fill in an emptiness with make believe, needing the other to play the role”.

So the realization came: “Dependence is not love...” And sex? Well sex is still great but it needs to be stripped of 90% of the projections we have imposed upon it, which are of course again the unconscious effort to recreate the atmosphere of the first years of life.

A tremendous wave of freedom came and then love, the real one, compassion. Ego had completely lost its marbles and for days I drove around, spaced in, floating on my “Bullet” motorbike.

Coming back to Poona I saw that the same had happened to my friend Rani: imagine my joy! Somebody else had become truly alone. This was fun. Now real communion was happening.

Then there is the process of realizing, and the discussions whether this can be called enlightenment or not, and whether one should shut the front door or give satsang. I prefer to call it “finishing the first course” (out of four), which means the being has had his ego evaporated to such an extent that his trips will very rarely be projected onto the outside, or if it happens he will immediately apologize for his lack of awareness.

He successfully deals with such stuff as anger, greed or jealousy, inside himself since there is a new innate knowing that there is no “I” anywhere. The wrong view of “me versus the rest” is no longer operative. Therefore his doubt is gone forever. And he knows that only the real courage to admit your own foolishness, works. No rituals or ceremonies will do the trick. He has become a Stream-Enterer.

I kind of like these Theravada Buddhists, you know. Very down to earth.

Since “I” am not, I AM! Or neither, or both.

Chapter 6

Masters

The Buddha: the Fully Enlightened One.

LAUGHTER is the very essence of religion. Seriousness is never religious, cannot be religious. Seriousness is of the ego, part of the very disease. Laughter is egolessness.

OSHO

After the first glimpse of nirvana and the reviewing of the list of opinions of the ego, you will come to the conclusion that there is nothing more to do but to watch things rising and passing away, one at the time in an eternally changing present, while at the same time knowing that the center never moves at all! It is a tremendous feeling of relief. There is no problem whatsoever, there never was and there never will be!

After a single moment of absolute zero, the mind tries to reestablish itself but finds there is no need for any worry anymore. All the pain of the past turned out to be based mainly on imagination. Wherever you turn your attention, understanding happens. You understand who you are, what you are doing and why. You know what has happened. You understand why, what has been done and what still needs to be done. You understand things you were not even aware of before.

Losing the wrong view of the ego, or personality belief, is the greatest change that has ever happened to you. You are lighter than you ever have been before. A tremendous love is now at the heart of all your thoughts, words and actions. Harmonious thoughts are now the rule instead of the exception. You have become a stream-enterer (sotapanna). You have fulfilled your destiny. You have completed the first course of meditation.

If certain negative states are still potentially there, they don't appear to be a big deal. In extreme cases perhaps anger, greed or conceit may still arise, but they are soon noticed and there is no need to express them anymore. And if they inadvertently still come out for a short time, the stream-enterer apologizes almost immediately.

Even though there is no obligation, you would like to share this lightness with all your friends. You are not a Master yet since you only experienced a glimpse but you realize that in a world of mundane people you have become a beacon of light. In order to become a Master you have to experience Nirvana three times more, and more importantly, you have to learn the ABC of the technique of teaching. Soon you realize none of your friends wants to hear what you have to say.

There is a story of the Buddha saying:

“The situation its like this: a group of people is having a party in a house and somebody outside the house sees flames coming out of the roof. He goes into the house to warn the people that there is a fire. He saw the fire because he was outside, but the people inside cannot see it and refuse to go out. This is the dilemma of the Masters in a nutshell.

Masters have to learn how to bring the news to these unaware people in such a way that they get out of the house without starting a fight with the Master. This is a skill that may take lifetimes to learn.

You have experienced the great flash of understanding but that doesn't mean you have now become a colorless saint. You review all that was on your original laundry list, dropping unnecessary items. Many habits stay on a little longer though. Sometimes this creates conflicts in other searchers. Disciples have all kinds of ideas about what their Master is supposed to look like. Big, powerful, sitting on a throne, morally upright. He should or shouldn't wear a beard. He should be clairvoyant, omniscient, and a healer. He should be a good orator, never touch a drink and not smoke of course.

Whatever!

And of course it is never like that.

Masters have techniques first to attract disciples and secondly to distinguish between those who are really interested and those who only come because they are bored with life, or because it is a fashion, or because they “miss daddy”. One way to do that is to act in an outrageous way.

If you went to Bodhidharma sitting in his cave facing the wall in deep meditation, he wouldn't even look at you. He would not accept the man who wanted to become his first disciple, so this disciple cut off his right arm and threatened he was going to cut off more if Bodhidharma wouldn't accept him!

Now this guy seemed to be worthy, so Bodhidharma instructed him to sit facing the wall and shut up. He gave no further instructions. This was the first Zazen session. It has never changed since.

Bodhidharma had the reputation that when he rolled his eyes very ferociously, people would run away screaming with fear!

When a Master looks into your eyes, great fear arises because the ego becomes instantly aware of itself and its fear to be found out. Deep down we know that we are pretending to be somebody we are not, which is the work of the ego, and therefore we are forever afraid to be caught in the act.

“What will people think about me when they find out I am just pretending?”

That's the problem with the ego: it has created a “self-image” based on deceit and so it is forever afraid of being found out. (After enlightenment ego changes into an individual and goes on functioning, but now this fear is gone because it knows there is nobody there to be found out, or to be ashamed of. Self-acceptance has finally happened, there are no more lists of requirements to become happy.)

Gurdieff would share cognac with his new disciples and make them really drunk, because that was the fastest way to see who the disciple really was. Many times after these sessions he would invite them to go out for a drive in his car. Many would shit their pants because of the Master's reckless driving. One day he had an accident that almost killed him and landed him in hospital. It is a good thing that there were no alcohol tests in these days.

Osho used to do the same, driving recklessly. Already in India he had a bad reputation as a driver, scaring his passengers to death. In Oregon he used to invite his close disciples for a drive in one of his Rolls-Royces. He would overtake in blind corners, driving very fast, in such a way that his people would be freaked out. After he ended up in the ditch once or twice, commune leaders decided to provide him with an escort.

A friend of mine who was a professional racecar driver, at that time was driving one of the powerful fast pick-up trucks they had for that purpose. He told me the escort could not keep up with Osho because they didn't have that uncanny capacity to know if there was any traffic coming from the opposite side: whenever Osho didn't overtake in a blind corner, a car would come from the other side.

Regularly they would see Osho disappear in the distance where he would sometimes be intercepted by cops eager to stop him for speeding, and many times by Jesus freaks who came to demonstrate against him!

Later the commune decided to construct a special road for the sole purpose of entertaining the Master. There he could go as fast as he liked because no one else was supposed to be on that road.

Other things considered outrageous that Osho did, was opening two bars in the ashram where enormous quantities of booze were served every night. Imagine, in India an ashram is a “holy” place to teach “spirituality”, and he opens bars?

Or what really freaked the Indians out of course, were the sex therapy groups. Sex in India, especially at that time was not - I repeat not - something that was being dealt with in ashrams.

It seems that Masters have a tendency to do just that what is considered immoral by the societies they operate in, to shock you out of your socks.

Then there is the story of a Tibetan Master, a highly regarded abbot of an old monastery. He was quietly walking around the countryside when he saw a young woman, grabbed her and had sex with her. It was a great shock to the people, but

Tibetans are used to strange things from their Masters so they didn't make it into a criminal case. Later the Master explained to them that he had done it to help a dumb disciple who was dying in the monastery just at that time. The Master had seen a pair of donkeys mating and he was afraid that the disciple would be reborn as a donkey so he provided him with an alternative new body in a highly untraditional way. What happened to the woman is not mentioned in the story but having sex with the Master was probably very desirable and the attitude to sex of the Tibetans is anyway remarkably free.

Chögyal Trungpa Rimpoche is a famous Tibetan reincarnation (Tulku), who escaped from Tibet in the sixties and went on to live in Scotland in a Tibetan centre. At that time I was in India and began to hear outrageous stories about him from my Tibetan friends, who asked me if I knew if the rumors were true.

He had bought himself a fast sports car and was drinking alcohol behind the wheel and inviting a lot of young girls to go out for a drive with him. My Tibetan friends were scandalized but never lost their faith again because Tibetans are familiar with Masters behaving outrageously. It got so bad that one day he had an accident, broke his back and was half paralyzed. He moved to the States, to Boulder, Colorado, opened a meditation centre, open to meditation teachers of all Buddhist Schools and went on teaching there. He always had a crate of beer next to him, sitting on the podium, which he would finish during the discourse. Of course the fifth precept says you are not supposed to get intoxicated at all. These discourses were published and became spiritual bestsellers (Shambala publishing House).

One day the previous Karma (the 17th reincarnation) came to visit him and after that Trungpa never touched alcohol again.

Ramana Maharshi never took care of his body after his enlightenment. I heard he let his toenails grow into his toes. Disciples had to do everything. They had to wash him, even feed him. He never taught; Osho used to say that his "enlightenment is the same as anybody else's, but as a Master he is the worst". He used to just sit blissfully in his cave. Yet he has thousands of disciples even today.

The behavior of a Master has nothing to do with the quality of his teachings. The idea that a Master has to conform to some moral model is just a hangover from the old pseudo religions. Enlightenment is not at all the same as sainthood.

Munindra would have passed the sainthood test with flying colors. He was so humble, practically invisible, that most people never recognized his qualities. That may be why he only had a few disciples who later went on to become teachers themselves.

We should never take a Master at face value. Masters point to the moon with their finger but the moon is invisible to the disciple, so the disciple begins to mistake the finger for the moon. If he doesn't get enlightened within a "reasonable time" the disciple may begin to find fault with the finger, blaming the Master for his own ignorance.

Or the Bidi-Baba who said: "Why deprive the body of chemicals that it has become accustomed to before enlightenment?" while lighting up bidi after bidi. (Bidi: Indian traditional cigarette containing 95% tobacco)

That's why my personal approach has always being: don't worry about your immoral qualities. Don't bother to try and change them because immoral qualities are like shadows; they are not a force in themselves. They are the result of a lack of light. As soon as the light enters, the darkness dissipates by itself. Nothing special has to be done. Just develop the light and the immorality will disappear by itself.

I had never been aware of the need of a Master until I started to take LSD in the sixties. This had the effect of making me realize there was more to life than meets the eye. I was trying to heal myself from a pain that I had recently become aware of. It was the fact that my father had been murdered in the war by a SS unit that tried to erase the traces of the concentration camp he had been imprisoned in. I became involved in the problem of war and tried to solve the problem by myself and I found that I couldn't.

A friend gave me "The Psychedelic Experience" by Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, who later became Baba Ram Dass. It had an introduction by Lama Anagarika Govinda, who was an Austrian adventurer-traveler who went to Tibet when he was young and spent most of his life there with the Tibetans.

In this manual they use the Tibetan Book of the Dead to explain the psychedelic experience, saying that it is very similar to death although in this case it is not the body that dies but the ego. The book says that between the last moment of this life and the first moment of the next, there is a short time when the being is totally free and in this moment enlightenment is very easy. All you need at that moment is someone to remind you of the essential facts of life and death, and plop! You recognize this truth with full awareness because at that time the mind no longer being imprisoned in a body, is nine times more intelligent than in a body, enlightenment happens and the person will not be reborn, since it is only out of ignorance, or ego (fear in other words) that the individual starts to look for another body through rebirth.

This is what the book was written for: the idea was that after taking the LSD one would leave the body, become very intelligent, understand the truth according to the Buddha and become enlightened. There was no real dying going on of course, but one would be reborn without ego, or so went the theory. I found that no matter how strong the LSD experience, one would always fall back into the ego with its immense fears and increasing the dosage in the end wouldn't help. So I was stuck.

Many years earlier, on a trip to Istanbul I found a book, "Zen flesh, Zen bones" by Paul Reps. It contains many short stories about the interaction of Masters and disciples. At that time it was a tremendous revelation, because I was not aware of the fact that there were still people around who seemed to understand, who seemed to know that which always eluded me. Out of some great wisdom they understood life, they managed to teach whatever it was that they knew. I was very happy to see that at least in the past somebody understood.

The next question was: were they still around?

Six months later I was in the Himalayas high in the mountains, looking for a Tibetan Master. Here is where this phenomenon happens that seekers project qualities that the Master must have in order to be acceptable to the disciple. To me he had to be Tibetan; he had to have various superpowers, like clairvoyance or healing powers. Masters know that and they always play with it to rid the disciples of these hindrances. Hence the many examples of outrageous behavior by Masters to shock the disciple out of his conditioned thinking.

And so it was that I finally followed the advice of a good friend and arrived in Bodh-gaya. Anagarika Munindra had not arrived yet and two days later I saw a small man in white traditional Indian dress, whom I mistook to be the bookkeeper. He didn't even come close to what I thought a Master is supposed to look like. It wasn't until I looked into his eyes that I recognized him. He had that look where one could totally disappear. He seemed to see things in you that you didn't know you had. It would make you aware of thoughts you hadn't seen before. His mind was very compassionate, always working for the greater good. He was great to hang out with, very humorous, always full of energy. He always invited everybody to come and sit on his bed in his small room to talk about meditation or any other subject you wanted. Such an ordinary man! He never considered himself a Master:

"I am your friend and I share this small matter of meditation with my friends, free of charge."

And then: how do you recognize a Master?

By his laughter. His humor. His fun!

"If it ain't fun, it is better left undone", said Alan Watts, already in the sixties.

There was a Zen Master in Japan who had a special teaching method. One day a disciple came and asked a question to the Master.

The Master immediately picked him up and threw him out of the window on the second floor. The disciple lay there on the ground, wounded, but not gravely so. The Master jumped out of the window and sat on top of the disciple and shouted: "Now do you get it?"

It is reported that the disciple instantly got enlightened.

It is sometimes described as the "bottom falling out".

A Zen nun was carrying water for the monastery. A very routine job that she had been doing for years. One day the bottom fell out of the bucket she used. It was as if the bottom fell out of her mind and she experienced enlightenment.

You never knows when it hits you! It could happen while on the toilet!

Chapter 7

Truth. The Dhamma

The Universal Law is called Truth, or Dhamma in Pali, Dharma in Sanskrit. In western society this can easily be misunderstood. It includes every law that rules the material world like the law of gravitation, electricity, physics, as well as the laws that govern the inner world.

It is not in any way personal, it does not talk about God.

It is the way things work according to their own nature, irrespective of class, religion, or society. Just as an apple will fall towards the earth, so will greed, hatred and ignorance cause suffering. Both laws are impersonal, inescapable.

At the highest level, the Dhamma is One. Things seem to work according to many different sets of laws, but at the time of enlightenment it suddenly appears as One. Afterwards the details also become clear. If you know the whole, you know the parts - but it is not by studying the parts that you can know the whole.

First you have to understand that all things have the same three characteristics, (Anatta, anicha, dukkha – impersonal, impermanent, unsatisfactory). Then Nirvana happens. Then you understand the Dhamma.

Menstruation periods, mathematics, lunar and solar cycles, music, all obey laws. They are facts of life, not personal. It is not something to believe in, it is something to investigate.

In the West the Universal Law has been mistaken as God. This is just a logical consequence of personality belief. If you think *you* are in charge of your life, then you'll also think that *others* are in charge. One step more, and you think *our Father* is in charge, or in some cases *Mother*. It is just a projection. You think: "In existence there must also be *"someone"* in charge - and of course with that projection come the wrong views of 'guilt and punishment', 'blame and claim' and a whole range of nonsensical "religious" beliefs.

The word person implies a more or less permanent unit, doing things. This is currently the normal dual way of thinking. The same illusion becomes apparent when we say for example: "God did this or that to me; God saved my life".

All the material in the universe is Gods body, and Gods mind is the sum total of all the minds of all the beings in the universe. In this definition there is no separation between God and me. I am God, you are God. When the Sufi mystic Al-Hillaj Mansoor after his enlightenment, declared: "I'm God", the religious authorities of those days executed him by cutting off one limb after the other. Still he went on shouting: "I am God".

Words are not made to explain the subtleties of spiritual truth. The same thing happened to me: I realized I simply *was* God! Thanks to Osho I realized that you couldn't say these things.

In reality there are only thoughts. Each depends on the last one and will result in the next one. There is nothing but a string of thoughts. I saw this guy on TV, who was condemned to 4 years in Chilean prison for violence in a football stadium. He said: "I am not the bad person you all think I am" and he is right of course. Within these strings of thoughts and opinions we call a person, nobody knows really why suddenly there is such a hatred and/or greed that it leads to criminal behavior. Now, in spite of all that we have to learn to somehow influence this process. How? With awareness and mindfulness.

In practice this means that you can criticize, study, analyze the facts and see for yourself what is true without the interference of a priest.

In the real religion (Etymologically religion comes from re-ligere, to re-unite, meaning to reunite yourself again with your own inner self, reestablishing the inner connection with your divinity) no one is in charge of the truth. No one tells you what to believe. You yourself have to figure it out. The Master gives you the gold and you have to hammer it until its shape has become according to your own truth. You have to ask questions, to think, to read, to discuss. In the real religion there is no blasphemy, insulting is not even possible.

In the beginning the disciple doesn't know truth so he needs faith in his teacher or Master. For his faith to grow, it is said that the meditation needs to be excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end. It is excellent in the beginning because it immediately alleviates the pain. It is excellent in the middle, because beautiful things start to happen, the disciple gets more faith, love, compassion, awareness that make his life easier, more beautiful. And in the end it is excellent because it leads to enlightenment.

Another aspect of the Dhamma is that it is in fact alive.

Plato is reported to have said: "This universe is indeed one single living being!"

Munindra: "If you care for the Dhamma, the Dhamma cares for you."

Before enlightenment the disciple feels he is somehow surviving in a dead world but after the first flash of understanding has happened, he suddenly sees that existence is taking care of him as a mother would her first born baby.

The Dhamma is also infinite love, infinite intelligence, all knowing, all seeing ...

Munindra is traveling in India with my friend David. David just realizes he has lost his wallet with their tickets, money, and passports. It is a major catastrophe.

Muni says: "If you care for the Dhamma, the Dhamma cares for you."

David doesn't believe that and scoffs at Muni.

"Mmm, let us see," says Muni and off they go to the nearest police station. In India losing papers like that means that you'll never find them back and the looks of the policeman seated behind the desk was not promising. He made David tell the whole story three times and David was beginning to feel more and more stupid thinking that this is totally useless. He was ready to start banging the desk when the policeman reached to his drawer and produced the wallet with everything inside, intact. Munindra of course, went on to make fun of David for many days

The truth cannot be understood intellectually. It will only be understood after all thinking has stopped at least once. Suddenly everything is crystal clear and you know this is Truth but you have no idea how you got there. You just know that this is so. The mind which came back after this moment of total silence, now enthusiastically begins to check out all the implications of this truth with giant strides, understanding whole scientific disciplines in one go.

This great intelligence that rises in you is not a product of thinking. It is instead a direct communion with the universe after thinking has being completely removed from the equation.

Experiencing Truth, one experiences at the same time infinite love, towards all beings, towards the whole universe. You just love everything that comes in front of you. Everything is so beautiful and you wonder why you never saw that before. Everything is so simple and you wonder why you never understood it before. In truth you realize you have always been wearing dark colored glasses. What you had always considered as yourself, you now see as just the fears of your inner child, the fears of your ego that has in reality the emotional maturity of a four year old.

The theory is that our defense system is more or less in place by age four. After that it learns a lot, it decorates itself, but the fundamental principles of the defense system are already established. This whole system is rooted in fear and not very intelligent.

Chapter 8

“Religions” and other Ideologies

Buddha called his way: “The middle way” and went on to explain that if you want to make music on a string instrument you have to ensure that the tension of the string is just right. Too tight and it will break; not tight enough and the sound will be horrible.

Fanatics of all pseudo-religions remember this!

Osho, quoting a disciple of Bodhidharma:

“The Sutras:

“But suppose I don’t see my nature, can’t I still attain enlightenment by invoking Buddhas, reciting sutras, making offerings, observing precepts, practicing devotions, or doing good works?”

Bodhidharma answers: “No, you can’t.”

Osho continues: “This is what all the religions are doing in the world. The so-called religious people are doing all these things; they are invoking God, they are invoking Buddhas, they are invoking Jinnahs, they are invoking prophets, messiahs, saviors. They are reciting sutras, holy KORAN, holy BIBLE, holy GITA, holy DHAMMAPADA. They are making offerings in temples, in mosques, in churches, in synagogues, in GURUDWARAS (Sikh temples). They are observing precepts, fasting, not eating in the night, not drinking in the night. Thousands of different kinds of precepts are being followed by different religions...”

“In the name of precepts, disciplines, all kinds of nonsense is being practiced – devotions, or doing good works, opening hospitals, schools, orphanages. Only a man like Bodhidharma can say, “No you cannot attain to enlightenment or Buddhahood by such stupid things. There is only one way and that is to know your being, that is to know your self-nature.”

There are the monotheistic religions that reject rebirth: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Their story is based on belief. Belief has nothing to do with meditation, but religions require belief, because it is part of their technique to dominate you.

Science on the other hand wants to know, so it proposes a hypothesis, which has to be tested until it is either accepted or rejected. This leads to a valid result. It can be verified and repeated. It is the truth, independent of the person who is meditating. Every time that the hypothesis is tested the same result will follow.

The most important thing is that in meditation belief has no part. Belief is a barrier because when you believe something to be true, you don’t investigate it further, thereby preventing you from ever seeing the true state of affairs.

In other words these religions are a barrier.

Osho used to tell the following story:

Galileo Galilei wanted to prove to the world that the sun rotated around the earth, not the other way around. The pope summoned him. He told him to rewrite his book and to forget about his new idea. He threatened to throw him in jail, to torture him. He said: “It goes against the Bible. In the Bible it says that the earth goes around the sun and we are not ready to listen to any arguments. The Bible is a divine scripture written by God himself, and God cannot make a mistake. If even one thing is proven wrong in the Bible, people will start thinking that if one thing can be wrong, other things can be wrong too. And if the Bible can be wrong, and what will happen to my *infallibility*?”

Thirty years earlier Copernicus had already found that the earth was not flat as said in the Bible, but round and it was going around the sun. He was in deep trouble. A Papal edict shut him up! These things have nothing to do with religion in fact, but the only argument of the Pope was that if one thing were proven wrong in the bible, then there would be no end to it and the whole edifice of Christianity would start to crumble.

And their last argument was always the sword.

In this way the church prevented western society to go inwards and meditate.

“The whole effort of [real] religion is how to drop the ego. The whole effort is how to penetrate into the phenomenon of the ego and to SEE the unreality of it.”

Osho: “Come Follow To You”, chapter 8, question 1.

No wonder most people prefer to stick to their beliefs because they still remember the climate of severe repression. In some religions this is of course still the case today.

Then there are religions, like Hinduism and Jainism, which accept rebirth but call it reincarnation, meaning the same “eternal soul” reincarnates in a new body every time. This is another form of wrong view: the belief in the existence of an eternal soul. Hinduism has produced its share of enlightened Masters, but then *they* say there is only one Soul that all beings share, because they have naturally also discovered that they don’t have a personal soul.

Some Buddhist schools also have beliefs, which goes to show that the followers don’t seem to have understood the Buddha. There is a Japanese school that believes that you can get to the “Western Paradise of Amitabha”, a heavenly Buddha, by repeating his name: “Amitabha, Amitabha, Amitabha...” They probably have never heard of Bodhidharma either.

The same thing happens with all ideologies that require beliefs. In these circles there will always be someone to tell you what your beliefs should be. Whenever you are on the verge of coming to your senses they will come immediately to the rescue to “help” you to regain your belief. That means you are no longer free to be scientific, so that you can no longer discover the truth.

Other isms, like atheism, theism, materialism, eternalism, communism, capitalism, etc., all use the same method to try and trap followers. Unresearched beliefs are taken for truth; clever leaders impose their wrong views on the followers. It becomes just another power trip, a way to dominate you, to impose taxes on you.

How to recognize the pseudo religions from true religiosity? The pseudo is based on belief while the true religiosity is based on investigation. Religions have priests telling you what you are supposed to think, how you should be, teaching blind belief, while Masters never tell you what to do, say or think. The Master only points to the truth for you to investigate.

Pseudo religions are based on traditions that come from dead Masters who can no longer awake you and therefore they are very safe. You don’t run the risk of being shocked out of your socks. These old traditions are easier to follow than to expose yourself to a living Master who tries to shake you up out of your dream, your hypnosis.

Pseudo religions follow a ‘holy book’, which may or may not have been useful in some past, but by now has lost all its usefulness, hopelessly outdated!

On the other hand in the true religion there are texts, yes, but they are not taken as holy in themselves, you have to practice them, you have to go there. They are like maps and worshipping a map will never get you anywhere!

And the words of the Master are not literal truth. They are just an indication of something that cannot even be said in words; so don’t ever take them seriously. Don’t mistake the finger for the moon.

Meditation will always be the tool of the Master. The word comes from the same root as meditation, medicine. It means healing. Meditation is done alone, yes in groups perhaps, but you are just trying to follow some instruction in your own inner world where you are always alone. “You be with yourself”, Munindra used to say with a smile.

Priests are on the other hand ‘go-between’s’ between you and ‘God’. They make themselves indispensable and ‘want to get paid’.

Many times it is difficult to see the difference between the true and the pseudo because as always there is cross-fertilization. Both use the exact same words but one of them is pretending...

It is never black and white. People do get enlightened through pseudo religions because of the intensity of their search. All pseudo religions have also their department of enlightened disciples. Christian mystics, Sufi’s, Hindu saints, Hasidics.

I have never heard of a Master becoming a priest though. Once you get it, you can never go back to your ignorance.

In ancient times in China there was a system of succession from one Master to the next. This was symbolically expressed by transferring the symbols of enlightenment, the begging bowl, the staff and the robes of the old Master, to the new.

When the great Master Kho Hsuan was publicly recognized by his Master as enlightened and as his successor, he was still working in the kitchen as rice cleaner, the lowest job available.

The Abbot of the monastery however was a jealous fellow, who thought he was the one who deserved the “post”. He planned to kill the kitchen boy.

Kho Hsuan was to run for his life for the next decades, because this abbot, just a ‘priest’, was relentlessly pursuing him to catch hold of the “holy” objects.

Even in this world of great Chinese Masters there were always priests, who, lacking the courage to become enlightened themselves, tried to gain power by misinterpreting the teachings. In Rajneeshpuram, in Oregon, Osho also had follow-

ers who tried to become “high priests”, and were ready to use any criminal means to gain power. This is not a coincidence. A Master is attractive to these people because for priests the path is all about domination, and being by the side of a Master is a good place to try to influence “followers” to convert them to their own “beliefs”.

When you want to learn something new from a Master, like an art, painting, music or gardening, it is probably a good idea to suspend your criticism, doubts and ideas about it for some time and just do what the Master says, in order to at least understand a little how the process works. Meditation is an art: the art of living, a re-education of mankind. You don’t start by being an independent thinker already. You have to get in tune with the Master and then once you understand, you transform it into your own truth.

A Master gives you the tools so that you can understand the truth on your own. You don’t have to be around the Master. Because you have the tools you are not dependent on the Master.

Buddha’s “short version”.

Once a man came to see the Buddha. He had been traveling for many weeks since he came all the way from South India. These were the days of the bullock cart and the greater part of India was covered in primal forest so it must have taken a tremendous faith to come all the way to North India.

This man had left his family and crops behind so he really could not stay.

He said: “Please give me the shortest possible version of your teaching. I absolutely must go back south tomorrow!”

Buddha smiled and said: “In the seeing there should be only the seeing, in the hearing there should be only the hearing, in the smelling there should be only the smelling, in the tasting there should be only the tasting, in the touching there should be only the touching and in the thinking there should be only the thinking.”

The man was very happy. He returned home and it is said he became enlightened before the year was over.

The Master has no desire to enslave you. If you can figure it out by yourself, that’s perfectly ok with him.

The priest on the other hand, will put you down; he will give you an impossible task like abstaining from sex, condemning sex to make you feel bad about yourself, to make you feel guilty. Then while you are in a limbo, trying to do the impossible, he will provide you with some kind of solution for your guilt. Pray, or recite sutras, repeat holy texts, mantras; there are many variations.

There is always a feeling that there is something wrong with you, and they can help you.

The Master never says there is anything wrong with you; on the contrary he says you are perfectly imperfect!

Even though I was never conditioned in any religion, Christianity did have a profound effect on me. I became aware of that the first time I crossed the water at Gibraltar into Marocco. It was like an almost physical experience of relief by getting out from under an umbrella of conditioning. It was a great surprise.

Because I was not familiar with Islam, I wasn’t aware that I had entered under another umbrella and I guess that that is why in the sixties and seventies so many hippies went to Marocco. They loved to get out of Christian conditioning and were as yet unaware of the Islamic conditioning.

Of course later when I went to India, I got a first hand impression of Islamic conditioning, where in the name of belief, men represses woman shamelessly. Especially my wife had to suffer many indignities at the hands of rogue men trying to squeeze her ass, touch her breast ‘by mistake’, and abduct her under the pretext of an invitation. Once they almost managed to abduct her in a city bus in Peshawar.

Changing from umbrella again, entering into India, I experienced the same relief. Now I was in the Hindu conditioning zone and again it took some time to become aware of that.

The Hindus are very hung up with sex. It is a crime to kiss a woman in public. Nevertheless, in India with its 150 religions, it is considered good practice not to interfere too much in each other’s business. Somebody may be dying at the side of the road, but if it is not someone from your cast, tribe, or religion, you don’t even see it. So there is in a way a deceptive feeling of freedom.

Enlightenment is recognized, rebirth its accepted, which makes the country still the most conducive to meditation of all the countries on earth.

So, all these religions have holy texts, priests, etc. There are many superstitions in the population because they have no meditation available. Like anywhere else people prefer belief because it easier to follow. You don’t really have to change.

In India there are many different sects all belonging to Hinduism. For example, there are the Sadhus who walk around half naked, smoking marihuana, which is considered a holy practice. Munindra was always making fun about this, while his hippie disciples were getting stoned.

Hinduism has hundreds of meditations, like repeating mantras, visualizing gods (like Vishnu, Shiva, or Brahma), etc, which are in fact not meditations but concentration exercises, good in themselves but not leading to your waking up. Even animals have concentration. A hunting cat is very concentrated, but devoid of wisdom.

More crimes have been committed in the name of religion than in the name of anything else. Pseudo religions produce fanaticism, which is always ugly. This has again and again led to very serious wars between the pseudo believers. I personally have never heard of a Buddhist terrorist.

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In gratitude to my Masters

Sw. Deva Rituraj