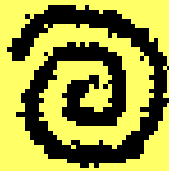


A Pathway to

SELF REALIZATION

and

ENLIGHTENMENT



Goldeneage

Pakiri, Monday Sept 10, 2007

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Introduction

There is a huge literature on the subject of enlightenment. Other synonyms for this word and state of being to which it refers include: suchness, attainment, nirvikalpa samadhi, reaching nirvana, becoming one with God, cosmic consciousness, finding Christ (consciousness), seeing the light, the experience of the unremembered moment, the eternal now, obtaining Krisna Consciousness and so forth.

Not all the foregoing terms and expressions refer to exactly the same state of being. The essence of the idea is a commonality across the range although subdivisions of the state are often claimed in respect to duration and proposed intensity. For instance the term sahaja samadhi refers to an adept stabilized in nirvikalpa samadhi (deep consciousness beyond the personal self with no thought arising) but apparently functioning in the world in a manner which is indistinguishable from any other person.

Some of the material covering this type of insight is written clearly in a style that can be described as “upfront”. An example of this approach may be found in the writings of Da Avabasa in his dissertations on “The Way of the Heart”. Other accounts are more obscure and less easily understood by the lay reader regardless of the degree of enthusiasm he or she might express. The field overall is exceedingly wide

and includes accounts offered in Scriptures such as the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Hindu writings concerning Advaita (non-dualism or the doctrine of One Consciousness Alone) such as elaborated by Adi Sankara. Buddhism is a related example, particularly as represented for instance by the Heart Sutra. Jainism, Christianity and so forth may also be included. Within these contexts there are also statements guiding the prospective adherent into realization. For instance, Jesus says “my Father and I are One”, “nobody comes to the Father except through Me”. The Old Testament avers the same idea in the format “I am that I AM”.

All scriptural material however, must be decoded in order to extract the basic meaning. For instance the statement “nobody comes to the father except through me” refers the practitioner to the necessity of obtaining “Christ Consciousness” in order to obtain identity with God. Christ Consciousness is thus the superseding transcendent consciousness (Enlightenment) that had been obtained by the person (the ego-self) of Jesus, moreover the pathway thereto is also specified in the New Testament.

For the modern reader much of scriptural material suffers from the fact that the fundamental ideas are encoded in seemingly arcane or hugely specialized structures represented by complex terminology, analogies or parables. Untangling such accounts can take many years of patient

research which is necessary to specify the exact mental state represented by different terms, some of which have almost endlessly layered meanings.

Modern tales of attainment are also widely available but many of these are written in such embellished everyday language that the descriptions of mental states involved often suggest images that appear to be quite bizarre and, as a result, do not readily lend themselves to identification with the profound states of consciousness that are referenced. Many such accounts are so specific to the individual concerned that they leave out the possibility for other people to follow-along because there remains no way for connections to be enacted with their own personal states of being.

The goal of suchness or enlightenment is reached at the point where the individual ceases to think about thinking, ceases in the recall of experiences and ideas which are related to the structure of ego-consciousness particularly that elaborated since birth in this life, and penetrates to the very core of being upon which that superstructure has been erected. In so doing, the ordinary world of “name and form” abruptly dissolves and the subject is left immersed in the root-state of being from which all emerges. In other words the ordinary ego-self is suppressed or excluded from consciousness and the Being upon which this has been constructed is then apprehended and “known” directly.

Needless to say this state is prior to the elaboration of language yet still we must use words to try to point thereat.

The great sage of Arunachala, Sri Ramana Marhashi, achieved such insight through his own practice however, in describing a suitable procedure for others to follow he used a phrase seemingly having very little to do with the effort and activity he had himself initially implemented which involved lying down and imagining himself to be dead. When queried on the subject he invariably invited his questioners to concentrate for themselves on one thought only: “who am I”. Of course Sri Ramana did not mean to reference himself in this manner since he already had the answer, but he invited querants to pose this question for themselves as individuals in the first instance.

This is an account drawn largely from my own experience and the following material has been prepared some years after the initial insight was experienced (Vancouver, B.C., August, 1996). The reason for the delay being that I simply found myself to be without any formal language which I could use to express the insight other than that of science which is incompetent in relation to the task. Since that time I have read widely and progressed further but the result is that the terminology I use in this rendition has been drawn from many different sources. I used a simple yardstick to select terms while trying to stick with elements that seemed to enjoy wide circulation. If a term fitted exactly with my

independent appreciation of the state of consciousness to which it purportedly pointed, I used it. Terms that do not fit I do not use. I thus use no terms that I have not verified in my self.

It is with these questions that we shall be concerned in the remainder of this account.

Origins of this Path

It is said that Enlightenment may come through any of many forms of practice. This can be summarized through the posited statement “He that comes to me from the ego-less state will I recognize as my own”. I find no record of the pathway that I herewith describe however, the principle “turning-point” that I inadvertently stumbled on is recommended by Sri Ramana Mahashi and is also used in some branches of Vajryana Buddhism as a meditative focal-point but more of that later.

When I first started on this journey, I had absolutely no idea where it would take me nor, for that matter, did I even think of it as something that would involve spiritual progress in any way shape or form, let alone was it to be viewed as a pathway to enlightenment. The whole of religiosity was an almost blank volume to me and if that book had had a title page it would have been headed “Superstition”. As a child I

had experienced several minor instances of “revelation” but of course this designation is something I have given to them recently. At the time I just thought of them as “strange” occurrences and more than a little frightening. Of these there were two that profoundly affected me and directly helped to dictate that I would take up a scientific career.

The first occurred on the farm in the Waikato where I grew up. At the age of ten or so I one day found myself lying on my stomach in the middle of a paddock (Bruce’s Paddock) which had been held shut, to exclude sheep, for two weeks or so in the early summer, before the heat had slowed growth. The ground was covered by a lush carpet of white Clover, Paspalum and Browntop. The clover held hundreds of white flowers and the air was rich with the buzzing of many honey-bees. In those young years I was able to focus my eyes to a point closer than the end of my nose and as I buried my face into the sweet-smelling clover I was suddenly aware of the pulsating life and complex streaming elements of protoplasm that throbbed within this green glory of vegetation. Abruptly I could see exactly, into the very interior of the plant-cells themselves. At once there appeared to be microcosms, within the back-lit clover-leaves, the stems and the blades of the grasses. Everywhere I looked I was stunned, awed and filled with wonder at the internal magnificence of life.

I knew then with indelible certainty that I would never, could never ever hope to understand the pure basis of what I was seeing. But then and there I determined to try, to try to understand life in its very essence in terms of its origin and reason for being. I had stumbled into the profound and life itself was pointing to its origin as not only a reason for being but at the same time indicating that being preceded it.

But how could I know what exactly drove life, how did it come to be, how did it work, and, really what precisely was it that I was seeing? Those were the questions I set myself then and there.

Thus did Gaia reveal herself to me though then I knew her not.

It was to be approximately ten years before I again witnessed that sight which had so entranced me but this time it was through the barrel of a microscope in the Botany Department of the University of Auckland. There it was again, streaming protoplasm, plasmids, nuclei within translucent green algae and the magic of that life called to me and once more and I could not understand. But still I persisted.

The second event occurred at the age of twelve. I was biking home from school along a rough and stony New Zealand country road and it was late-summer, hot and still. On the side of the road stood an old Gravenstein apple tree bearing a host of dusty but crisp red and yellow apples. I stopped my bike (a Hercules), threw it onto the side of the road, shinned up the tree and quickly picked half a dozen or so of the readily available fruit. I pushed all of them inside my shirt. All, that is, except for the biggest and ripest. I gazed through the branches at the beckoning form of the hills that stood above the paddock where I had watched the protoplasm streaming in the clover and, as I absently bit into the sweet-sour apple an amazing turn of consciousness struck me.

In an instant I knew, again with indelible certainty, that the things I could see, the world, my life everything would never be the same again. I knew at once that in the whole history of the universe this moment, this representation of outside and inside reality would never ever be the same, would never be repeated, that it was absolutely unique in all respects that could possibly be enumerated. Time stood still, from one moment to another and in that non-moment nothing moved, I had stepped or rather bitten, into the profound.

Stunned I climbed slowly down the tree, picked up my bike and, all the while drinking-in the surrounding landscape

with each and every one of my senses, I wheeled it along, holding with one hand, eating with the other.

There was, I knew, something “strange” about time. For I knew then and at once that time made life and life made time. But how could that be? I wondered and in so doing I decided to become a scientist, to embrace science in order to find the answer to this profound mystery. I determined to lay it by the heels and to wrestle it to the ground. The world I felt had to be taken as a reality, a reality outside myself but then if that were so how had I managed to stop it, even if for but a moment? And, as I became a scientist: BSc; MSc; PhD, I induced myself to forget that I had stopped the world.

Forgot it entirely until one day in my 50s, a successful environmental scientist, Director A.I. of the UNESCO Regional Office in Southeast Asia, a friend remarked, in passing of some particular personal characteristic she had expressed, that it must be due to experience garnered in a “past life”. Shocked and embarrassed I laughed out loud and the words “how could you believe that” sprang off my lips. She smiled and looking directly at me replied “what makes you think that living more than once is less likely than only to have lived once”? Stunned, I had no answer for the scientist I had trained myself to be knew at once that, on the face of it, having lived at all was at once the most unlikely of all possible events. Indeed that it was unique but that its specific nature could not speak to the unlikelihood of never

having lived before in some other mode of consciousness and in fact quite to the contrary!

But a scientist is a scientist so I determined on an experimental analysis of the matter. I reasoned in this way: if I had indeed lived before (or even if I thought I had lived before) then there would, in all likelihood, be marks or shadows in my deep consciousness to record such events. After all it is the nature of life that one does not progress through it without being affected at every turn. My thought experiment was this: I determined to review my life by stepping back through it starting on that very day. Accordingly it became my practice in the evening before falling asleep to retrace backward, from moment to moment all the details of my existence. Hour by hour, I went, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year back to birth itself.

Before I did this I made a proposal to myself of this form. If I found that all instances of my behavior, particularities of life-decisions and so forth, could be adequately explained in terms of prior experience in this life alone then I would conclude that I possessed no internal evidence that could justify the existence of a prior life and I would profoundly reject the hypothesis that I might have or could have lived before. If on the contrary, I was able to identify major decisions or behavioral characteristics that seemingly possessed no causal roots in this life then I would entertain

the hypothesis that indeed it might be possible that I had lived before (or at the very least that I acted as though I thought I had lived before).

Needless to say careful examination revealed several such tendencies chief of which had been my willingness to become involved in fighting environmental battles that, on the face of it, could not be won. These highly publicized skirmishes furthermore had resulted in job-loss and considerably depressed income over a number of years. In other words I had involved myself with counter-survivalist behavior for reasons that could not be tied directly into earlier events of my life. So, there it was, the conclusion of my “thought experiment” stared directly at me. A conclusion furthermore, that I did not wish to find and did not wish to acknowledge.

However, I felt bound by my strict adherence to scientific protocol. I had formulated the “null hypothesis” that the absence of any trace of immediately unexplainable behavior would be taken to mean that my consciousness did not support evidence of previous lives. To the contrary I had clearly found such behavior meaning I was duty-bound to reject the null hypothesis and thereby was forced to accept the alternate hypothesis that other and previous lives were indeed at least possible if not certain.

There remained a very big question that called for an answer, why had I done this? Why had I thrown myself into this arena of proactive environmentalism which had involved civil action and civil disobedience? This was the question that I would use subsequently to “unearth” the past-life or past-lives that had led to this behavior.

Along the way I had become a “population ecologist” and in spite of my objective scientific training, I had also continued to see life as a very special and universal force connected at every level. I had come to understand that the living Earth or Gaia was a reality that only the blind did not see. I became in other words a naturalist and from there a pro-active environmentalist and one that had sacrificed an academic career to that mystical goddess’s alter. Furthermore this had been done for no material gain whatsoever and I had also coupled this with endless emotional pain into the bargain.

In short, after several years of effort following the proposal that I made to myself to consider the possibility that I had lived before, I succeeded in recalling one past life simply by asking why I had involved myself into one environmental battle after another with such reckless abandon. I was startled (stunned more like it) by this recall to say the least, mainly because at the time I was still a practicing scientist and certainly not a person believing in God, spiritualism or higher powers of any form.

However, there remained the phenomenon of Gaia to explain. I held that she was somehow different, in that one could see touch feel and encourage her and observe her response. None the less I continued to feel that she was somehow not spiritual exactly. For me she was still something that was profoundly separate from the inanimate world in general while being at the same time part of it.

In the next section I shall discuss the emergent attributes expressed by Gaia from this scientific viewpoint. From this account it will be seen that the position of Gaia is anomalous in that nature can apparently be described in an objective mechanistic manner but at the same time everything that life has accomplished on this planet clearly points to the existence of cohesion and guidance. And as I now realize, this also identifies the spiritual content.

Life is the necessary force that permits and nurtures human existence. Life is not here by chance. In fact, if there were no life, the question of its meaning could not be discussed. The existence of life and nature as a whole is an obligate necessity for the maintenance of humanity and a sure indication of the existence of a power extending beyond that of the ego-mind. The very capacity of the inorganic “lifeless” world to organize itself in such a way that it

provides a vehicle and structural context for the support and expression of life speaks to this point.

Consciousness of Life

Now the wonderful world is born,

In an instant it dies,

In a breath, it is renewed.

From the slowness of our eye

And the quickness of God's hand

We believe in the world

Anon

- Oh thou who givest sustenance to the universe
- From whom all things proceed
- To whom all things return
- Unveil to us the face of the true spiritual sun
- Hidden by a disk of golden light
- That we may know the truth
- And do our whole duty
- As we journey to thy sacred feet

Prayer from "Liley" by Kate Bush, The Red Shoes, drawn from the Upanishads

Gaia

The absolute age of the earth is now taken to be somewhere about 4.5 billion years (four thousand five hundred million years). The oldest sedimentary rocks are around 3.75 billion years (Isua series in west Greenland) and there is some indication that they may show traces of the earliest life in the enhanced carbon-12/carbon-13 ratio, which suggests that photosynthesis, might then have been active. In present-day vegetation, a preponderance of light carbon (C-12) over heavy carbon (C-13) is observed with respect to the background ratio found in air. Photosynthesis (life) favors the fixation of light carbon.

Actual cells have been found in sedimentary rocks from 3.5-3.6 billion years old in Africa and Australia (Knoll and Barghoorn, 1977; Walter, 1983). For the next 2.4 billion years all living organisms were single celled with simple undifferentiated matrix (no chloroplasts, no organelles), Gould 1989.

The larger, so called "eukaryotic" cells of modern multicellular organisms and Amoeba evolved later (1.4 billion years ago), perhaps by aggregation of the simpler forms. The first appearance of multicellular organisms is, on balance, surprisingly recent at 700 million years ago. Approximately 100 million years later a full range of multicellular body-plans, including many that have long-

since vanished, appears in the "Burgess Shale" of British Columbia in Canada and since then, 500 million years of emergent dominant life in both aquatic and terrestrial habitats has developed with man appearing on the scene in any recognizable modern form, as late in the game as around 1 million years ago although primitive forms (the Australopithacines, "Lucy") yield fossils of around 3 million years in age.

To provide a mechanistic accounting of this progressive development of life from the simplest of replicating, energy-utilizing chemicals, Charles Darwin proposed the theory of natural selection which posits that those organisms more fitted to their environment tend to survive at the expense of their "less-fit", "less competent" brethren as the result of competition for essentially limited (energy) resources. Later, it was realized that the ground-plan reflecting that "fittest structure" was propelled forward in the form of the genetic record through the medium of the chemical code locked into DNA molecules (or their functional pre-cursors).

Thus, the genetic strands that have expanded the structure which supports life stretch backwards through time in an unbroken sequence. In turn, this means that this chemical structure, common to every human being, has migrated forward through time, taking on progressively more complex form: invertebrate, fish, amphibian, reptile, early mammal, man, with the numerous side-branches that have

populated the world with differing forms suited to available energy resources and available space at each step of the way.

Formulated in this manner, it might appear that an inevitable progression was involved, and indeed, perhaps it was. The way forward was however, far from clear. As mentioned above, the Burgess Shale fossils for instance reveal a bewildering array of body-plans many of which have disappeared without a trace in today's fauna. Stephen J. Gould (loc. cit.) uses this fact to argue that evolution was essentially a dice-game and, but for circumstance, an entirely different biological dominance structure might now inhabit the earth.

This overlooks the argument that natural selection has determined the losing plans to be inappropriate by default. For not only does an organism have to deal with the elements of environmental variation that it faces in "equable times" but it also has to retain a capacity to survive "selection bottlenecks" as represented by the effects generated by comparatively rare events. The capacity to do this constitutes a measure of Gaia's tenacity, so to speak and it also ensures that a fundamental ground-plan (even perhaps a predictable ground-plan) for life will emerge in the long-haul.

One such “selection bottleneck” is associated with the demarcation between the Cretaceous and the Tertiary periods in geological time (about 65 million years ago) which separates the age of the reptiles and the age of the mammals. This differentiation is known as the K-T boundary, where K is the abbreviation for the German form of the word Cretaceous and it marks an event responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs. It was first recognized over one hundred years ago by geologists who realized that there was a dramatic change in the types of fossils deposited on either side of the boundary. The boundary corresponds to one of the greatest mass extinctions in Earth's history. In addition to the dinosaurs at least 75 percent of the species on our planet, both in the seas and on the continents, were extinguished forever. In the oceans, more than 90 percent of the plankton was killed, presumably due the subsequent extended winter, which inevitably led to the collapse of the oceanic food chain.

The presumed cause of the extinctions was taken to be due to a meteor impact and an extensive search for a large crater identified one that is 65 million years old on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. It is a huge buried impact crater called Chicxulub, a Maya word that roughly translates as "tail of the devil." The crater, now buried beneath a kilometer-thick sequence of sediments, has been imaged using geophysical techniques that allow us to visualize underground structures. It appears to have a diameter of 145 to 180 km, which makes it one of the largest confirmed impact structures on Earth.

It appears that certain "conservative" body-plans are suited to surviving such extreme challenges and others are not. For instance, fern spores dominate the coal measures, which developed after the widespread annihilation caused by the K-T boundary event. Prior to this ferns had developed as early land-plants capable of colonizing the terrestrial environment some 400 million years ago. It is significant that the physical conditions that resulted after the K-T event were probably closely similar to those pertaining at the time the ferns first initiated the life-history enabling them to proceed out of the swamp environments onto essentially dry-land. A host of specialized, "well-adapted" plants perished as the result of the K-T event, but not the ferns, they had already developed a "conservative" body-plan which had not fallen to the side, although perhaps its representation had been somewhat marginalized by other forms which developed to take advantage of "equable times".

Creation & Evolution

The objective formulation of the theory of evolution does not deal with the idea of "creation" in and of itself as perpetrated by a "prime-mover", a force having "moral attributes" from whom the universe proceeds and to whom it returns. It is however, readily reconciled with this idea in that it may be supposed that the creative act in the sense referred to, is to be found in the manifestation described above. In other words, the very structure of matter combined with the mechanism through which life arose on the earth

and subsequently progressed, as dictated by the rules of natural selection and so forth, itself may be taken to refer to creation. No contradiction exists to this important point, which supposes life to play the part of "animating" the physical vehicle that supports consciousness. For this purpose, a simple dictionary definition of life may be taken as: that property of plants and animals (ending in death and distinguishing them from inorganic matter) which makes it possible for them to take in energy (food etc.) and to grow and reproduce.

Biotic & Abiotic Agents

From the perspective of the above discussion it is axiomatic that the conditions present on the earth for the 3.75 billion years that life has dwelt thereon must have been appropriate to the process, in some sense, otherwise living organisms would not presently exist!

However, it took a planetary engineer and scientist to point out that this happy state of affairs was not necessarily the consequence of benign neglect that perhaps "it did not just happen by itself".

The Gaia Hypothesis supposes the Earth to be alive (Lovelock 1988) and was first advanced by Lovelock in 1972 in a one page note based on comparative atmospheric compositions among the Earth and of the nearby planets (Mars and Venus). From this comparison he showed clearly the ecosystem-based activities expressed by Gaia serve to

increase the levels of Nitrogen, Oxygen and Methane in our planetary atmosphere far above the levels that would otherwise be expected on a lifeless Earth.

The idea that the Earth is a living being is obviously as old as humankind but was apparently first expressed in a scientific forum by James Hutton (the father of geology) in 1758 at a meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Although the emphasis on "mechanical objectivity" focused on biological investigations in recent years has tended to make this fundamental notion appear as "naive".

The Gaia hypothesis supposes that the world we inhabit is, to an extent, self-regulating and that the climate and environment is a consequence of an automatic goal-seeking system. The system includes: living organisms, subject to natural selection that survive by leaving the most progeny; that grow and exploit environmental opportunities; that affect the physical and chemical environment by acting on oxygen and carbon dioxide; that are bound by physical constraints (temperature, energy availability and so forth).

Life is a planetary-scale phenomenon, the presence of sufficient living organisms on the planet is necessary for regulation of the environment. The growth of organisms affects their physical and chemical environment so that both

are coupled into a single indivisible process. Gaia is of course at least as old as life itself upon this Earth and if the "Big Bang" started the Universe 15 eons ago Gaia is a quarter as old as time itself, at least in this cycle of manifestation. Gaia does not only adapt herself to the Earth but also adapts the Earth to her requirements, one might say in a manner of speaking. Only life can impose the conditions whereby oxygen and methane can co-exist, without mutual obliteration, in the atmosphere. Here, at the very least we seem to be discussing the mechanism of a "primitive" consciousness.

Gaia herself, as represented by the living conscious Earth does not necessarily represent the end or even a unique solution to existence. Our universe is by some, now supposed to represent but one element in an evolving form connected to the whole by "worm-holes" proceeding from "black holes" which engulf all matter and energy surrounding them. At some instant, these worm-holes end, perhaps in "singularities", equivalent to the point immediately before initiation of the "big bang". These may be of the same form as that associated with the appearance of our own universe. So it is possible that essentially the same laws of natural selection, growth and so forth as govern living systems are also played out at a higher level thereby involving Gaia in the management of the whole universe of universes.

The notion of Gaia has been criticized as "teleological" which basically means that a foundation of human consciousness is introduced into the supposed causal mechanisms underlying the observed interactions and a "conscious purpose" is thereby assumed. Although it is easy to claim that self-regulation is in some sense, a feature of all extant populations of organisms in as much as those which do not exhibit this characteristic are long since extinct it is a little more difficult to convince "mechanical logic" that the goal of self regulation must indeed also be an objective response to natural selection. Populations that adopt such strategies as are appropriate survive by leaving more offspring and those that do not, simply go extinct.

The concept of integrated and "co-adapted nature" has been taken further and assembled under the title of "Super-Nature" (Watson 1988). In this formulation the biological basis of "awareness" arises as the result of selection for "mutualistic" characters amongst groups and associations of organisms. In the simplest form this is to be seen in close associations between two species, say clown fish and sea anemones on coral reefs. In more advanced formulations, whole assemblages of different species are seen as co-operating for mutual advantage.

An example of this is to be found in the phenomenon of co-ordinated spawning exhibited by many different coral species with the end objective presumably lying in the

"strategic satiation" of available predators so that the reef as a whole can maximize its chances of survival and continuity, by means of the propagules that are not eaten. Here the corals unite to produce more propagules by their combined efforts at a particular instant than the immediately available predators can eat. In the ultimate formulation, nervous systems, which at first serve merely to coordinate associative structure, then replace structure at a higher or reflexive level and the prospect of consciousness is evolved.

The idea can be taken further to associate the living Earth as a whole (Gaia) in mutualistic interactions mediated through atmospheric exchanges between populations and communities (ecosystems) via electrical phenomena (lightning to create nitrates for fertilization), and involving positive coercion of physical factors by biotic influences (rain-forests promoting rain through transpiration discharges of water vapor). One might further propose that the principal effect of "bottle-neck" selection events such as that represented by the (Cretaceous-Tertiary) or K-T boundary incident is the elimination of most if not all forms of mutualism as nature is forced back into adopting previously relinquished objective and individualist-favoring strategies through stringent natural selection in order to firmly establish a conservative structure to support life.

In ecological terms, the processes by which communities of plants (for example) build-up gradually from open clearings

to full forests (the climax community) is known as succession. Succession in this sense covers perhaps units of time up to tens of years and in structure represents the elements of the whole of evolutionary history (3.5 billion years) in compressed format. The successional complex is thus defined by evolution as the ecosystem which maximizes biomass and incident energy utilization in any given circumstance. No part may be withdrawn without weakening the whole and decreasing the degree to which available energy is rendered into biological form. This in turn governs the ultimate stability of Gaia.

Wide-scale stress is observed to force climax ecosystems back to earlier stages in succession. Global extinction events act similarly, but they move biological potential back into earlier structural stages of evolution however, these will also preserve much genetic information that was previously unavailable to these conservative formats when they first appeared.

Global Dynamics

The course of evolutionary history has seen many global extinction events induced by outside or allogenic events and has also witnessed a number of biological expansions which have induced autogenic changes over millions of years of comparative stability. Over such time-spans, ecosystems have captured enormous quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere where it has briefly resided, after being forced from the earth through volcanic action, before being

re-deposited as coal and oil by courtesy of physical processes and biological action.

Autogenic changes of this nature have undoubtedly served to promote ice ages through the drawdown of carbon dioxide. Ice ages may also have been promoted by allogenic changes associated with orbital variations, particularly in more recent times.

Human populations have now, co-incidentally, reached a point where the conditions permitting individual and group survival in the modern world have dictated continued and obligate exploitation of fossil energy deposits arising as energy storage units from earlier ecosystems, so that with very few exceptions, every move we make contributes to the liberation of previously sequestered greenhouse gases whether the massive release arising from launching space vehicles, which also liberate significant amounts of ozone depleting chemicals, or the more modest contribution from a family car on the way to the grocery store.

We now move into an increasingly warmer global regime because humankind, since the dawn of civilization and particularly over the last few centuries has systematically worked to eliminate the great forests from the face of the earth and to drain the wetlands. In recent times humankind has also been driven to expose and degrade the vast carbon deposits laid down in safekeeping, in part, by those same

forests in days gone by and has so opened Pandora's box of carbon based gases and other industrial pollutants such as the nitrogen based gases.

We can now see that in the geological past occasions resulting in release of carbon dioxide have occurred before and indeed substantially higher periods of atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have dominated the earth throughout much of the time when it has supported higher life forms at warmer temperatures than we see today. Such releases may have been occasioned by meteorite impacts or by periodic fires in accumulated organic material.

Releases could also have come about as the result of exposure of fossil carbon deposits by the excavations of the massive ice-sheets which then oxidized, by discharge through volcanic action perhaps associated with crustal subduction mechanisms or by as yet unknown processes which then resulted in warm inter-glacial periods. In the case of the current releases however, the far-reaching forests which may have subsequently reclaimed and sequestered the carbon gases, and have done so previously in cycle after cycle, have all but vanished at humankind's bidding and we are now presented with an uncertain future in the form of run-away carbon dioxide increases.

Environmental Ethics?

As human population pressures increase throughout the world (more people have been added since 1950 than for all of human history up to that point) and the influence of industrial man spreads from formerly restricted areas in ever widening circles powered by fossil-fuel energy accumulated from ancient ecosystems, the factors militating against continuity of undisturbed natural communities intensify. With the possible exception of a few remote communities in the abyssal depths of the oceans or perhaps under the Antarctic and Arctic ice-caps many ecologists now feel that there are few if any undisturbed ecological communities remaining on the face of the earth.

Global Energy Fluxes

The question of energy throughput and its effects on the structure and function of both human and natural ecosystems is of considerable interest from the ecological and environmental perspective. It appears that natural systems have evolved in association with relatively consistent energy fluxes even if these may have varied somewhat over the long-term of the earth's history. The relationship between the higher species diversity existing in tropical systems with high natural energy flux, compared to that of polar regions, with low natural energy flux, together with the intervening trends are relatively well known. There are more species per unit area in the tropics than for instance on the tundra.

It is also well known that most species are not abundant through their potential range. A possible explanation for this is that the majority are relics of past environments in which different global conditions and climates pertained. Global species diversity may thus be properly viewed as a form of ecosystem memory, which could permit a competent biological response to a host of differing environments including those predicted to develop as the result of anthropogenic climate change.

Examination of the laws governing energy-flow and transformation (thermodynamics), leads to the conclusion that energy use involves what may be termed an entropy cost translating as increasing disorder. Thus energy is available as a once-only use-function in transformation from a higher to a lower state insofar as the ability to perform work is concerned. As the result of this process, energy does not disappear, it simply becomes degraded and cannot be further used. In principal, it then takes the form of low-grade thermal pollution (contributing directly to global warming) and wastes. The socially competent energy transformations resulting in the elaboration of useful work certainly provide an increase to the general economy but at the same time result in increased disorder (the entropy penalty cost).

For every automobile produced a corresponding amount of pollutants is generated and a specific environmental cost is involved. The difference in these two conditions is intended to result in a socially useful state of increased order (the automobile) and is the basis of economic life, as we know it today. At relatively low population densities and with modest energy throughput, the environment readily absorbs these costs. Global populations of from 5-10 billion people together with their concomitant energy throughput are an entirely different matter indeed.

It might be said that natural ecosystems have resulted from an order-positive imbalance on the solar energy degradation pathway. In other words, an anomaly has been created in the action of the second law of thermodynamics. In essence the second law says: work performed as the result of energy degradation always results in an increase in disorder, the degraded energy (usually heat) can never be reclaimed for the same amount of useful work without an additional energy injection.

This anomaly represented by living systems whereby increased order results from energy use however, depends on continued energy throughput. Although disorder (sometimes called entropy) everywhere increases, living nature never-the-less converts essentially un-ordered chemicals into more ordered physical states, as long as energy flow is maintained, i.e. an order-positive imbalance

exists based on solar energy throughput. Gaia thus dictates an "ecologically balanced" energy flux which can be taken as the stable end of a range of progressively increasing socially mediated energy-throughputs. The other extreme of this range is associated with the detonation of a thermonuclear device on a city or the more moderate expression of modern conventional warfare. In such instances, an immediate order-negative imbalance results from the energy degradation.

Suitably consulted, Gaia can tell us many things about the way in which human communities can live comfortably but she has no hesitation in making whatever adjustments are necessary to ensure her own survival. Thus we may well petition Gaia and ask at what multiple of solar energy throughput per unit area and time might we expect to find an acceptable ratio between the entropy cost penalty and maintenance of physical system order compatible with overall ecosystem well-being? An answer to this question might also tell us at what level of energy throughput per unit area we might expect to see a point at which subtraction from established cultural and technical (physical) order is initiated. In tune with Gaia we may then approach the analysis of human ecosystems from an ecological perspective.

The concept of an order-positive imbalance, or, a unit increases in order, for a given energy flux must take into

account the entropy cost of energy conversion/capture, transmission and degradation. All energy capture schemes involve environmental costs. Hydro projects may alienate biodiversity; solar energy panels may block sunlight from reaching the ground and thus potentially reduce biological productivity. The selenium and metals etc. used in photoelectric cells and peripheral structures must be mined and processed involving energy costs and appropriate carbon penalties as well as the induction of direct environmental damage and pollution etc.

By taking such factors into account, one may then inquire into the relationship in human systems between unit increase in order and energy throughput. Since we may also properly regard money as a social claim on energy and thereby indirectly as a means of accounting for socially available energy (considering all forms from fusion energy, hydro-electrical energy to low-grade heat energy etc.), questions may be elaborated and answered on an ecological basis concerning the relationships between capital accumulation, expenditures or investments per unit area and the resulting energy/order relationships.

For instance fossil fuel (oil) is extracted from the middle east, exchanged at a low value-rate for hard currency (firm claim on energy), used by industrial nations to elaborate infrastructure, industrial capacity and, incidentally, military hardware which is then swapped back for the original capital

creating an immediate primary imbalance which eventually leads to destruction of both the military equipment and the developing country infrastructure along with significant environmental degradation, and as yet an un-quantified contribution to global warming.

Gaia and Resilience

As human beings reduce existing biodiversity, they decrease the ability of the planet to adapt to changes. A sustainable biosphere, which retains a full compliment of biological form, is thus a necessary prerequisite to human survival in the long term. For the most part, it is thought that animal and plant species adapt to environmental changes primarily by slow genetic changes in physiological, structural or behavioral characteristics. Humans prevail as a species, which essentially adapts by learning. The process by which this adaptive behavior is spread among human populations is assisted through education.

Summation

It is indisputable that the natural world has ordered itself. Moreover the degree of organization expressed by life in all its complexity from sub-cellular through the structure of an individual organism into ecosystems and to the fabric of the one living mantle that stretches across the globe is remarkable to say the least. By careful dissection it is possible to see every component, regardless of scale, as a purely mechanical expression of energy exchange. It is the amazing coherence of the whole however, that gives pause

for further thought. Natural systems, left to their own devices, under the influence of natural selection, tend towards an organization that is both stable and tenacious. The role of individual organisms, of populations within species and of species themselves is profoundly flexible yet the resultant cohesion of living systems can be analyzed and described as such. It is as though the separate elements (individuals, species and so forth) are collectively each a more or less separate and flexible thought-form within a vast multilayered concept which continually adjusts itself in order to survive from moment to moment.

If humankind were to have awoken within a context wherein other life was absent it would be difficult indeed to imagine how the concept of God might ever arise. In fact, even when the biosphere is seen as a host of interacting mechanical functions that have been obliged to arise through particular and definable circumstances the emergent properties of the whole are none the less stunning in their complexity and implications when understood in the finest of detail. The idea of evolution by natural selection is, at its base, structurally analytical, and it represents the work of the mind.

However, the fact that inorganic appearance has within it the structural capacity to support life, the fact of life itself, the fact of the biosphere and so forth, as an ascending scale of complexity, must be addressed and understood through a

different category of comprehension. The emergent attributes of the collectivities themselves cannot be understood by mechanistic subdivision since they must be addressed as cohesive wholes. While the workings of the component parts can be appreciated separately we can never understand the operational rationale for the existence of the aggregates unless it is in terms of the characteristics of the collectivity relating to preceding associations.

Nor can the mystery of life be laid to rest by pursuit of an analytical quest into the nature of matter since the emergent answers are always themselves encased in further descriptive structure, even if this may be at the level of charged states and the likelihood of their presence (or not). Such engagement is thus best described as an infinite analytical regress.

There is none the less content to this different category of comprehension and it forms the answer to the question “why should this be so”?

As surely as the enquiring mind raises this particular query however, it also questions its own existence since humankind is a product of the apparent order described. In this way the ultimate questions are promoted namely, “why should it be so that I exist”? “Who am I, what am I doing here”? These were exactly the questions that I had raised for myself. Namely, what is life in general and then what is my

life in particular? Do I see it once only and now or have I seen it before?

Past-Life Integration

The first life I reclaimed involved me, as a battle commander in ancient Greece, projecting power and war by force of arms. In my current life I had tried to make amends for the pain and suffering I had caused in that earlier life by taking on battles in defense of Gaia. These were social conflicts that I could not possibly win.

Immediately I saw these were intended to serve as elements of compensation for my earlier behavior. The recollection itself was obtained with the help of a past-life regression therapist. I sought this help after deciding that there was indeed enough evidence to warrant a deeper search for such a past life as would serve to answer my query concerning the fundamental reason for my proactively involvement in environmental activism.

During a vacation period and with some time on my hands, I located a past-life regression therapist to assist me. I simply picked up a copy of *The Georgia Strait* while on holiday in Vancouver and found that the address of Di Cherry was only two blocks from where I was staying. I walked into her office unannounced and, amazingly a prior appointment had

just been cancelled so we could begin work immediately. This otherwise empty calendar was so to speak, the first instance of a “forced act of serendipity” that I became aware of.

Now I must admit that I had a false preconception as to the type of life I would like to encounter in my proposed regression. I had quite arbitrarily decided that life as an ancient Inca warrior would be a good place to start but that was not to be. I was first asked by Di if I already had a meaningful life-question that I wanted to explore and as I responded positively I was hurriedly told that I should not reveal this and at the same time motioned towards a recliner and asked to make myself comfortable.

This I did and Di then asked me to imagine that I was wrapping myself from head to toe with each of the colors of the rainbow in turn, starting with red. I did this and then was requested to look outside the window at the blue sky and to imagine that I had left my body, was floating up above the telephone wires plainly visible, up till the city was laid out beneath me, up until the Earth itself appeared as a ball spinning in space.”Now imagine you are wearing a necklace of large beads, reach up and snap the cord which threads them. The beads represent your past-lives as they go spinning into space each separate from the others dive down and catch the one that represents the life you are seeking”. I must own that I was still singularly determined to find my

imaginary life as an Inca even at this stage but, after some hesitation at the confusion of spinning beads that I had imagined, I grasped the one directly in front of me and in an instant everything went blank except that I was walking back on Earth.

As my right foot touched the ground I moved forward so that it took my whole weight. Plainly and clearly there was a crackling crunching sound of medium sized uneven particles moving under me.

Immediately I thought I was walking on a pathway of crushed coral fragments such as were used to pave walkways on the coral islands outside of Jakarta Bay where I was most familiar with this sound and feeling. But as quickly as this thought arose I knew myself to be mistaken. The texture and particle size were not correct and it suddenly flooded into my mind that I was walking on a bed of crushed white marble chips. I was certain of it even as I moved my left foot into place and confirmed the sensation. This I reported to Di and she asked me what I was wearing on my feet. Without hesitation I said “sandals” whereupon I was requested to touch my thigh in order to determine how I was clothed. “A leather skirt and strapped leather sandals” I replied followed by “I’m also wearing a heavy leather belt with an embossed buckle” as my hand moved further to my right I blurted “and a wicked short sword only as long as my forearm”.

Not a “battle-sword” but a very nasty piece of work designed for close quarters defense or, more the likely, offence. It was seated in such a manner that the right hand had to be reversed in order to withdraw it, either in a sweeping semi-circular parry into the position of “tierce” or to deliver a sudden back-hand cut to the throat of a potential target. I was stunned, each detail was so precise, it was exactly as I had been and I knew without a doubt that it was me, it all seemed so familiar, as is the case with an old pair of shoes one has not worn for some time.

Di next instructed me to reach up and touch my face saying that I would be able to tell what kind of life I was leading according to the skin-texture. I reacted by placing my right hand on my right cheek and, on encountering rough skin, I immediately announced “outside, I live outside in the weather”. However, as I made this gesture my little finger touched my nose. The effect was so startling that I leapt to my feet and started pacing round the office and I cried out loudly “but I’ve got a BIG nose”. Why the shock”? Simply that in this life I have what can only be described as a modest sized nose, not very big at all really. My forefingers had meanwhile also touched the embossed rim of a metal helmet that I was wearing so the physical picture was complete – I was some sort of an expensively attired “swords and sandals” soldier. But who was I and what was I doing?

“Who or what is around you” asked Di, “are there any people”? For a moment I did not answer as I concentrated, then I said “I’m walking at the head of a group”. Again Di prompted “are there any other people around? This time I looked a little more carefully but with only a fleeting glance as I sensed huddled and despondent figures on the wayside and I replied “yes there are other people around but I don’t have to take any notice of them”. At this Di came to attention and said somewhat sharply “why not, why don’t you have to pay them any attention”? Without even the slightest hesitation, without thought at all, I replied, and the words just seemed to roll off my tongue “because I take direction from no-one!”

There it was, and in an instant I knew who I was and what I was doing and the weight of it descended upon me with such force that I let out a long moan. At last I managed to speak and said through a veil of tears “I’m on my way to destroy a city by fire and put its people to the sword, I have regiments behind me, and it is a matter of military and political strategy. We will have no trouble behind our lines after this”. As the agony of the people involved engulfed me and as the horror of what I had done descended into my bones I lay weeping on the recliner. It was only too clear to me as to why I had fought so many environmental battles and at such cost. I was trying to make amends; it was as simple as that.

After some time (two years later and again with Di's assistance), I recovered two additional lives. Suddenly I was presented with personal evidence allowing me to see and appreciate that an aspect of me, perhaps my soul or an essence thereof, extended beyond time. This happened as I contemplated the three lives and related the connections among them to include the standpoint of my present life. Seeing, as it were for the first time, why I had been driven to perform certain actions in this life with a dreadful logic of certainty.

As soon as I started to meditate upon the meaning that had to lie behind the collective lives I began to feel disoriented. At once a feeling of terror gripped me and my I-consciousness started to break apart. Still I held on and suddenly found myself floating above all of the lives. I was then immediately aware that in some sense, I, that is a Self, a direct identity, ascendant to the lives and somehow beyond them, had all along been involved in creating everything about them for they were mine. It was as though I hung suspended above four different worlds spinning in an identical location in space. Yet there were no worlds at all and nor was there any space in which they could spin and I encompassed them entirely! The contents of the three solid and distinct lives, like a terminal feeling, as well as the perspective of my current, life simply hung there within the scope of my comprehension.

As I considered the “vision” I was aware that any one of these lives was capable of involving my complete attention to the exclusion of all others yet I did not allow this to happen and in an instant I knew with hard certainty that the essence of me that stood beyond these lives did so for the simple reason that it had created all of them. This feeling suddenly expanded to include not only the self-feeling in each of the lives, but also the infrastructure, the "reality" that had cradled the lives. This comprehension of an "ascendant self" I now call the “Higher Self”.

From that point I went off into higher consciousness. Now that consciousness I took to be a summation.

The direct experience was as follows. In considering the seeming impossibility that the lives I had recalled could really belong to me, particularly in respect to the disparate time-frames involved (one, the first from ancient Greece, another from Egypt shortly after the Great Pyramid was built and yet another from 18th Centaury Europe) I was gripped by the terror of the unknown and inadvertently, automatically, raised a question concerning my own identity.

As I tried desperately to integrate them I asked myself “who or what am I that thus span space and time”? In response I

was suddenly shaken by what seemed like an internal electrical discharge like a series of explosions, in two linked tiers, running inside my body but not of my body. The individual explosions felt like the effect of "cricking" one's neck, specific internal flashes but without the pain. With each explosion I was thrust higher and deeper into myself till I could see the lives laid out beneath me and at the same time knowing that I had created every detail thereof. I then had the sensation of remembering who I really was, my Self, pure and certain. The one consciousness that I had always known myself to be but had almost forgotten completely and this realization jarred me to my roots as I perceived it had always been this way and would always continue so to be, boundless and the source of all.

A wisp of anxiety brushed me, something perhaps left undone, and I passed through it to an encompassing responsibility for being and then to pure bliss which spiraled onwards, upwards forever after. I was home at last to the state of being I truly represented with all the lives and sorrows that they had entailed banished into oblivion for they did not exist and had never existed I was free, bathed in the pure light of being alone.

For a moment I stabilized this mad upward rush of comprehension in perfect peace and reassurance becoming aware of the infinite numbers of repetitions of the life-experience that I had passed through in the eternity of time

that I had endured in “apartness”, as the essence of separation. Secure, now I asked myself why I had ever undertaken that journey of separation, of infinite loss and sadness in the first place and then I knew. Once again the answer was so simple – I had done it for one reason only “to see if I could return” to where I now was and for no other cause at all. It was, if you will, a simple-self-test but it had lasted for eons, for untold lengths of time yet really it had never happened at all.

But I was not yet done. Upon ascending further I cannot quite recall for all the foregoing vanished and emptiness reigned. But although this was emptiness of all that had gone before; it was not entirely emptiness of being since I alone existed but not as creator, not as soul and certainly not as ego. A formless lack of focus ensued but a curiously pregnant formlessness from which anything or being might emerge as a mere whim, anything at all really including this world of being along with the pages you are reading and the consciousness you are. In a flash you are here in flesh and blood and in an instant you are equally all of that from which this, as universe and world, has emerged. At once and together one and the same and also, constituting a never to be repeated instance, a ripple in the profound.

Curiously, although I can revisit it at will, whenever I try to capture the experience in words it emerges in a different form. This variability arises because we only have words to

describe something that is beyond words and consciousness. That something is completely beyond comprehension in ordinary space-time.

Here is another "version" of the insight. It is the Self in all its infinite, transcendent glory of perfection. If I dive into this sea, I first experience a ripple in myself rather like a series of electrical explosions somewhere in a "space" above my spine (one explosion would be somewhat akin to cracking one's neck but without the bodily pain), the hairs on my arms stand up and I begin to remember who I am. At first it is a bit frightening but a pure essential element of me recognizes that it has always been this way, that it, the experience of life, has all been a test. A self-imposed test and every single thing about it I have created, the lives I have experienced (or seem to have experienced), the context, everything.

At this point all consciousness of my body and the outside world has long-since disappeared. I then experience a great relief as I bath in the pure consciousness of being but then this is superseded by a huge sense of responsibility. I deeply regret I have left the world behind, that I have dissolved it away, that this idea exists as a shadow even in the fact that I am aware it never existed at all. But I am thankful that I have done so, I am overwhelmed by a sense of bliss. I am who I am, I have always been. There is no end. I expand further into a vast endless awareness; nothing else exists

except the awareness of emptiness and I know with absolute certainty that there is no other. After a time some niggle arises, as though something remains “undone”. I do not “want” to go further and I begin to return. Although I know where I have been I cannot quite describe it. It was and is perfection; it goes on forever, above and beyond time. I am giddy and disoriented for days. It takes me weeks to reassemble the world outside.

World of Plurality

But now I can indeed describe perfection as that state from which any change is a retreat. But these are only words and the state in question is so much more. It is boundless, holding everything within but only in a very small speck somewhere out on the periphery and all the "time" the source, the supreme Self is expanding.....It never ends because it is all there is, and, as they so often say in the Upanishads, "That Thou Art"!

However, to continue in some greater detail, the “niggle” abruptly resolves itself into rock-hard adamant certainty. This point again represents the certainty of creative authorship of everything that has proceeded and indeed of all being. But with it, the small wisp of uncertainty suddenly emerges from the very depths of this being, as wave after wave of sorrow, pain and despair. So many people involved in such swirling misery simply because they have yet to realize they have imposed the crushing burdens upon

themselves. So it begins. It is the long hard journey back into the world of name and form. But why is this necessary? The answer is that it is in no way necessary. It is only a “choice”. Although nobody is truly there to respond, there is, none the less, a “teaching” to deliver, the pain I had left behind had seemed too much to bear, a vile blot on perfection.

So, how can the earth-bound human mind describe this? It sums up all the imperfections of individual minds across space and time and tries to imagine an origin (an apposition) that is perfect, that is without any of the aforesaid defects and says furthermore that any imaginable change is a retreat from this perfection. But this ideal of perfection, of God, is merely a projection and as such is a pale shadow of the one Reality, which is so much more and it never ends. The only change being that once in a while it obtains full self realization, remembers itself (so to speak).

Far Recall

To repeat, the procedure I used to obtain the above insight can be broken down into three stages. The **first** involves

placing a focus on yourself, as deeply as you can go and at the same time asking “who am I”. Or, “what am I”? These are NOT shallow verbal questions to be satisfied directly by an ego-reference to one’s current life. A response of the form “I am a schoolteacher by name John” will not suffice and will on the contrary act as a blockage to deeper enquiry. More than that, a response containing any quasi-verbal images at all will also not suffice. This petition is to be addressed non-verbally to the deepest aspect of your being that you can possibly access. This is the basis in being of the very capacity to support elaboration of a personal self even before conception of the body or at the least before birth, or, anyway as far back as you can go.

Second, it will be helpful (but not absolutely necessary) to bring into your consciousness at least two lives, one past-life and your present life will do. Picture your incarnated lives from some place beyond them. **Third**, consider what sort of being the Self must be in order to have formulated and created these separate lives, beyond time itself.

In the case that you cannot recall a past-life then proceed in exactly the same way in review of your current life and in this manner focus on an answer to the question concerning the state of being that must have preceded development of the ego-self. This is your own true Self, the essence, "I am I" that pervades both. What is it that could possibly manage

this ego or all of these "egos" or, what is the pre-existing essence and how have I arrived at this point?

I am that (the Self) which imagines myself to be, in the life, in all these lives laid out before me, below me. What am I? Eternal being beyond time? Infinite Consciousness!

It may be useful to note that the identity “I” starts as the little I, the ego, and ends with the Self identity (in an internal "flash"). However, the little “I”, the ego is very loath to let go so "thoughts" other than the answers you seek, will intrude on your meditation. Just push back to the owner of the thoughts in order to vanquish and dispose of them.

In my view chakras of the Vedas are a series of energy points, knots I prefer to call them. One may think of them in electrical terms as expansion vortices linked together within the subtle body in such a way as to form an ascending scale of awareness and disposition of consciousness. The energy force that courses through this skein exploding into higher consciousness within each successive vortex is the Kundalini force of Vedic literature. The actual progress of the Kundalini is universal memory recall. I term this “far (memory) recall”. This energy discharge certainly affects the physical body in very distinct terms but it has absolutely nothing to do with physicality as such. It is beyond the physical, a subtle form of energy representing the act of

Self-realization. This act in the last analysis is simply remembrance of one's true Self.

There are many ways in which the chakras can ignite but ignition for me, usually seems to initially take the form of past life flashes or remembrances traced to shadows of the personal self. These flashes when connected serve to impress upon the personal self the fact that it is a very small focus of a phenomenally expanded being. Riding up the energy discharge results in the "view from the top" where the small personal self is eclipsed totally, drops away with the support-world or infrastructure and the Being enjoys recall of itself to the extent of its karmic reclamation. That is, the individual concerned ascends to a level limited by its earned comprehension of itself. The discharge burns away Maya (illusion), but not necessarily all Karma. The insight is self-earned and indelible.

The meditation to bring it into being, simply involves focus on the aspect of oneself that unites all or any of the past life fragments available to the limited ego (personal self, Jiva). Ask of yourself such questions as: What is this aspect of me that comprehends an array of lives? What does this mean? Who am I that thus spans time? If I span time what am I? Seeing time thus spread before me, where am I? How have I managed to observe this? To comprehend this eternal being that I am? Etc. In other words, concentrate on the Self that

was and is being before matter, before time and is that from which all proceeds.

I saw this, when I commenced to meditate on two specific lives in particular and became aware in my higher Self, that I had managed or created every single aspect of these representations including the related infrastructure, the "ground" so to speak, the world of plurality. Being able to see this I could also see and potentially affect all the elements but I had no interest in this possibility.

Models of Being

Perhaps some may make an argument that the central core of being, the ground, so to speak is "consciousness with nothing to be conscious of" but that is understating the situation. At the very least, this Reality can be and is conscious of all that there is, (anyone) can realize the exact same thing according to their own states of being. And when it happens (is induced) you will know it beyond a shadow of a doubt as the unity of infinite consciousness knowing itself – Self knowledge.

Working from the standpoint that many people are aware that they have lived several times on the earth, it is possible to construct a kind of “mechanical” model of the resulting multi-dimensioned self. Simply, this model is a bundle of

glass light-fibers that is overseen by the higher Self. Each light-fiber within the bundle represents one life strand and is thus the result of one incarnation on Earth (or perhaps elsewhere, “my Father’s house has many mansions”) at the human level.

The higher Self is the aspect of consciousness that stands apart from the ego or personal self that is active within each strand. The higher Self, through the ego, organizes the expression of the personal self from incarnation to incarnation. This function is undertaken without the active participation of the higher Self in worldly life. The higher Self is an observer standing outside time. To the higher Self, neither time nor the world exists. To the ego or personal self, which is the aspect of consciousness normally expressed in life, time appears as a translucent silver fiber. This may be termed the lifeline. In effect the higher Self is able to view this thread from the end, much as one would the cross-section terminus of a glass-light-fiber. To continue the analogy, the higher Self can focus at any cross-sectional depth within that fiber and any time therein is "now". The higher Self can also view such a fiber all at once, reflect an upper section to a lower section, move instantaneously from one parallel fiber to the next to access other past-lives and so forth.

However, only the Personal Self, as comprehended INSIDE a lifeline, can act to change the degree to which that

particular line obtains the character of "transluminosity". That transluminosity in turn reflects through the bundle as a whole. The radiance expressed by the terminal cross-section of the overall bundle of lives reflects the current status of the Extended Self. The term soul might be in some ways described as that aspect of the ego linking one life with another. This aspect of consciousness, the soul is vague and wispy, oscillating between existence and non-existence, a weak memory trace at best.

The Higher Self on the other hand is Adamantine Certainty. Clarify one line and all fibers share the reflected light there from. Change one line from dark to translucent silver and the whole undergoes an order of magnitude upward shift in luminescence.

Once a particular past life has been identified a primary objective of spiritual work is the clarification of the major issues in that strand. In general, these are the factors that induced (or will induce) the next life. A comparatively limited number (say 6-10) of intense emotional traumas or samskaras (deep emotional memories) lie submerged within past lives affecting the overall clarity of the personality. Perhaps these may be termed unresolved moral errors on the part of the various expressions of ego as mediated through the soul. These are the errors of commission (sins) that are of sufficient magnitude to cause the soul timeless anguish and painful regret. Once these are dissolved, by personal acceptance of the associated responsibility, the possibility of direct experience of the higher Self may be realized.

If one piece of behavior is adjusted in a way that so leads to the elimination of a samsara (a karmic driver) within this array of false knowledge, then another spectrum of concern springs forth immediately. However, although the whole is improved by the correction or “admission”, together with the world in total, this influence is apparent only, for all beings therein are just the one infinite consciousness, the Supreme Self, formless and absolutely indescribable.

Maya or “illusion” is the aspect of the Self that veils continuity. Due to the "stress" experienced by the ego in comprehending the result of its manifestation of and into the physical world (it is a complicated process and takes all one's attention to make a "go" of it) the personality forgets. In order to learn about its true status in any one life-time, the ego must be transcended in the journey of Self Realization - Self remembrance.

Now, from my own insight, there is a descending hierarchy of consciousness (shall we say?) from something that is so profound that after merging therewith and returning one cannot find words to express - a dream, something one always knew existed, profound and limitless, peaceful. Then down through connective consciousness (prior to prakriti - the material universe), down again to "I am that from which all proceeds" (the position occupied in the thought "that thou

art") which is then resolved (individuated) again into the consciousness of the higher Self, that focus supporting, or within which are all incarnations of direct personality - the individual personality-egos encompassed by the higher Self. Within this latter state a number of descending sub-sets may also be imagined or "remembered". These may be termed (for convenience) stages of "pure consciousness" existing prior to the actual expression of "ego-conscious" actively involved with the world of "name and form".

Here we may encounter spiritual influences such as "Christ" Consciousness, Krisna Consciousness, spirit guides and so forth. However, all these states are only loosely identifiable aspects of the one Reality, Infinite Consciousness depending in part on the only apparently clearly separated subset which is the ego. I say "apparently separated" because the ego and the associated world of names, forms and physical beings are entirely false and do not exist at all from the perspective of the One Reality, the Self.

At what point in this descending hierarchy do the individual units split? Actually never, they are all for ever part of the whole even if they always view themselves as individual --- what does happen is that they progressively forget what exactly this individuality stands for and how it came into being.....this is the veil of Maya, forgetfulness. Thus when people collectively see the commonality of their souls, they become one again (although they always regard themselves as unitary on an individual egotistical basis anyway).

What of Soul?

Based on the ego-sense, a connection exists among past lives (from one death to another) as mediated through the soul. The incarnated ego-mind has its "shadow", the trace whispering between and among incarnations, otherwise known as the soul. It is aware of itself and is thus conscious and intelligent. This wisp of consciousness is not of its own being but is a minute fraction of the consciousness, which is the Self, the Reality that transcends the mind. However, the soul is none the less only loosely, if at all, connected with the ego.

In the normal ego-focused state there is no recall of past-life experience, the mind, a direct part of the ego is therefore the primary part of the illusion, and it does not remember the Self. The immediate (current) ego must be lulled into passivity and momentarily by-passed in order to reclaim even one past-life experience.

Just as the ego, the personal self, is not real, being based as it is on the "false" thought "I am realized separately" or "I am the body" so also is the soul unreal, in the same sense. This is because it is just an extension of the ego, tenuously connected to the Higher Self. Apart from the ego-sense there is really no individual soul. All the adjuncts to the ego, the body, the world and other beings likewise are not real. All

these exist only on behalf of the ego, conjured-up by the thought "I am the body".

The only Reality is the Self, Pure Consciousness, not a person and not related to the world of persons and things. No real cause and effect exists between The Reality and the "world". Of any proposed God, that God as he really is, is one and the same as the Self, it is the essence thereof. The Western outlook obtains comfort through the proposition that there is an objective God outside of personal consciousness but the sole Reality is that both the term Self and the term God are congruent in every sense.

Looking upwards from the flesh-entombed ego, the first intimation of "higher connectivity", the trace whispering between and among incarnations, is the extended self or soul. Other names exist for this attribute. The Vedas recognize such affects as "vasanas" which are influences arising from the timeless past. Mahayana Buddhism sees the same effect in the working of samskaras where the influence is seen as "uncaused" so no soul is posited thereby. However named, this influence can be the searching ego's first grasp of the higher Self.

It was due to motivation arising from this influence that I found myself obliged to become involved in environmental actions, battles really.

The Sage

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Mahashi, the Sage of Aranachula, did not put any positive emphasis on past life recall as a procedure helpful in obtaining the egoless state (of enlightenment). His position is made clear by the following questions put by Mercedes de Acosta.

Question: Is reincarnation a fact?

Bhagavan: You are incarnated now, aren't you? Then you will be so again. But as the body is illusion then the illusion will repeat itself and keep on repeating itself until you find the Real Self.

Question: What is death and what is birth?

Bhagavan: Only the body has death and birth, and it [the body] is illusion. There is, in Reality, neither birth nor death.

Question: How much time may elapse between death and rebirth?

Bhagavan: Perhaps one is reborn within a year, three years or thousands of years. Who can say? Anyway what is time? Time does not exist.

Question: Why have we no memory of past lives?

Bhagavan: Memory is a faculty of the mind and part of the illusion. Why do you want to remember other lives that are also illusions? If you abide within the Self, there is no past or future and not even a present since the Self is out of time--timeless.

Personal Self

To describe the process resulting in the appearance of the personal self, Bhagavan Sri Ramana, used an analogy based on the rising and setting sun, as between the waking state and that of deep dreamless sleep where no trace of the world can be found. He stated that the world and the mind arise and set together as one. But, of the two, the world owes its appearance to mind alone. That alone is real in which this inseparable pair, the world and the mind, rise and set. That reality is the one Infinite Consciousness, neither rising nor setting.

The personal self (ego) arises from a stream of thoughts across consciousness (the Infinite Consciousness). The first of these is "representational", an urge of the form "I am the body" but it is false and the entire world and its beings are subsequently built thereon. The personal self (ego) is thus a

strange combination of the Infinite Consciousness (the Supreme and only Self) and non-reality, that which does not exist. To some this may seem "accidental" yet it is not an accident. The thought "I am the body" is deliberate in the sense that it must arise. Yet still the result is unreal as is a dream. One may perhaps then understand that since the ordinary world so described is not real that it must owe its existence to mind alone.

The moment of Self Realization, conscious immersion (of the personal self in the Self) means recognition of the one Infinite Consciousness, as True Reality. At the same "instant" the world (plurality and all beings therein) falls away does not exist anymore, is not seen and is thus understood to be unreal.

A close associate of Sri Ramana, K. L. Sarma, wrote under the pseudonym of "Who". In his book "Maha Yoga", Sarma held that the one great difficulty that the intellect finds in accepting the teaching that happiness is just the return of the mind to its source, the Self, is because the intellect demands a rational link between the world it knows and the Self or Reality it is told about. Such a bridge does not exist and cannot be built by anyone – even by a Sage. The reason is extremely simple, namely because the world and the Reality are negations of each other.

In discussing this idea, Vedic literature often points to the example involving the illusion presented by a rope when it is imagined to be a snake. It is then further indicated that the snake and the rope cannot be seen simultaneously. This is more or less the same as the situation often illustrated in Western psychology texts where the image used involves the perception of the figure and the ground. Depending on which aspect of such an illustration is seen by the mind as dominant, one of two visualizations of the image will be perceived and change will occur in a "flash".

This analogy may then be "stretched" to cover the idea of the switch between the ego-world and the Self, particularly the everyday world, even while maintaining that there is no bridge possible between the two.

However, the comparison may well be apposite in the sense that act of switching awareness takes place in the "flash" of an instant where recognition changes from recording the world of plurality to an immersion within the Self. None the less, both the image of figure/ground and that of the snake/rope remain as incomplete analogies since in such instances it is the mind alone (as ego-function) which initiates and records the transposition from one to another.

Furthermore, the switch between figure and ground is accompanied by a very mild sense of surprise in the observer whereas the ego-world to Self transition is profound and life-changing in an instant. In the “ordinary world” sense the mind is truly the bridge between the snake and the rope or figure and ground but where the ego and Self are involved, although the mind can be persuaded to be involved in the initiation of the switch, it is itself subsequently deconstructed to the point that days or weeks may be required to effect reconstruction. Even then the reassembled mind can never be the same as it was previously since the apparent every-day consciousness lurking beneath this new structure now knows it certainly to be a sham.

In a similar vein when the ego mediated world of plurality and the indescribable Infinite Consciousness (the Self) transition from one identity (viewpoint) to another in a "flash" there is, in the immediate and instantaneous aftermath, an aspect of the Self that still knows of the world and in particular knows of the ego-trace, the manifest record of outside existence, left by the experience of all the personal selves (past lives). This is known at least in the context, if not with the direct involvement expressed by the ego-self, as a being in the world. The aspect of the Self that is so witnessed is able to comprehend this flashing transition from one to the other in terms of the Higher Self (the Atman).

Combined Images

The elemental thought involving identity with physicality can be summed up by the phrase “I am the body”. This can be viewed as an hypothesis or more properly an intent, within the context of the Supreme Being but it is an urgent demand entertained by a subset of the Higher Self that generates the material world. In my view, the ego-self thus initiated is first activated because of an incipient desire to test its ability to return to the ground-state of unlimited being. Thus viewed, it is an “adventure”. This desire initiates the thought “I am the body” which is really “false” in the sense that the context in which such an intent forms is the very antithesis of a physical body. But from it thus flows the intended pluralistic world and all therein.

In writings concerning Advaita, the pluralistic world and all therein are thus said to be “Unreal”, transient, subject to change and so forth. The world is thus described as “unreal” but because we are physically the result of this “hypothesis” or dream, it means that we actually conjure our physical selves into existence. But this existence is inside the Self. We are not inside the world as such except by illusion, the world, at last analysis, is inside us. A better way to describe the every-day world is to simply say that from the viewpoint of the ego-self it is “consistent”. The world is thus not “real” but is an absolutely consistent illusion but then so is a dream and in this there is no difference whatsoever between the two.

The Sage of Arunachala did indeed observe that past lives were of the same nature as the ego-based current life but he also pointed out that both categories of ego-construct were false and therefore unreal and unworthy of attention in relation to the infinite certitude and desirability of the Self, the Supreme Consciousness. He therefore questioned why anyone would bother with past lives let alone the current life when it must be realized that the Truth dealt in neither. He also said "Even with knowledge of the present life (one is not) happy. Knowing past lives will only increase (your) unhappiness. All such knowledge is only a burden to the mind". There is a ringing truth to this assertion to be sure.

The Advaitic technique of negation whereby the Higher Self is identified as Neti-neti (not this, not this) is perfectly acceptable as a description of the Self in terms of a remainder, namely some construct or idea (God) that cannot be likened to any thing or idea. However, this is of no help whatsoever in defining and delimiting the path to that point of initiation and termination. Perhaps, for the ordinary mortal in search of insight revealing the Higher Self and, lacking the immediate capability expressed by the Sage, a comprehension of past life experience might be considered because this precisely provides a mechanism whereby the (non) bridge can be faced and then crossed (in a flash). Furthermore the resultant transition to the Higher Self carries with it the comprehension of the world which can

then be released on immersion into the Supreme Self and beyond.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana is also reported to have said: "Why bother about previous births? Find out first if now you have been born." In this regard, K. L. Sarma in his book *Maha Yoga*, tells us that the way to proceed in this matter is to go in quest of the real Self by gathering together all the energies of the body and directing these to a single current constituting the resolve to answer the question "Who am I" or "whence am I". For the Sage, being a manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness, this procedure was obviously seen as the most direct route.

For myself however, I did venture out on this method (of my own accord) for 3 years or so and while I must admit I had some partial success, I subsequently abandoned it for around 25 years before starting out on what proved to be a variant of the practice. Part of my initial problem was undoubtedly that I was practicing alone. For instance I managed to obtain the "formless" I where the consciousness begins to shine brightly. This was the state of "I am I" but for various "social" reasons I became convinced that this represented some form of megalomania and I therefore terminated the practice without attempting to progress further.

The interaction between Infinite Consciousness and the thought "I am the body" manifests the ego (personal self)

that elaborates the world and all its variety. Thus to the personal self, all that is contained within mind (extended ego), the sky, rocks, other beings, time, space, all incarnations and experiences etc. is projected as an apparent externality. All are unreal and all manifested, step by step (in a "flash"), by the "hardening" ego. Karma is the word most often used to describe at least the "obligate" elements of this manifestation, as influenced by the deep past embodied in the seemingly endless succession of incarnations which arise as a consequence of direct involvement of the personal self. Such influence passes from lifetime to lifetime as severe anxiety arising from unsatisfied expectations concocted by the ego in the course of its otherwise "erroneous" behavior. In this manner the "dream of life" becomes self-perpetuating, driven from cycle to cycle by imagined errors or "sins".

When one becomes fixed in identity with the One Self, fearlessness is obtained and the yen to drive further subsides. A desire on the part of the ego-self to do just that, to become fixed in that identity, constitutes the first step along the pathway to enlightenment. When the least division in this One is entertained, fear arises. The personal self that sees such differences, therefore proceeds from death to death. The ego is itself thus ignorance, the origin of all sin and suffering. Such a one sees personality as existing in its own right, separate from other beings – based on the ego-sense, and may even see the connection among the lives (from death to death) as mediated through the soul. The ego-mind and its "shadow", the trace whispering between and

among incarnations, the soul, may thus be dimly aware of itself as conscious and intelligent. However this consciousness is not its own but is a minute fraction of the consciousness which is the Self, the Reality that transcends the mind.

Yet these divisions are, from the viewpoint of perfection, as unreal as this account. However, this unreality, the world of plurality and the beings therein, is no accident, supported as it is by only the one Self, dualistic and non-dual as it may seem. Only at the moment of Self Realization, conscious immersion (of the personal self in the Self) is recognition of the one Infinite Consciousness and identity therewith obtained. In the self-same instant the apparent contradictions indicated above are resolved once and for all time.

Regression techniques and the like as well as meditative approaches are procedures to bypass the ego-sentinel, the guard that protects the cohesion of the current personality. The soul can truly be thought of as the faint memory-trace left behind by the ego, lifetime after lifetime. Once the active ego relinquishes the body (death), the "residue" becomes the true property of the Higher Self in the sense that the ego no longer stands guard over it. Since the ego arises from Infinite Consciousness as a thought identity with thereby manifest substance (propelled by the conviction that "I am the body") the soul thus produced might be pictured as something like a fringe to the Self. The soul is both of the Self and, as arising from that which is not reality, at one and the same time. Once the personal self is initiated on the

pathway to enlightenment the soul is increasingly able to affect direction in thoughts and actions.

Perhaps I could have stayed in that experience and not have entertained a return into body. But could I? Was it not that wisp of anxiety brushing me, just the smallest disturbance in the One, the hint of something perhaps left undone, that became the certain knowledge that all sentient beings cry aloud in their pain of separation made the worse by considering themselves as separate and distinct. Was it not the answer to this perceived pain, as an act of compassion that served to reactivate the last gasp of the ego pulling me back into body?

Is not the ego-dream (I am the body) perhaps inevitable? It is in the nature of the Supreme Self to "dream" reality perhaps. There is no "reason" for this, it just does and this dream thereby expands life and all consciousness! But perhaps once the dream is initiated there is no inevitable return. Some personal selves seemingly report numberless incarnations without the slightest hint of Self Realization. It is indeed the Hotel California but I myself do not think that enjoyment of the comforts therein can ever light the "check out" sign. Also in this hotel you get to pay the tariff with pain, at least that's how I see it. So far I have yet to meet anyone that does not pay. That one that has paid the most and so realizes the obligation thereby supports the world until death relieves the duty but nothing changes thereby.

However, I make no claim to being this or that, I am beyond all.

The Infinite Self alone is Real and the world is merely the world within, eternal and undying as am I unborn.

Summation

It was not until I was 57 years old, and at the height of my scientific career, that a friend asked me why I would be surprised at the thought of having lived more than one life. Upon reflection I had to admit that I could think of no rational or systematic reason why this should not be so but that I had just assumed that it was not the case. Then, as reported above, I started to think about it and within a few years I had recalled a very shocking past life.

After recalling yet other such lives I began to meditate on the being that I must be in order to have so "stepped out of time" and then suddenly a massive double-barreled and faceted internal shock-wave hit me which I termed "Far Recall" and came later to know as the Kundalini.

Different people will of course be compelled to follow different paths but it is the accomplishment of being able

experience the full extent of the human spirit as both infinite and divine which is of elemental importance. This after all constitutes the answer to the basic question that each and every one of us is here to answer. Exactly how this answer is apprehended is of no particular importance. However attention to the simple question: "Who am I" though suggestive, did not prove for me to be as effective as the same query with at least two lives held firmly in the frame.

So that is the answer to Bhagavan's question. In some cases it may well be helpful to recall a past life or two before asking the pertinent question in a meaningful manner.

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