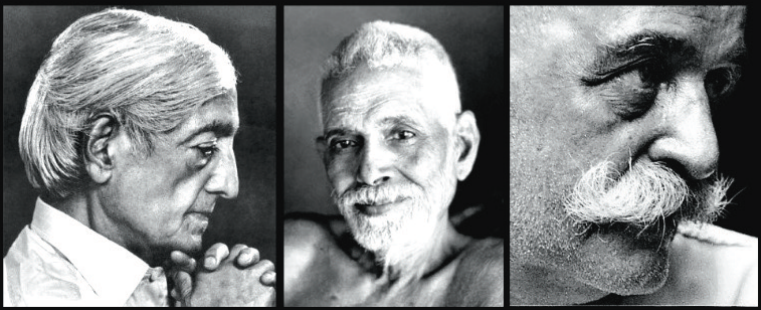


Ruslan Zhukovets

# THE GREAT MYSTICS AS THEY REALLY ARE





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RUSLAN ZHUKOVETS



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## FOREWORD

The life and being of mystics always remains a mystery even for those who know them personally, and those who know them only by books and recollections manage to understand them even less. The life of mystics is overgrown with fictions, and in fact some of them are created by ill-wishers and others by followers for whom it is hard to keep from falling into the temptation of exaggerating their Teacher's virtues and abilities. Slander is accompanied by starry-eyed fantasies and projections; vilification goes hand-in-hand with deification. Great mystics are never perceived by people unambiguously, and therefore all kinds of things are written and said about them. People judge mystics according to their experience and notions and here, of course, we cannot expect profound understanding. The deeds and behavior of mystics provide some with a basis for judgement of them and others for imitation, but the essence of their message and activity usually remains undisclosed. Without one's own mystical practice and experience of the Truth, it is generally impossible to properly understand the Work of mystics.

Nevertheless, their message and methods of work with students require thought and understanding; after all, numerous

people take them as the basis for their own search. Time will put everything in its place, and now it is already possible to see what has become of followers of this or that Teacher and what the Work begun by them has turned into.

The sketches presented in this book contain practically no full biographical information of any kind about the lives of its subjects. They are devoted to research about their mission, message and what the Sufis call the Work. I wrote about those whom I consider to be really great mystics although not all of them are recognized as such. I didn't begin to limit myself to only an analysis of the activity of specific Teachers, but included in the book several essays on the later stages of the Sufi Way and methods of transmitting knowledge. In my view, they enable the reader to understand more fully and deeply the situation in which any real mystic finds himself. In this book, I propose answers to many questions that I know for sure torment many seekers. I hope that it will be useful to them as for all those in general who are interested in the Way – in the widest most sense of that word. After all, the experience of the Work of every mystic is the most valuable knowledge, available to us in an ordinary state of perception.



# **OSHO: THE MISTAKEN MASTER**

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People can be awakened in different ways. You can tell them about the suffering of their ordinary life, trying to intensify in them the sense of hopelessness and the inevitability of constantly recurring torments provoked by unrealized desires. You can indicate the mechanicality of their actions and life in general in which they are only puppets, obeying the impulses of psychological reactions formulated in early childhood. Every awakened person chooses his own means which he uses to achieve an established goal. And although the means may be different, all of them must create disturbance in people, depriving them of their customary “waking sleep.”

Even so, of course it should be remembered that there is a certain general “call” made to all those who can hear it, and there is individual work with a specific person – a student or a person who intends to become one. Words designed to attract the attention of many incorporate a common idea, a new view on life and a description of the methods to change the situation in which people find themselves. Work with a student is individual, and in it, the methods of awakening are somewhat different. Osho’s general call was such – become free, rid yourself of dogmas and

conditionality! In itself, the message was positive, but getting rid of dogmas required criticizing them, and therefore Osho overturned religious notions, scolded politicians and ridiculed humankind's way of life. All of this turned out beautifully for him, and as usual, it was his criticism of all and everything that earned him quite a few enemies. Everyone came in for it – priests, believers, and the founders of religions as well. Characteristically, Osho himself demonstrated total freedom regarding his own judgements – in one place, he would speak of Jesus with great respect and understanding, and in another casually call him “a poor Jew, who got into his little head the big idea that he was the messiah.”

And that was how it was with everything – non-attachment to his own judgements engendered a mass of contradictions in his books, especially if you read them one after another, believing every word of the Master to be pure Truth.

**T**he eternal question tormenting all students is whether or not the Master should be consistent. In the case of Osho, the situation was very bad regarding the consistency of statements. Today, he could say one thing, and tomorrow something entirely different, not worried at all how the minds of his listeners would “digest” this. The second problem with which students and the curious usually run around like chickens with an egg is whether the Master can be mistaken. For those who want to believe in the infallibility of the guru or believe their teacher is superhuman, such a situation is unacceptable. Here’s an evocative situation for you, compelling the mind to choose whether to accept what is happening or not – a Master who says now one thing, then another. Here you must either leave your attachment to details, to literalism and look at the essence of the message, or call it all nonsense and go to where you will be told one and the same thing. Then you will learn everything that needs to be learned, and your mind will settle down, having fallen into a new conditionality and having filled itself with beautiful ideas.

Osho deliberately chose inconsistency, but such a feature is common to practically all the rest of the Masters, although it is

manifested by them according to the situation in which they work. Acting in contact with the Supreme, the Master relies on seeing the situation that he has, on a sense of the tendencies for the possible turn of events or as the Sufis says, on seeing the Pattern. But a person is never given to see the picture as a whole, and furthermore, the situation can change in a single day. Thus, for example, Gurdjieff made big plans regarding the development of the Work at Fontainebleau, but the automobile accident he was in cancelled them completely. A similar story happened with Osho as well, when upon moving to America and founding Rajneeshpuram, he spoke about new prospects and possibilities in his Work, but the results of this initiative turned out to be quite deplorable.

The examples of a change of plans cited by me can be attributed to external circumstances; however, the Will of God as well will be exactly that same insurmountable circumstance that will be revealed only to the Master and no one else. And if everything is God's Will, then there is no difference at all between failed plans disrupted for external reasons or a rejection of them by virtue of following that same Will.

The Master may see different possibilities, but far from always are they realized – by virtue of the most diverse circumstances. For example, a student may have a high spiritual potential, and the Master tells him about this, speak of the possibilities that exist. But the student achieves almost nothing because he cannot overcome his own fear or conditionality. Can it be said in such a case that the Master was mistaken?

As for Osho, he was mistaken constantly – seeming to do this entirely deliberately. Citing examples from the lives of other Masters or prominent people, Osho would make numerous mistakes, seriously distorting facts or even making up new stories on the fly. This didn't bother him at all, and when one of the students wanted to correct them in the texts of books released on the basis of his talks, he forbid this to be done. "What is important

is the essence of what I want to convey, but the facts aren't significant," so (or approximately so) Osho declared in reply to reproaches of inaccuracy in the stories he cited.

Readers of Osho's books are divided into two categories. The first read one or two books and lose interest in them. The second read them constantly; thanks to the fact that Osho spoke a lot, he is published abundantly and while you read all his books, several years will pass. I myself once read them "in a binge" and found a mass of information on the most diverse issues – both religious and general. And it seemed to me that I know about all the enlightened and nearly all about all the religions as well. Later, when I took to a serious study of texts belonging to various traditions, I became convinced that Osho had a very peculiar approach to the presentation of information and you should not base your understanding of a religion or mystical tendency by relying solely on his words.

Nevertheless, I have quite often had the occasion to meet people who are totally enchanted by Osho's books and believe that they know about everything on earth. Such an illusion arises in all the admirers of his books, and they are ready to defend, foaming at the mouth, the perspective learned by them from the Master, confident that their truth is irreproachable. Here is one of the consequences of Osho's casual attitude toward the facts, combined with his amazing gift as a raconteur. Another consequence consists of the fact that many are put off both by Osho's inconsistency and the mistakes in his stories, but as they say, you can't please everyone. And he didn't have that goal, anyway.

In working with people, Osho strove to have them not become attached to his words, listening to the intervals, the silence between them. He would speak slowly, with great pauses. Those who were present in a hall during his talks really would have the opportunity to detach from their mind and enter into a meditative state. Now, when Osho is gone, only his words remain, put in

books, and the inconsistency, which he used as a method of work with students' minds becomes an obstacle for those who are trying to learn the Truth. Thus, everything changes with the departure of the Master, and almost any effective method of awakening people used by him either loses its power or changes its effect and often becomes the opposite.



Osho himself repeatedly said that he didn't want to leave any teaching after he was gone. And it was not left, since you cannot build anything coherent and logical out of the commentaries to various texts that were essentially his talks. And if you take into account the number of contradictory claims, and claims that outright negate one another, made by Osho in the years of his communication with people, you can calmly put paid to it. That doesn't mean, however, that you can't extract anything useful out of Osho's books. There are, at a minimum, two topics which he explains consistently, clearly, and fairly fully. The first of them is the theme of awareness. Osho speaks about it a lot, but in various places, and in order to obtain detailed information on this topic, you have to read quite a few of his books. Now compilations of excerpts from various conversations of Osho are being released, organized by certain topics, but as a rule they are read easily and pleasantly, not leaving any "remains" in the mind. There is a compilation as well with the title *Awareness* but it is also rather superficial. From all appearance, the person who made these collections himself did not have a high level of understanding. Or

perhaps he wanted to release Osho's texts at the level of our pop culture.

If you read Osho, then you should read him exclusively by his whole books. Each cycle of conversations contains within it a certain mood, and has its energy and its message. Each new chapter is connected by context with the previous one, and therefore while it is possible to remove something from it, part of the meaning is simply lost then. However, in order to penetrate the topic of awareness in Osho's presentation, you would have to read at least a dozen of his books. He speaks of it here and there, often repeating in essence and sometimes by form as well. And thanks to this, reading various books, you are sort of reading the same message, which is very well absorbed by your mind. Osho speaks a lot about suppression and work with it, about the main principle of observation – non-identification – and many other things directly related to the practice of self-awareness.

Far from everyone is capable of reading the same book over and over so that the mind can soak up its content. It becomes boring and it seems that you already understood everything, even if that is not quite the case. But it is far easier to read different books, where the author returns to the topic of the state of awareness one way or another, and that isn't perceived as violence against your own mind. Thus, Osho's approach has its pluses and minuses – just like any other approach, in fact.

Osho described numerous aspects of observation and the nuances of performing this practice. The height of awareness he considered to be awareness of the observer or *awareness of awareness*. It turned out that the growth of the state awareness, with constant direction of attention inside oneself must lead to the fact that all of its strength would turn to its source – to the individual Consciousness of a person. At that moment, a burst of energy would take place and enlightenment would come. That was how Osho described the chief mystery of enlightenment, although he

also had the doctrine of the “non-mind,” to which I will return later. And then we will also return to the awareness of awareness and the possible reasons for enlightenment.

The second topic which Osho explained magnificently in his talks concerns interaction and the work of the Master and the student. He knew of this not by hearsay, therefore his judgements are precise and based on his own experience. For potential students, Osho’s books in that sense may be very useful. It’s another matter that now one cannot find so many Masters directly working with people. Now seminars, trainings and answers to questions from the stage are in fashion. Nevertheless, from Osho’s books, much can be learned about how a true Master differs from a false one, and to learn to distinguish them in life. This knowledge is quite useful for those who are seeking guidance on their path, but here, too, in order to collect the most full information, you must read not just one or two of his books.

Osho said that in our world there are only two endless things: the patience of the Master and the dullness of the student. It’s hard not to agree with him on that.

**A**nother topic that Osho made nearly central in his message was rebellion, revolt against dogmas and the limitations of conditionality. Here he coincided with the tendencies of his time – the 1960s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – when the sexual revolution occurred in the West, and the movement of the hippies emerged, those who wanted freedom and spiritual transformation, and in Russia, by the way, the so-called “Thaw” also occurred after a long period of repressions. It can be said that Osho embodied people’s striving for freedom in the spiritual dimension. It reached the point that he called himself a spiritual terrorist, which now, of course, sounds somewhat different than it did then, when terrorism had not yet become one of the main threats to people’s security. Osho called for not making compromises with the lies spread by priests and politicians and was therefore very inconvenient for many of them, since his criticism was scathing, witty and precise.

Mystics are always connected to the tendencies of their time, even if they surpass it. The most outstanding of them, like prophets, lay down new models of development for the future; others simply carry out the work of connecting the Higher with

the earthly. Like conduits of the Will of God, they cannot be totally removed from the processes going on in humankind. If you attentively look at the life of any mystic – under the condition that we will have sufficient information about him – then the connection of his message and the Work with what has happened at that time with people will definitely be opened to us. That was how it was with Osho – his rebellious spirit very much fit in with the West, and exactly for that reason the majority of his students came to him from there. They also provided the topics of his talks, orienting Osho to view the texts from all traditions, in order to give answers to questions that people brought to him from all the ends of the earth.

The interaction of the Master with students is always reciprocal: he influences and acts upon them and they – in part – on him. Their need is responded to in the Master, expressed through practices that he creates for them, and their unexpected questions engender answers, also as unexpected, but opening new aspects of the Truth. The higher the quality of students, the higher the quality of the Work, which can be done with their direct participation, and then the more the Master is opened as a conduit of the Higher to a person and from a person to the Higher. It can be said that without talented students, sometimes it is simply impossible for the Master to be fully opened. Osho had a lot of students, but he accepted them, so to say, on the fly, practically on the spot. A person could come to the ashram for a week and receive initiation as a student – *sannyasa*. Thus was Osho's approach to *sannyasa* – on the one hand, he broke the traditional Hindu notions of discipleship, and on the other, he took students almost by the same principle by which people add friends in social networks now – the more the better. Osho himself believed that even such initiation could change a person's life, and could lead him to exercises of meditation and in the end, to spiritual transformation. There is not particularly a lot to say

here, except that each Master picks his method of awakening people.

Time has shown that since the majority of *sannyasins* received *sannyasa* so easily, then they just as easily parted with it. But the casualness of the attitude toward everything was in general part of Osho's message, so there is nothing to be sorry about here. At some point, Osho's students numbered in the tens of thousands, but it is impossible to work effectively with such a number of people. In a situation when there are thousands of students, constant direct contact with the Master is not realizable, if, of course, you aren't in the "inner circle." Therefore, Osho's students worked on themselves by themselves, performing dynamic and other meditations and trying to practice awareness.

If we look at the practices invented by Osho, the impression is formed that he believed in the usefulness of super-efforts. They last for an hour, and sometimes longer, incorporating very active movements, requiring great intensity and commitment. Requiring totality, as Osho would say. In his practices, he tried to bring people to the explosion of energy which he himself experienced during enlightenment. Therefore, there was everything in them in order to pump up and raise a person's internal energies, and active stages often gave way to total freezing, in order to provoke this very explosion. Here Osho was close to Gurdjieff, who believed that super-efforts can lead to a breakthrough when hidden sources of energy inside the student open up, which bring him new transcendent experience. Osho sought something else, but the essence of his search was similar. The most famous of Osho's meditations – the dynamic – was performed in his ashram twice a day, but as far as I know, it did not bring great results. Anyone who performed it knew that the effect of a sudden stopping after half an hour of movement is lost fairly quickly – approximately a week after daily practice. The mind grows accustomed to the exercise, and therefore it becomes a kind of pleasant form of

training, although the part connected to the expression of suppressed energies may preserve its relevance even for a longer time.

The need to express suppressed energies is one of Osho's main discoveries in what concerns the practical side of work on oneself. Although *latihan* existed even before him, it was Osho who clearly formulated for modern people the need for cleansing the internal space. He gave quite a few practices, but those connected to expression are the most valuable of these. Not counting, of course, his exercises on awareness and self-observation. Osho called all his practices meditations, spreading this term to exercises most diverse in essence – from chaotic breathing to entering into a trance through visualization – but that is, so to speak, his right. Now, at any rate, everything you wish is called meditations, including even exercises for the concentration of attention, and the terminological confusion enables the persistence of confusion in the minds of seekers. Mixing up everything into one pile became one of the reasons why modern people simply cannot understand the difference between awareness and concentration; after all, in their minds there is a notion that it is one and the same, because often it is called the same thing. But Osho, possibly, is absolutely not relevant here.



**E**very Master teaches from two sources – his own experience and his vision which arises as a consequence of a developed super-sensitive perception. Osho maintained that he was born already nearly enlightened, and therefore he practically did not have the experience of suffering of ordinary people. The first experience of the stopping of the mind happened to him at the age of seven, and enlightenment itself occurred at the age of 21. Accordingly, he didn't know any Way, except entering within and awareness of himself. Nevertheless, that did not prevent him from interpreting texts from any Ways, and here Osho relied on his vision and experience of the Truth. And that is what he introduced into the interpretation, sometimes getting to the essence of a teaching, and sometimes making a subtle substitution. Even so, his words are quite poetic and undoubtedly contain with them the light of the Truth, although they are not always precise regarding the content of a specific teaching on which he is commenting at a given moment.

As for enlightenment, Osho tries to convey his own experience, to which he came through meditation – in the sense of awareness of himself, of his internal space and energies. There-

fore, he tries to bring people to enlightenment through creation of an artificial burst of energies, in the hope that through active practices people will awaken in themselves such a force that in conjunction with awareness, it will lead to an explosion and changes as well. But the problem is that no energies a person has within himself can become the basis for spiritual transformation. This has essentially been confirmed with time – because not a single one of Osho’s active practices has led to the explosion that he counted on seeing. It appears that he did not quite entirely correctly appreciate his own experience.

It must be said that Osho’s notions on the transformation of energies do not hold up to criticism. For example, he often spoke of the fact that at the moment of enlightenment, anger transfers into empathy. Or he has an idea that sex, upon achievement of the highest states of awareness is transformed into love. Here Osho, in the most mysterious fashion, reveals a lack of understanding of what are our internal energies, and what are the mechanisms for transformation in general.

A person is in principle a transformer of the most diverse energies. He receives them from outside and transforms them into something else. Here there is physical food, and oxygen, and the energy of the life force which turns into desires, and other energies. The final products of transformation on the level of the ethereal body are emotions, and on the level of the mind, desires or ideas and so forth. The energy of anger cannot be transformed; it can only be expressed or dispersed through awareness. If a person rids himself of desires, anger has nowhere to go at all, because it arises as a reaction to unsatisfied desire, and nothing more. Especially because it cannot turn into empathy, because that is a feeling in which there is the idea of the suffering of living creatures, the desire to help them (and anger, if it does not manage to do this) and other components which I have written about in the relevant chapter in my book *How to Tame Emotions*. The same

relates to the transformation of sex into love – neither the one nor the other can be transformed by internal effort. Therefore, Osho's practices did not work – no matter how much you raise your energies, no matter how much you uncoil them, simply no transformation at the expense of a person's internal resources is possible at all. The explosion of your own energies doesn't happen, no matter how much you heat them up.

For a person's spiritual transformation, the impulse of external energy is needed, during the assimilation of which it happens. This impulse, received from a higher place, is called usually the Grace of God in the Sufi tradition. Through it, enlightenment and other wonderful things happen that the mystical Way brings. What happened with Osho during his enlightenment in fact was the descent upon him of the impulse of Grace, which he perceived and experienced as a burst of energy. No awareness of awareness or awareness of the witness can lead to transformation. It is just that in the process of the growth of awareness, a person so cleanses his internal space and becomes so perceptive that Grace cannot but help to descend on him. This is, so to say, the law of a person's spiritual growth. Why didn't Osho understand and see this? The answer is simple – God never existed for him.

Osho said of himself a number of times that Buddhism is closest of all to him and that he himself is a latent Buddhist. Even so, of course, he repeatedly discussed God in commentaries to his latest text, where it was impossible to get by without God. What Osho said from himself sounded like this: there is eternal Existence, in which we all live; it is impersonal, but creating life and interacting with us in some way. Thus was the expression of his experience, and there is no reason to deny its truthfulness. Existence is everything and nothing; it must be trusted; stop fastening on the mind with its limitations, and everything will be fine. Someone will say – that’s essentially a description of God, but there is a difference. You can’t interact with infinity; there must be a certain point to which your prayers come and from which an answer to them will be received. In infinity and eternity, your energy dissipates without a trace, and there will be no one to answer you. Therefore, people create gods for themselves, and therefore, there is a level of perception at which a person perceives God as a Source, as a Power, having a center. I wrote in more detail about this in the chapter “Levels of God” in the book *In God’s Presence*. Osho skipped over this level of percep-

tion, landing immediately on the next one without having become aware of the receiving of Grace. No enlightened one can know everything – Truth is endless and multi-dimensional, life is short, and the Way is prescribed. Osho still tried to embrace the unembraceable; hence the number of factual and other mistakes in his texts. Some things he succeeded at, some things not, but one mystic cannot succeed in everything, no matter how talented and enlightened he was,

In the last years of his life, Osho turned to Zen. He understood that little time was left, and turned to Zen as a method promising instant awakening. Then Osho began to use the concept of non-mind – a special space beyond the bounds of the mind – into which students could “jump” or go into the process of meditations, conducted right during the time of conversations in the presence of the Master. Possibly, by that moment Osho already saw that his dynamic meditations did not work to the full extent, and decided to try another way, which was based not on the expectation of an explosion, but on an instant departure from the mind. As far as I understand, this attempt was also not very successful because such breakthroughs must be carefully prepared with the practice of awareness, and serious internal work. But people living in an ashram were too well compensated to grow their awareness to the necessary level.

Here is one of the paradoxes of which there are quite a few on the spiritual Way: life in an ashram, commune or monastery would seem to provide the best conditions for performing practices of spiritual development, but as for what concerns awareness of oneself, being in a closed society may become an obstacle. In order to see in yourself deeply suppressed things and work with them, the power of awareness alone is sometimes not enough – you need external irritants that provoke an internal reaction of fear, anger and so on. In Osho's ashram, where people were extremely relaxed – in dances, sex and dynamic practices – such irritants sooner or later ended. A person gets used to everything, including even the influence of the field of Consciousness of the Master, if he is in it for a long enough time. And the Master's field has a *limitation of effect* on the student, which is expressed in the fact that a person rises in his awareness to a certain level, and then time and his own efforts are needed for growth to continue.

Staying in an ashram turned into a way of life, which was drastically different from what happens on the outside, which is much less dangerous and more fun. Life was stripped of the very chal-

lence which Osho often spoke of, and becomes quite comfortable internally. Under such conditions, to grow in awareness is very difficult because exactly the stresses provoked by external reasons raise up what is still hidden from our attention. Both monasteries and modern ashrams often are refuges from the vicissitudes of life, and the refugees rarely come to awakening because they want too much to acquire emotional comfort and peace. Approximately the same thing happened in Osho's ashram with those who lived there for a fairly long time – dynamic meditations turned into physical exercises, talks with Osho became a means of getting a little blissful high, and freedom became an excuse to relax and not do anything with oneself.

I have already written about how Osho's slogan – Do what you like but be aware of yourself” – was somewhat changed by the minds of his students, dwelling only on the part “Do what you like.” Liberation from suppressions has meaning only when it becomes part of the overall work on awareness and change of oneself, and not otherwise. You can endlessly realize your desires, but if you don't get to their roots, if you don't become aware of the reasons for their emergence, then this path will be endless. As a result, the majority of Osho's students relaxed too much, having lost the necessary internal tension without which there is no work on yourself. He himself enabled this to happen, encouraging various types of celebrations in his ashram. His people danced with or without reason – they felt good, Osho was happy, things stalled. Time showed that it was very hard to link the dancing Zorba with the silent Buddha, because Zorba would always get the upper hand.

Osho would constantly denounce priests and theologians, calling them parrots who repeated sacred texts, sometimes not even understanding their true meaning. By the bitter irony of fate, the so-called enlightened students of Osho do the same thing now. Of those I have had the opportunity to see, not a single one had

his own message for the world, only quotations from Osho, mixed up in random order. They did not have enlightenment, either, but they weren't worried about that because celebrating Existence, as the Master taught them, could be done always, everywhere, and in any state.



“No man is a prophet in his own land,” so the folk wisdom says. Osho was not an exception to the rule, and in India, for a long time he was perceived with quite a bit of hostility – too bold and unusual were the message and methods of the Work which he brought. His rebellious spirit didn’t fit in even in America, from which he was deported, and where he was poisoned with thallium. The scandals accompanying Osho frightened away some, and provoked the interest of other potential seekers. Among law-abiding citizens, his reputation was ruined forever, but that is the fate of the majority of mystics in all times. Now, Indians are proud of the fact that their nation produced such a great son, and Osho’s books are placed in the library of their congress. Osho often said that a dead Master is always more convenient than a live one, and now we have a visible confirmation of this.

No one can become a Master if he doesn’t love people. Without love, there will be no acceptance, no interest to them, to their problems and sufferings. From love comes patience, thanks to which the hearts opened to the Truth. Osho spoke about love without an object, without a direction in which it must flow. Such love pours out on everyone, nourishing those who are capable of

perceiving it. Osho was a conduit of Love, and that is also one of the reasons why people traveled to him from the farthest corners of the earth. Unquestionably, he possessed religious genius, and it is impossible to find an equal to him in the mastery of discussions and commentaries. Even with all his mistakes, Osho did an enormous Work, and his books are quite relevant and will remain so for a long time still. Osho himself said that his influence would last 100 years after his death. Today, it is still alive, and what will come later, time will tell.

**PORFYRY IVANOV: THE  
MADNESS OF A MYSTIC**

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Can a mystic be normal – just like the rest of people? How much does contact with the mysteries of Being change a person, and how are these changes manifested in him? Finally, can a mystic be mad, virtually crazy? From history, we know of cases of the strange and mysterious behavior of mystics from all kinds of traditions. What was it dictated by – the nature of their experience and transformation or their own nature as a person, particularly vividly expressing itself after the removal of limitations on the mind? A number of speculative answers may be found, but truth is only known by experience. When our own experience is insufficient, we can turn to the experience of others, having looked at the life of an especially strange mystic, for example. Then, possibly, we will be able to understand the border between the madness of the ordinary mind and the mad statements of a person who tries to express the experience of the beyond.

Porfiry Ivanov was likely the most mysterious Russian mystic. For starters, it is entirely unclear how he became the person he has appeared to be to a wide public. It is known that until the age of 35, his life was not remarkable; he loved card games, drinking, and fairly often changed jobs. No one would have taken him for a

“great Teacher,” as he is now often called. His rebirth took place suddenly and seemingly without reason – he left home for five days (apparently he left his wife for another woman), and then returned a different person. Where he was during his absence is totally unknown, and he himself never talked about it. We only know that from that moment, Ivanov became seriously interested in the possibilities of the human organism and his life in harmony with nature. Porfiry Korneyevich himself indicates a precise date – April 25, 1933 – when it dawned on him that a person’s illnesses and death are due to the fact that he lives separated from nature. Thus, was born the Idea from which his practical teaching grew, resulting in 12 commandments, which today are known as “Child” [*Detka*]. And here the question immediately arises: was this a vision and a commitment only at the level of the mind? Or did something more serious happen with Ivanov which changed not only his mindset but his entire existence as a whole?

There are two aspects which call attention to themselves in reviewing the story of Porfiry Ivanov’s rebirth. The first consists of the fact that the process of his assimilation to cold, his gradual emancipation from clothing, took about two years. At first he took off his hat in the winter, then his coat and then gradually reached the point that he was left only in his underwear. Here it could be said that in such a way, Ivanov accustomed himself to cold, and there can’t be any mystery in this. It can also be added that his abilities for hardening his own organism were outstanding and far greater than the rest of people. The second aspect simultaneously both confirms and denies the previous claim. It is related to the fact that not a single one of Porfiry Ivanov’s followers could come close to the level of being that their Teacher had, although he apparently left them direct instructions for how to do this. So here we are left with either admitting the mediocrity of Ivanov’s students and once again being amazed at the extraordinariness of Porfiry himself, or looking at the situation somewhat differently.

Not a single person, as hardened as he was, could remain naked in any cold for many hours. Such an ability, however, is demonstrated by some Tibetan mystics, whose internal warmth is so great that they can calmly sit in a snowdrift without freezing at all and can even warm the snow around themselves. And of course, this ability comes to them thanks to strict practices and internal discipline, which we don't observe at all with Porfiry before the moment of his sudden change. Or, if you like, before the moment of his spontaneous transformation.

A notion exists that transformation or enlightenment changes a person instantly, once and forever. Thus do people love to write about Ramana Maharshi – he supposedly had an experience that changed him at the age of 17, after which he left home for the sacred mountain and became as he was known later by numerous seekers. Even so, we somehow lose sight of the fact that Maharshi lived alone in a cave for a time. What else happened to him there? No one knows. But the mind wants simple and understandable frameworks – here everything depends on the fact of his experiencing death at a young age, in which everything occurred finally, so it seemed. The mind wants completion, so people think up for themselves explanations of another's transformation which looks final and closes the question once and for all. Then they begin to seek such an experience and never find it; after all, it's not so easy as the human mind would like it.

The transformation to which the impulse of God's Grace leads changes a person instantly; that much is true. It is a certain turn in his life, a new point of departure. But receiving the impulse is only the beginning, after which follows a process of transformation which has a certain duration of time and the length of this period



directly depends on the amount of Grace received and the depth of the ensuing changes. They also develop gradually, not in a single day. You can awake in one instant but the changes in life after awakening do not come at once, but to the extent of experience of all kinds of situations and an answer to the needs that emerge against their backdrop. This is what happened with Porfiry Ivanov – a vision that occurred to him on April 25 became a turning point which in turn became a manifestation of the action of the impulse of Grace, received by him either at that moment, or somewhat earlier. Such a sudden rebirth and Ivanov's super-abilities that appeared later can only be explained by transformation, as well as Ivanov's super-abilities that appeared later. There isn't another rational explanation here, although if you want, you can explain anything at all for yourself.

Our mind is constructed in such a way that it can ignore any information that doesn't fit into its customary view of the world. The mind is closed with its ideas about the world from direct perception of it and brackets out everything – or almost everything – that contradicts these ideas. Thus an atheist remains an atheist, even after seeing a real miracle, and all of Ivanov's abilities can be written off to the uniqueness of his organism. Our mind, encountering information unacceptable to it either enters into a state of protest or falls into a kind of trance state in which it convinces itself that there is an explanation for everything, even perhaps a scientific one. At this moment, the mind blinds itself, and along with it the person to whom it belongs. A state arises in which it doesn't want to delve into or think about a certain question and it becomes easier to accept another's perspective or wave it all away.

A strange kind of forgetfulness occurs in which you seemingly know a certain fact but its explanation doesn't bother or concern you, and the memory regarding it quivers in haze. That is how the mind preserves the status quo of its conditionality – in all people without exception. Something like this happens when a person

sacredly believes in an idea, even new for himself, and constructs his actions on it. Then his mind also ignores any information contradictory to this idea, plunging into a trance-like, almost changed state. Then any brutalities can be done to other people, while feeling nothing but pleasure in doing so. The sleep in which people stay can be different in depth. And a state in which the mind is prepared to ignore any information contrary to it very much enables the deepening of this sleep.

Thus, Porfiry Ivanov received an impulse of Grace without suspecting it and not doing anything special for it. There may be several explanations for why this happened. For example, the Lord arbitrarily chose Porfiry, and the Grace he received was practically accidental. But Creation stands upon the principle of necessity, and the Lord is not an idiot, and therefore such an explanation does not look very convincing. We can reference the law of karma and decide that the rebirth that occurred to Ivanov was a result of efforts applied by him in a previous life. Let us say he was a Tibetan mystic, who melted snow with his body, but fell a bit shy of enlightenment, and now it had occurred, when the time was right, in a country where there's plenty of snow in the winter. This is not a bad explanation, although it is contrived. Besides these two, there is one more answer to the question about the sudden transformation of Porfiry Ivanov, unprepared by anything, which seems to me the closest to the Truth.

There are two assertions regarding so-called folk wisdom and containing with them a reflection of folk experience. The first: a sacred place is never empty. And the second: a village does not stand without a righteous man. In the Soviet Union, religion was

suppressed, and righteous men were virtually destroyed, turning them into martyrs. Thus, their place remained empty, and no communist morality was able to fix this. So that Darkness did not totally overcome Light, a righteous man on a grand scale was needed. A new saint was needed who would also not be destroyed by the state's punitive machinery. A need emerged, and the answer to it became the appearance of a Teacher in the person of Porfiry Ivanov. Why he was the one chosen for this mission is not given us to know, and the mystery remains a mystery. Apparently, at that moment he was the most suitable candidate for the role of a new Russian saint. There can't be any other explanations.

From all of the above, it is easy to understand why the teaching of Ivanov was almost atheistic and directed toward maintaining health – otherwise his death would be inevitable under the conditions of the Great Terror of the 1930s. His preaching still led to 12 years spent in prisons and psychiatric hospitals, where Porfiry was diagnosed with schizophrenia. But there is no cloud without its silver lining – thanks to the disabled status from his psychiatric disease, Ivanov did not have to work anywhere, and could travel around the country, teaching people his method of getting healthy and hardening. If he did not have first-group disabled status due to schizophrenia, he would be jailed for parasitism and vagrancy; after all, he quit working almost immediately after the Idea was born.

In itself, this Idea, in fact, had two bases. The first basis – the most widespread now – was that a person is separated from Nature regarding clothing, comfortable housing and other goods, and moreover is filled with food from inside, and therefore closed off from Nature both inside and out. Consequently, one must train oneself to live without clothing, and fast from time to time. Thus, harmony with Nature was restored, and a person acquired strong, indestructible health.

The second basis significantly differs from the first, and it

seems to me for some reason that the Idea was at first precisely this. It says that people have become too dependent on comfort – housing, clothing and food, for the sake of which they must give a good part of their time in life earning money for them. Therefore, a person must free himself from this dependency, in order to live in Nature in a natural fashion, getting by with only what is most necessary, and enduring heat and cold equally simply. Then he may open up the true purpose for himself and his place in Nature. Of course, such an Idea under Soviet rule would be perceived with more than hostility. But the conversations of an eccentric, standing out in the freezing weather in just his underwear and propagandizing the usefulness of pouring cold water on oneself was perceived far more simply in those years when health was cultivated by the government itself. Undoubtedly, sick people wanted to become healthy and eagerly listened to Porfiry's advice, who moreover, soon acquired the gift of a healer. And the call to asceticism in the context of the universal striving for the acquisition of new goods could be heard only by certain individuals inclined to masochism. Thus, the adaptation of the message to the existing reality occurred, and thus the opportunity to continue the Work is preserved, which – in one form or another – a mystic must realize. The majority of mystics who bring a certain new message find themselves in such a situation, but in the case of Porfiry Ivanov, it was incredibly difficult.

It is said that the faithful receive from God trials exactly equal to their strengths, according to what they can bear. There is another side of this coin – when a messenger from God receives such an obvious super-ability, such a visible power, which can't be dismissed so simply and can't be written off as the manifestation of insanity. Therefore, the amazing resilience of the Teacher regarding cold could not help but impress everyone – both his supporters and opponents, evoking in them grudging respect and even a certain timidity. Thus it was with the orderlies in the

psychiatric hospitals, thus it was with the fascists who seized Porfiry in Dnepropetrovsk in the fall of 1942, buried him in snow, and drove him around undressed on a motorcycle, trying to see what he could endure.

In the end, Ivanov was given a protective order, in which German soldiers were ordered not to touch him, since he represented an interest to world science. Later, Porfiry wrote in his memoirs that he really didn't like the Germans, and then he decided that Hitler would not have success in this war. One can never say with full certitude how much the power of a saint can influence the course of affairs in the world, but Ivanov himself to the end of his days believed that his interference really did influence the outcome of the war. Was that not one more task to perform for which he had been called? Mystics often influence the world and the course of events in it in visible or invisible ways – and in that, in particular, their role as conduits of the Will of God on our plane of Being is manifested. Perhaps, no single mystic has saved the *whole world*, but it is a fact that many of them saved their own peoples. One can in fact treat this skeptically, if believing that there is no God and no fate, and therefore all mystics are either people sick in the head or clever charlatans. It really is hard to imagine that one person can possess the power to influence our reality; after all, it would have to be equal to the power of God. Nevertheless, if you feel or on the basis of your own experience you know of the truth of the existence of God, then it is not hard to understand that His direct interference in our world is not possible, since it violates all the laws by which it is constructed, and as a result destroys it. Therefore, interference in Creation at our level of Being must occur indirectly, through intermediaries, through mystics and prophets. Thus, even with all the simplicity with which Porfiry Ivanov describes his own settlement of the outcome of the Great Fatherland War, his words may be a reflection of the Truth.

Porfiry Ivanov was a simple person – as simple as a mystic can be at all. He completed four grades of a church parish school, and didn't have any other education. His memoirs are written without punctuation marks and capital letters – practically in one line. According to Gurdjieff's classification, Ivanov belongs to the category of “stupid saints” – when a person has a high level of personal being, but a low level of understanding of what has happened to him and is happening to him. For example, a person follows a certain Way, receiving knowledge about its stages and the experience of passing through them. In the ideal, the level of a person's being must correspond with the level of his knowledge – about himself, God, the Way and the world. Ivanov had a level of personal being that was very high, but had no knowledge of what was happening with him. The descent of Grace on a person does not at all imply the obtaining by him of the fullness of the Truth. Porfiry went through a transformation and acquired a message which he had to bring to people, but that did not bring him a clear understanding of what in fact had happened with him.

The lack of understanding of what is happening is on the

whole very characteristic both for people who have passed through spontaneous transformation as well as for those who can be called “spontaneous mystics.” Thus, I call people whose perception somewhat goes beyond the usual bounds and therefore they see, hear and feel certain things connected with other levels of Reality. One of them might see energy; one of them receives messages; almost all of them have vivid, sometimes even prophetic dreams. Sometimes visions come to them regarding the essence of their lives, and also information comes about their mission. As a rule, this mission is quite exalted and honorable and other experiences are most often related to something majestic and divine. I have seen quite a few such “mystics,” and listening to their revelations is pure torture. They regard their experiences completely uncritically, preferring to consider themselves chosen by God or – at least – to be quite unusual people. Even if it is not pronounced aloud, it is definitely implied. They are bursting with the awareness of their uniqueness and very interested in the nature of their own “gift,” and they possess a very developed and inflated spiritual ego. Even so, they have no understanding at all of what is happening with them, and as a rule don’t want to understand it. As a rule, they are not ready to renounce their aberrations of perception, because it is unacceptable for them to become ordinary. People with fairly good spiritual potential and actual subtle perception most often become “spontaneous mystics,” but it begins to serve them as a compensation for an inferiority complex, creating great “spiritual” experiences out of small glimpses of perception.

Therefore, the mind gets into the act, and all kinds of visions and internal hallucinations, and also night dreams of their own grandeur become essentially constant. Often, a “vision” is revealed to them, thanks to which they begin to judge the state of those around them. “Spontaneous mystics” are practically untrainable, because they place their “perception” and their specialness above



any knowledge, unless it enables them to imagine even more of themselves. They are loners, but they love the society of others like them in which they can share their “experience” and sing praises to one another. From practices and books they take only what they like and what enables them to acquire great power; therefore they all love energy exercises and performing magic. They differ from real spontaneous mystics by a lack of real change of being, a lack of real transformation. They are involved in endless beautification and strengthening of the ego, but nothing else, essentially, happens with them.

Porfiry Ivanov was a real spontaneous mystic, but he had no knowledge of transformation. He also had no knowledge how other people may reach such a state, because he simply didn't the road to it. Sudden transformation is a good thing, but he who has experienced it cannot bring others to it, because he himself doesn't know how he came to it. Nevertheless, Porfiry had a message, although that very lack of understanding of his own situation could not help but leave its mark.

Not long before his death, in 1982, Ivanov first published his so-called twelve recommendations or commandments, his “Child” [*Detka*]. By following it, a person can be healed of diseases and in general, become much more healthy. Its name comes from the address with which it begins: “Child” [*Detka*], you are full of desire to bring use to the whole Soviet people building communism. For this, you must try to be healthy.” The years spent in prisons and hospitals taught Ivanov how to deliver his message with the “right” words.

The first time he was detained was in 1935, when he propagandized his teaching ( we don't know in what form it was expressed then) at a market in Rostov. He was then sent to a hospital, to the ward for the violently mentally ill, where the diagnosis of schizophrenia was then made. Apparently, Porfiry protested seriously against such treatment of him when detained. It must be said that

subsequently, he behaved like a classic insane person, first trying to get to the Congress of People's Deputies in order to explain his system to them, then trying to send letters to Stalin. On the one hand, such behavior can be considered a pure manifestation of insanity. On the other hand, imagine a person upon whom a higher mission has suddenly fallen, which outright demands fulfilment and realization. When a person knows that he can help people and that he must do this at any price. Of course, the easiest method would be to bring the government over to his side. Hence, by the way, the possible change in the concept of the message, with an accent on getting healthy. Many mystics imbued with a certain higher mission try either to befriend the government or even try to take it into their own hands. Thus, prophets, for example, would behave. By contrast with them, Ivanov's mission seems trivial, but that doesn't mean that for him it didn't become the cause of his whole life and its entire meaning.

When the Will of God is manifested to you, it is very hard to refuse to obey it, or to be more precise – it is practically impossible. The Will doesn't leave you a choice, which there is, for example, in the case of the possibility of making a step toward Surrender or refusing to do so. The impulse of Will burns you from inside, not giving you rest until you do what is required. The same thing happens with a message – the mystic must bring it to people, doing everything possible for this. The awareness of the importance of his mission and the very impulse of the message imbues the mystic with a power that helps him overcome various types of attacks connected with its dissemination. And when a person becomes “an unwilling mystic,” he can hardly get by without illogical and even stupid acts. As for schizophrenia, in the last years of his life, when Ivanov ceased to be persecuted, he continued to say strange things, which sounded unusual to atheists, but which were quite comprehensible to those who were at least a little acquainted with mystical practices and experiences.

Madness can be interpreted in both ways. To someone, words about someone being a conduit of God's Will might seem crazy, but someone else, it might be precise instructions how to celebrate the year of the Red Fire Monkey. Each person decides for himself how crazy this world is and the specific people in it.

**P**orfiry Ivanov's "Child" [*Detka*] consists of twelve points, less than half of which relate directly to the body, and more of which relate to the mind. The recommendations relating to the body are simple, although not very easy to perform. In fact, that's the case with almost all the points of "Child" [*Detka*]. You have to pour cold water on yourself twice a day, not smoke, and not drink alcohol and keep a strict fast from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon, going without food or water. Furthermore, you must regularly – before pouring the water and after the end of the fast – stand barefoot on the ground or snow and mentally wish health to all people. And on the whole, the spiritual part of the "Child" [*Detka*] message consists of openness and kindness, and also riddance of egotistical manifestations. For example, one of Ivanov's commandments: "Conquer in yourself greed, sloth, self-satisfaction, acquisitiveness, fear, hypocrisy, pride. Believe in people and love them. Do not speak unjustly about them and do not take close to heart unkind opinions about them." And if the commandments concerning the body call on a person to become an ascetic, in the part that concerns the spiritual side of the matter, there is love toward people and nature. "Help people how you can,

especially the poor, the sick, the injured, the needy. Do this with joy. Respond to his need with soul and heart. You will acquire in him a friend and help the cause of Peace!”

Ivanov’s commandments are categorical and require a serious internal effort from followers. Just try, for example, to up and conquer in yourself greed, sloth or fear. Porfiry Ivanov’s spiritual advice is not reinforced with practices – for example, exercises enabling one to rid himself of fear. The lack of practice is directly connected with the way the Teacher came to transformation. By virtue of the way it occurred, Porfiry simply didn’t know the way to victory over what he called for. However, he had a vision of what prevents a person from growing and changing. Thus, good wishes appeared that did not have anything specific supporting them, and few would manage to simply up and change – with a wish alone, conquering in themselves the power of mechanical reactions. Although, of course, the path of control still remains, the path of suppressing fear, greed and the other negative features of the personality. But it does not lead to spiritual progress, and understandably, Porfiry Ivanov had something different in mind.

There are two points in “Child” [*Detka*] that now seem somewhat inappropriate and even comical. In one, Porfiry asks to love the earth and never spit on it, and in the second, he advises wishing health to all people, since wishing them health will return to you the same health. As for spitting, that is likely the commandment that is now easiest of all to follow, because the pavement likely can’t be considered earth. Although Porfiry, of course, meant a respectful attitude toward the earth, as toward all of Nature as a whole. Spitting in his understanding is manifestation of contempt, and therefore should be avoided in every way.

You can wish good health to all passing people, and in some villages, this tradition is preserved to this day. Whether they know

you or not, people wish you well and there is something pleasant and nice about this. But to behave this way in a city, you would have to be prepared to be taken as an eccentric, and maybe even as a crazy person. That is, if you exactly follow the way proposed by Ivanov – including undressing down to your underwear – even now, you might wind up being examined by a psychiatrist. As it is said: as the Teacher, so the way.

Even so, pouring cold water on themselves twice a day helped strengthen the health of many people. So even if not in the spiritual sense, in the physical sense, Porfiry Ivanov's teaching brought certain fruits.

If Ivanov had not discovered the gift of healing people from the most diverse diseases, sometimes incurable by other means, then he would hardly have been able to achieve any results in disseminating his teaching. It was his miraculous healings that brought him fame and glory among the public; they were what enabled him to begin to have followers. Their worship of the Teacher's unusual abilities unexpectedly influenced him himself. In the last years of his life, Porfiry suddenly began to speak of himself as God and to seriously declare his own immortality. And he meant physical immortality, not spiritual immortality. There was also something insane about the idea of physical immortality, but what else could become the logical completion of the idea of absolute health, reinforced by the appearance of superpowers in its messiah?

Any person who has conquered his own weaknesses and limitations begins to sense power in himself, and he who overcomes even the laws of human nature and has power to heal people begins to sense his immortality. That is an essentially normal state for a mystic, but one who has passed through training in a *school* will know that power belongs not to him but to God, and he is

only its conduit, and in fact rather weak and limited. In Ivanov's system, God was replaced by Nature, and his feeling of his own power was not explained by anything. Equally inexplicable was his feeling of eternity, timelessness and endlessness, from which appeared the sensation of his own immortality. From this sense, multiplied by internal power, a new idea was born: I am immortal! And kind followers already helped Porfiry to come to the next thought – I am God! And perhaps he came to it himself, under the impression of people worshipping him; in general, there isn't any difference.

People love to create idols for themselves, in order to add to their need to bow before someone of great significance. Quite a few legends circulated about Porfiry; he could stay under water for 15 minutes, and there were numerous witnesses of this; he could be seen at the same time in different places; in short, all sorts of things were said about him. Checking the reliability of these legends is now impossible, and there is no point in such a check. The main thing is that the fame that came to Porfiry began to change his awareness of his role and significance. From a conduit of the Idea he suddenly was made a new Creator, and, as befits God, decided to create a new Adam – a perfect person. In Ivanov's conception, the new Adam must from birth live in complete fusion with Nature and be immortal. A new humankind would begin with him, free of illness and suffering of the body. The act of a new creation must be made in a place of power – on the Chuvilkin Hill, which was located next to Ivanov's native village, and which Porfiry considered a particularly sacred place.

Now, it would most likely work – to give birth to a child on a hill, and to have a fairly widely-known man assist at the birth, who nevertheless had the status of first-group disabled for schizophrenia. But in 1975, this was impossible. Despite the fact that one of Ivanov's followers decided to enable the birth of the new man (Porfiry was not the father of the child) and she had already been



brought to Chuvilkiny Hill by the start of her contractions, the mystical act was interrupted by a local policeman, who took the child-bearer to a birthing center. Thus, in the most banal fashion the great experiment was cancelled, to which Ivanov for some reason never returned. Maybe the moment had been missed, or perhaps Porfiry understood the total senselessness of this caper. Nevertheless, more followers were added, and the worship along with the deification continued.

**I**t is pointless to judge about the affairs of mystics for him who does not live Beyond. Moreover, even other mystics do not always understand the reasons for which this or that “colleague” of theirs acted. The mystery therefore remains a mystery, which cannot be guessed in any way; you can only accept its existence, and that’s it. Porfiry Ivanov was not a schizophrenic, but sometimes acted as though he were one. Transformation sometimes so changes a person that the boundaries of the possible become indistinct for him, but along with it is lost what is called sanity among ordinary people.

A mystic influences the world, but it is very hard to distinguish his influence among the general flow of life, in which a mass of influences are intertwined, combined and either reinforce or weaken each other. The world, in turn, also affects a mystic, responding to the influence made by him with all forms of resistance. That is always the way, and there are no exceptions to this rule. Porfiry Ivanov was called by the Lord for certain reasons unknown to us, and did everything as he could and how he could. And no matter how the world resisted, no matter how much

Porfiry was held in prisons and psychiatric hospitals, with his presence alone, the Teacher already changed it. This is also a mystery which cannot be revealed, and let it remain so.



**IDRIES SHAH: A NEW  
TRADITION**

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**I**dries Shah has gained fame in the West as a Sufi Teacher, and in fact some sources called him the Teacher of the Century – that is, the most significant conduit of Knowledge of his time. The majority of modern orthodox Sufis consider Shah to be a renegade and find the Work which he did to be worthless, considering it false and harmful. One should not be surprised at this; after all, the version of Sufism introduced by Shah to an astounded public significantly differs and in some ways contradicts its orthodox version, which before this was essentially the only one known to us. Even so, the legitimacy of Shah's claims to possess Knowledge were apparently nearly irreproachable. As a native of Afghanistan, Shah claimed that his family tree had a connection to the Prophet Mohammed, which is very respected in Islamic countries. It is entirely unknown where Idries Shah went through Sufi training, but for Western people, his origin was sufficient to accept him as a true Sufi.

Shah was ideally suited for the role of conduit of Sufi ideas in the Western world – his family lived for a long time in England and he himself even studied at Oxford for three years. Idries spoke English beautifully and was familiar with the mentality of Euro-

peans. Perhaps, precisely for this reason (and also for his outstanding abilities in professing Knowledge), he was chosen by teachers unknown to us to fulfill a special mission?

There are two versions of the story regarding his mission which, in fact, are not mutually contradictory. According to one of them – well known – he was a messenger of people of the Tradition, people of Knowledge, in order to introduce it to the world. All of his activity seemed in fact to be aimed at disseminating Knowledge and at inculcating new ideas into the minds of his contemporaries. According to another version, Shah was supposed to separate Sufism from Islam and create the conditions for its dissemination in the West. If that is the case, was not the mission to introduce the Tradition, and everything that he wrote about it only a means, a kind of “smoke screen” for fulfilling another, true mission of his?



Shah first wrote about the existence of the Tradition in his book *The Sufis*, which brought him prominence in academic and other circles. It claims that Sufism is the heart of any religion and the Sufis existed always, although they gained prominence under the shadow of Islam. The book explains why Islam was the perfect soil for the flowering of Sufism, but it also claims that Sufis were present in all significant esoteric tendencies in all the times of humankind's existence. The Tradition contained within it higher knowledge accessible only to the initiated who had passed through special (Sufi) teaching. In that regard, here immediately we recall René Guénon and other traditionalists who believed that true knowledge in fact was received by a certain magical means in ancient times and then was preserved and passed down from age to age from the chosen to the chosen. Only to Guénon it seemed that at a certain moment Tradition was forgotten and displaced by the modern, and therefore the new time was an era of the fall of morals and everything in general. Shah, on the contrary, states that the Tradition did not go anywhere and exists perfectly well even in our troubled days, continuing the transmission of knowledge and teaching of those who are capable of it. He stated that

Sufis are encountered everywhere, acting sometimes openly, and sometimes hidden – and they fulfill the Work in maintaining the Tradition and evolution of all humankind as a whole.

The idea that in ancient times all of humankind received higher knowledge from the same Source, most often called the Absolute, is not very new. Its followers find signs of the manifestation of common ideas, common symbolism and rituals close in essence – in the most diverse eras and various mystical orders and schools. The idea of Tradition bearing True Knowledge and giving humankind a kind of vector for correct development always attracts people seeking meaning in what is happening with us in this world, and why. The idea of secret knowledge, encoded in books, buildings, and music also attracts a certain type of minds, dreaming to contact mysteries and become at least a little chosen. Finally, the idea of the existence in the world of something at all higher – including higher knowledge – already feeds the mind with the hope of acquiring the highest meaning.

The ego is constructed in such a fashion that for faith in the importance of possessing anything, it needs brands tested by time. The new model of the Audi automobile is valued above all because it is an Audi. The ancient secrets of knowledge are also a brand promoted by more than one generation of various types of spiritual writers and teachers. There is the famous saying by the Strugatsky Brothers, that you have to write about either what you know very well, or what nobody else knows anything about. Ancient, and even secret knowledge is related to the category of what no one knows anything about, and under that guise, one can give listeners and readers plenty of ad-libbing. Quite a bit of this has been put out in the last hundred years.

Idries Shah used the concept of Tradition, even so, departing from the principle of cursing modernity and praising the past. He made use of the idea of ancient knowledge and ascribed the role of its bearers to the Sufis. Essentially, Shah created a new *Sufi*

*brand* from scratch, applying citations from the texts of great Islamic mystics in confirmation of his claims, which were at times shocking. Shah proposed a new picture of the world to the Western reader, in which Sufis, to one extent or another, influenced almost all science and culture. In Shah's presentation, Sufis became the initiators of progress or – using the author's terminology – the evolution of humankind.

Evolution is yet another one of the concepts used by Shah in *The Sufis*. This refers above all to the internal development of a person, acquired through conscious efforts, but it also says there that the existence of humankind also has a certain purpose, related to the opening of the potential of its development. It is not directly stated who placed such a goal before humankind. It is implied that apparently the Lord God did, but there is no clear indication of this. The purpose of evolution of the Sufi – according to Shah – is to acquire mystical experience in the form of illumination which leads to a new level of understanding and knowledge. Possibly, the integrity of the perception is also guaranteed not so much by practices as by illumination. But it is impossible to learn more detail about this from Shah's books.

There are no doubts that Idries Shah studied with Sufis and himself was one of them. Moreover, he possessed an outstanding intellect and therefore, possibly, took upon himself the mission of introducing a new view of Sufism in the West. Or the *creation* of a new version of Sufism, suitable for Western people. Or to be more precise, the creation of a demand for this new version, the description of which he introduced widely and promoted. For the fulfillment of this task, Sufis needed to be independent of Islam. Thus the history of the Tradition appears, which existed long before Islam and was the heart of all religions. In order to lend the new version greater significance, the mystery is emphasized, and Sufism is presented as the *only* source of possible human evolution.

Here is a quotation from *The Sufis*: “The Sufis believe that in some sense humankind is developing, striving toward a certain goal. We all take part in this development. Organs appear in response to the need in existence for such special organs (Rumi). In accordance with such a need, the human organism develops a new complex of organs. In our time of the overcoming of time and

space, that complex is also occupied with overcoming time and space. What ordinary people consider separate and accidental manifestations of telepathic or prophetic powers, Sufis view as the first signs of activity of precisely these organs... How to develop these organs? By the methods of the Sufis. How can we know that we are developing them? Only with the help of experience.” Further follows a beautiful phrase about how experience obtained on the Sufi Way is impossible to convey with words, and this is repeated constantly in various places of the text.

Here Shah promises direct *physical* change of the human organism, interpreting evolution almost literally, in the spirit of Darwinism. It is quite a strange idea, but a mysterious and even disturbing image. In later books, it is developed further, when Shah began to present the Sufis as nearly super-people, but we will speak of that later. Nevertheless, I know of people who to this day contemplate the location and action of the “organs” mentioned by Shah, trying to detect them in themselves. Thus mysteriousness and innuendo provide fodder for searches that at times are impossibly silly.

In order for desire to arise, a person has to be told what he could strive for. And be told in such a way that he will *want* what is being offered. On that principle is based all modern advertising, and spiritual teachers work according to it as well. You can't want what you have never heard of, but you will not want to acquire things or states in which there is nothing attractive for you. Buddha, as we know, sold freedom from suffering; Gurdjieff sold the ability to rule your life; Ivanov sold health, and Shah sold the ability to develop a human into some kind of higher creature. This was also accompanied by an wonderful addition in the form of Tradition that stores and transmits Knowledge, affiliation with which enables you to imbue your actions with the highest meaning and come close to feeling yourself chosen.

Can you succeed in the dissemination of your ideas without resorting to such enticements? Likely, you can. But the carrot must always be promised, such is human nature; after all, no one can begin a search of the Way without the most banal desires, like acquiring immortality, power, bliss and so on. If your purpose is to create in society a demand for a new teaching, for a new Way, then exaggeration, mystery and tempting promises must be included in its description. It's another matter that most often the people who pounce on such things are those for whom following the Way is beyond their capacity, but that is one of the inevitable consequences of such Work, so to speak.

Osho said that at the very start of his work with people, he tried to give them the Truth in pure form. In his words, they were made nauseous from it. They were not capable of "digesting" the information and energy received. Then he began to dilute it with a pleasant lie, and then when only just a little Truth remained, people began to gradually assimilate at least something. I totally believe this story of his, because I myself repeatedly encountered the fact of how unreceptive unprepared people are for the truth about themselves, and all the more so as to the Truth itself. Therefore to "sell" people the Truth is useless: in the state in which they are in their ordinary lives, Truth cannot seem attractive to them.

Here mystics must do whatever they can at least to somehow attract their attention to their message. Or start with the most simple and obvious truths, in order to gradually, in the process of work on themselves, people can mature to an understanding and perception of truth that is far higher. But you cannot build a message on simple truths, because in the last couple of thousand years, they were all used by mystics working before us, and have become too customary and "hackneyed." Other truths, which are assimilated more or less easily are too petty to build anything on them. Thus the bearers of messages must think up ever new means of attracting people's attention, sometimes giving them

deliberately false information. It is hard to say how much in this case the end justifies the means, but in order to awaken the sleeping, likely one may shout “Fire!” and that will help someone. In any case, not a single message can stand exclusively on a lie or on exaggerations; otherwise, it is not a message at all.

There was quite a bit of Truth in Idries Shah's message. First, it concerned the human mind – its conditionality, manifestations of ego, methods of thinking, processing and perception of information. To the carrot of Tradition and evolution was attached a stick – to that part of the message where the state of mind of the modern man was described. Very accurately, and with quite a bit of sarcasm, the reader's ego and mind are laid bare before him, his living and making decisions according to old, worn stereotypes. In order to strengthen the effect, Sufis were contrasted to ordinary people, and there was something in that comparison that provoked a quite perceptible discomfort in the reader. The stick operated rather well – in my youth, while reading Shah's latest text, I would sometimes catch myself in a feeling of my total insignificance. I know that many other readers experienced the same feeling. To be sure, there were those who did not feel anything like this, but either they regarded themselves as Sufis, or they read the books not for the purpose of discovering the truth for themselves, but rather for intellectual entertainment.

The wish not to experience discomfort from awareness of one's own imperfection may also become a stimulus leading a person to



the Way. The dissatisfaction emerging from such discomfort quite enables this. But Shah so strongly and clearly indicated people's imperfection, and simultaneously, the perfection of the Sufis, that the gap seemed insurmountable, especially because he did not propose any concrete ways to become a Sufi.

Here the usual mystery appears before us. A Teacher comes who brings Knowledge – about Sufism, Tradition, evolution – but the information given by him does not have a practical part. Shah does mention Sufi methods of teaching more than just once or twice, but he does not cite any of them and does not provide references to texts where one could read about them. What he gives is the preparatory part where some principles of teaching are explained, but does not get to the point. Why bring knowledge which does not have practical application or can be applied only under certain conditions? Shah provides a lot of theoretical knowledge – how groups degenerate and how the Work changes; about imitators and false teachers; and how one has to learn how to learn... And that information is quite useful. But we do not encounter any descriptions of practices from him and his texts break off exactly in the place where he should speak of the concrete methods by which the ordinary person could become a Sufi. Here a gap emerges – on the one hand, Shah declares the existence of the opportunity for development and claims that it is simply necessary to people, and on the other hand, he leaves unrevealed the most important question: how to become Sufis? We do not receive from him any indications – only mentions of Sufi methods of teaching and parables as illustrative and educational material.

The parables presented by Shah are a special story. The books in which he collected parables used by Sufis as teaching material have the highest value. Thanks to them, everyone can come into touch with the wisdom accumulated and handed down through the ages. Shah selected them for anthologies, proceeding from some sort of his own notions and purposes, but work with the parables promises quite a bit of revelations to the person who devotes to this a certain amount of time.

Shah constantly indicated that in each parable, several levels of meaning can be found. That is indeed the case in the majority of parables. But the ability to discover them for yourself corresponds to the experience you possess, and nothing else in any way. Shah himself wrote that the educational meaning of some of the parables can be understood only by knowing the language of symbols used in them, by having a knowledge of their Sufi meaning. With some of the parables, most likely that is the case. There are quite a few parables, however, adapted by Shah for the Western reader, where the knowledge of symbolism is practically not needed. But you have to be able to work with a parable in

order to come to an awareness of various levels of meaning represented in it.

If you want to understand what is contained in a given parable, it must be recited. It is not enough to read it one or two times. You must keep returning to it, and re-read it again and again, until it firmly settles in your mind. In re-reading it, you must look at the main meaning of the story and the secondary meanings scattered here and there and representing keys which can be used in practice to obtain new experience and understanding.

Here, for example, is a brief parable from the book *Thinkers of the East*: "In the Sufi monastery in Shishtau, in the *tekke* there is a hall lined with gorgeous, priceless inlaid tiles.

Throughout almost three centuries, sheikhs, emirs, sultans and scholars flocked here to meditate and be in the presence of the Master of the Age.

But he had his very own circle, and he held his classes in a rectangular room which looked like a kitchen.

That is why in many *tekkes* there is a place known as the *Hearth*."

What can be said regarding the meanings that flow from it? The most obvious one is that the hidden part of the Sufi Work always exists, in which those who are really prepared for it take part. And here is another one: that everyone can receive only that which he is really prepared, and even the Master of the Age cannot offer you more than you are prepared to assimilate and perceive. And that neither book knowledge or high position and money can change this situation. Moreover, the true Work must not be brought out for show, and those who come to be in the presence of the Master do not necessarily know about it and this is even contraindicated. And one other meaning: while you are concerned about the external – your position, the surrounding in which the teaching takes place and with how and where you are received – the path inside will be closed to you. The *Hearth* is the

heart of the Sufi Work, and at the same time the symbol of the human Heart. If you want to be in the company of nobility and feel yourself an important persona, then you are not prepared to turn to the Heart.

The Sufi parables published and processed by Shah are truly invaluable teaching material. Those who have come into contact with him – directly or through communication – have been suggested to develop their understanding through reading and interpreting them. Even parables well known to you should be re-read from time to time, and then you can understand how much you have grown and deepened your understanding, and that means how much you have advanced in work on yourself. In general it is useful to periodically return to teaching texts if, of course, you do not consider that you have already understood and learned everything that you need to learn.

I dries Shah worked with ideas and through ideas, instilling them in the minds of his readers. He speaks little or almost nothing about feelings – they do not interest him at all. On the other hand, he knows a great deal about ideas and their influence and perception. He speaks about the mind and works with the mind, with how it can be correctly tuned, prepared for the perception of certain higher ideas and for the Work, thanks to which a person may acquire insight. Insight is also mentioned in passing, without details. Here and there, Shah speaks about Love, but that occurs extremely rarely. After all, the love of the Sufis is turned toward God, and Shah practically does not approach the topic of God, and I would say he even avoids it in every way. But Sufism without God is not even an absurdity but some sort of surrealism.

If we accept the version that the chief goal of his Work was the separation of Sufism out from under Islam, then everything that he did becomes understandable. The declaration of the existence of a Tradition which emerged long before the appearance of Islam served the same purpose, and everything that was said or not said by Shah was also dictated by it. The end, as is expected, justifies the means.

Whatever Shah wrote or did not write about the existence of a Tradition penetrating everything, all educational texts and in general all information about Sufism was taken by him from that very "Islamic" Sufism. It is as if there were no Sufi teaching materials outside of it at all. I fear that the Tradition existing outside of Islam conceived by Shah for achieving his purpose – creating the opportunity for the independent development of Sufism in the modern world. It was making Sufism free from the influence of orthodoxies and traditions formulated in already degenerated groups and orders. There exist testimonies in which it is said that Shah considered the further development of Sufism in the East impossible. Moreover, he supposedly claimed that in the East, such a situation would soon come about in which Sufism could disappear entirely. If we take into account that these claims were made in the 1960s or 1970s, Shah apparently turned out to be right. That is, what is happening now in countries where Sufism was born and developed could hardly be called a favorable environment for achieving the living mystical Work. So Shah may have understood his mission as a salvation of Sufism from final degeneration.

Shah wrote a fair amount of the degeneration and the signs of the degradation of groups of the Sufi persuasion. It can be said that quite a bit of his legacy is devoted precisely to how to distinguish true Sufi teaching from false, and the real Work from its imitation. Thus, Idries Shah created the opportunity for distinction between those who will find the true teaching and real working group. He left instructions and placed landmarks for those who want to go on the Way which he himself described. Or to be more precise, described the conditions in which this Way could be begun.

Proceeding from all of the above, it becomes understandable why Shah could not provide a practical part in his teaching. All the practices of the Sufis, except, perhaps the practices of aware-

ness of oneself, were connected to Allah and the Koran's understanding of Being. That is, to Islam, out from under whose shadow and influence Shah tried to bring Sufism. In order for new practices to appear which were not as "Islamic" and did not require the affiliation of Sufis to Islam, seekers must appear, capable of perceiving Sufism as an independent mystical movement. Precisely the Work of Idries Shah should have created the conditions for their appearance. But when people came who were prepared to perceive Sufism anew, then the person appeared who seemed to provide new, not so "Islamic" practices and Knowledge expressed without constant references to the Koran. Thus, as I understand it, was the original plan of Shah's Work. Although life, as it often happens, made its unexpected correctives to it.

It was impossible to take God out of Sufism without losses for the entire teaching. Something had to be given in exchange, and such that it would create positive motivation in people. Shah chose the Truth as the highest goal of the search, and the *state of the Sufi* as what each seeker should strive for. As a result, the Truth became a kind of self-perpetuating goal, and not an attribute of God, and each person could himself fill in the possible content of that Truth. You can serve God, but Truth cannot be served, because the first serving is interaction with the Highest Power, which can lead and direct you, but the second one, one way or another turns into service of an idea and nothing more. The Truth of God is one thing, and simply a certain abstract Truth is quite another.

The same thing occurred with the appearance of the Sufis. Without God, they began to acquire certain superhuman traits. Their powers are not the consequence of serving God and conducting higher energies toward our plane of Being, but in the most mysterious fashion, they are developed in the Sufis and become already their *own attribute*. Here, for example, is an



excerpt from *The Sufis*: "Sufis believe that Sufic activity produces and concentrates what might be termed centrifugal or magnetic force. This force calls to similar force elsewhere. With the coming together of such forces, work continues. This is an explanation of the mysterious 'messages' which Sufi teachers get, telling them to repair to such and such a place, in order to respond to the call of the force there which has been derelict (in the sense of abandoned) or needs their reinforcing." In general, such messages were always viewed as signs of God's Will, and following it was part of the Work of the Sufis. When God is removed from the context, a certain power emerges, the explanation of the appearance of which seems strange, and the messages received from it – even stranger. That is, the activity of the Sufis engenders a power which begins to direct them, and a kind of hand-made analogue of God emerges. To this is what the attempt to draw a new picture over the old leads, by using elements of the previous composition in doing so. Here either one has to draw from scratch, creating something entirely new, or throw everything overboard, which one way or another is connected with elements subject to removal.

Shah – to some extent forced – made of the Sufis superhumans, influencing practically everything in the world and incidentally, continuing to influence it. I cannot say that there is no Truth in such claims of his – there is. But it is one thing when the Sufis do something by following God's Will, and another when they act out of their understanding of some sort of evolution known only to them. The Soviet government illustrated how the abolition of God leads to the deification of leaders. With Shah, something similar happens – the Sufis without God have themselves become half-gods. They possess telepathy, the ability to predict the future, mysterious might and who knows what else. The picture is quite attractive – for those who seek power and authority. But it is precisely such people who have no place in a spiritual search.

Any action has side effects and consequences which are far from always possible to predict. It is especially difficult to predict how people will behave who do not know your goal or interpret it as they please.

**I**dries Shah had an older brother. His name was Omar Ali Shah, and he also included himself among the Sufis. At first they acted in concert, although the tone of the Work was given by Idries. Then, Omar decided to begin teaching people, which did not at all fit into the plans of the younger Shah, and they quarreled. Understandably, if Idries prepared the soil for the future Work which must be conducted in different conditions and with different people, then given the demand for it which he had created, Omar's appearance in the role of the Teacher could not lead to the necessary results. Yet the need created by Idries for a real teacher could be reasonably removed, and even discredited. Nevertheless, Omar decided to begin his game and took many of those for teaching who had been attracted by his brother's books. Furthermore, Omar Shah began to use in the teaching the most "fantastic" of his ideas, ascribing to Tradition truly magical power in influencing those who seemingly belong to it. You would only have to begin attending any of the groups led by Omar to already join Tradition and seemingly be connected to its magical effect. Here is an excerpt from his book *Sufi Tradition in the West*: "if a

person performs an activity connected to the Tradition in a special way, say, by exercise or reading, then during these 10, 15, or 30 minutes almost definitely there will be 5 or 10 moments of contact (*with a person's internal essence—author*). What a person is doing or listening to, or what he is thinking about during such moments will be reinforced in the sense of understanding. These things will not necessarily be in the focus of attention at a conscious level, but they will be at the internal level.” That is, Tradition, according to Omar, has an influence that is almost divine and extremely beneficial. Due to what does it exist and what maintains it? But of course by the Work of the Sufis – well, not by the Supreme Being (this is how God is named by Omar, although He is also mentioned extremely rarely). On the whole, it is the same old song, only brought to the point nearly of the absurd.

The older brother did not provide new exercises: he introduced those which the “Islamic” Sufis had earlier. His books were very meaningful in form and quite shallow in essence, although in them, he honestly tries to “modernize” Sufism, using fashionable concepts at that time like *intention* (a nod to Castaneda) and the methods of positive thinking. As one of the fundamental purposes for his followers, Omar chose the achievement of harmony, which, like any such term, each person can fill with his own meaning and strive for it. Quite in the spirit of the “Islamic” Sufis, Omar left his own son to lead the groups of followers, which by that time had acquired all the signs of sectarian thinking – a sense of chosenness, a sense of significance from possession of the only possible truth, and intolerance to any other points of view.

It is hard to say whether the fact that Omar Shah declared himself a Teacher influenced the general results of the Work of Idries Shah. A true Teacher, who could breathe life into the new, non-Islamic version of Sufism did not appear in the West, and what occurred in Omar’s groups is impossible to take seriously. In

any event, the demand for true Sufi teaching created by Idries is still alive, and that means , the opportunity to receive an answer to it still exists.



**KRISHNAMURTI: CONDUIT  
IN A PATHLESS LAND**

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**T**he destiny of the majority of mystics who are at all significant is always unusual. Krishnamurti was not to become the exception in this line; rather, the fate of his establishment as a mystic was quite unique. He was born in 1895 into a family belonging to the Brahmin caste, where, besides him, there were another ten children. At about age ten, he lost his mother, and soon afterwards, Krishnamurti's father, needing money after he went on his pension, found work at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society which was located in Adyar. The children went along with him, and this event determined Krishnamurti's subsequent destiny. In 1909, when Krishnamurti was 14 years old, he came to the attention of Charles Leadbetter, who at that time was one of the leaders of the Theosophical Society.

The Theosophical Society was founded by Helena Blavatsky and pursued the goals of creating a worldwide brotherhood of people and a comparative study of religions and scientific disciplines, and was also involved in investigations of the hidden forces of the human being and various paranormal phenomena. Charles Leadbetter had a total mastery of paranormal abilities, in particular clairvoyance. At any rate, that was what he believed himself

and instilled similar thoughts in others. Without developed extra-sense perception, it was practically impossible to get into the elite of the Theosophical Society, since all of its activity even since the times of Blavatsky was guided by the Brotherhood of Great Teachers, who sent the Theosophists telepathic messages somewhere from Tibet. Furthermore, the Theosophists, who were fascinated with Buddhism and Hinduism, were obsessed with the idea of the rebirth of souls, and Leadbetter, thanks to the super-perception he had, played the role of the chief “specialist” on this issue. He drew up long lists which described who the Theosophists were in past lives, and in what relationships they stood to one another. Of course, it was implied that their meeting in this incarnation was far from the first, and someone was already someone else’s mother, father, or lover. All of this wonderful nonsense was in great demand at the Theosophical Society.

It is known that the followers of any religious movement always need a goal – exalted to the maximum, to the extent possible. The messages of the Teachers by that time had ceased to be something new, and their content did not bear any serious revelations. Possibly, that is why Leadbetter began to prepare the new incarnation of Lord Maitreya, whose spirit was supposed to be used as a conduit by a well- and correctly-prepared body. For that purpose, Leadbetter searched for adolescents who, from his clairvoyant perspective, would have the necessary qualities to accept the spirit of Maitreya in themselves.

It must be said that Leadbetter himself supposed that this would be the spirit of Jesus Christ, although later they began to speak of the spirit of Buddha. In other words, despite Blavatsky’s prediction that “not a single Teacher of Wisdom from the East will appear in Europe or America and no one will be sent there...until 1975,” the Theosophists began to prepare for his appearance. And if we take into account that Leadbetter identified Maitreya with Jesus, then they were preparing for the second coming of Christ.

By the time he met with Krishnamurti, Leadbetter already had a candidate for the role of the new Messiah. He was Hubert van Hook, an American youth whose father was a member of the Theosophical Society (as was Krishnamurti's father as well). He was already worshipped as a future Savior, but the appearance of a new candidate for the Messiah cut short his possible career in this field. In the spring of 1909, Leadbetter saw the Indian boy, surrounded by an unusual aura, and in whom, in his words, there wasn't a particle of selfishness. From that moment, ordinary life ended for Krishnamurti and preparation for the great service for the welfare of humanity began. Van Hook ceased to be a candidate for the Messiah, and the Theosophists switched their attention to the new man of destiny, whose role at that moment was played by Charles Leadbetter.

People's passion for the deification of their own kind has been well known to everyone for a long time, but history repeats itself again and again. People want to have idols, so that they embody in themselves what they themselves don't have. By identifying themselves with the "great," people seem to attach to their "greatness" and acquire a replacement for full value which they clearly lack. Losing oneself in worship is not equal to losing oneself in the higher, mystical sense, but it also for a time helps to free oneself from the burden of ego and the stresses related to it. To identify oneself with an idol is, of course, not the same as dissolving into God, but it also helps for a time. Moreover, the creation of an idol enables one to project on him all one's dreams and in worship to enter a particular form of waking dream, when you yourself seemingly become the idol, acquiring all his imagined or real qualities. A transfer of this kind explicitly or implicitly is always present in worship, and it is precisely for this reason that people for a time are liberated from themselves, obtaining a true satisfaction. When people begin to worship spiritual teachers or political leaders, then another aspect appears in worship – removal of oneself of

responsibility for what is happening. Express signs of respect and reverence to the Master – and let him in response somehow get you into paradise. Praise the mind, character and will of the president of the country – and hope that he will solve all problems for you. The yearning for worship emerges from the need to remove a burden from oneself – or due to fatigue from one's own insignificance, or from the need to apply efforts and make decisions.

**K**rishnamurti's father gave his consent for the Theosophists to begin teaching and preparing Jiddu for a great mission. Immediately after this, the 14-year-old boy, who was the future Teacher, fell under serious pressure. On the one hand, he was revered as a Messiah, but on the other, he was prescribed a rather rigid regimen and strict teaching. Krishnamurti was kept on a diet, forced to perform yoga exercises and practice meditation; in addition, he was taught to read and write. The program of preparation included subjects of the school program, which were taught by the Theosophists themselves, and it was they who caused Krishnamurti the greatest difficulties. He had been absent-minded from his earliest childhood, could not concentrate at all, and had a poor memory. Even before Krishnamurti fell under the power of the Theosophists, local school teachers expressed the opinion that perhaps he was retarded. The future Messiah's absent-mindedness and dullness irritated the new teachers as well, and Leadbetter even once somehow struck him, angered over his ward's poor acumen. Even so, Krishnamurti demonstrated good capabilities for studying languages and an interest in the construction of complicated mechanisms. On the whole, he was a complicated

student, who had moreover found himself in a situation of predetermined fate – for example, he was forbidden on principle to fall in love and get married, since that didn't correspond with the notions the Theosophists had about how the World Teacher should live. The strict regimen and the renunciation of the secular – that was what was offered to the young Krishnamurti as payment for the high mission which essentially was imposed on him.

Training always contains within it elements of force regarding a child. He is refused the gratification of simple wishes and forced to do what doesn't give him any pleasure and induces boredom; he is habituated to a regimen and a certain order of life. Even if the child isn't punished, the forcing of him to perform certain concrete actions is always present, because without it, no upbringing is feasible. Teaching a child against his wish is also a form of violence to his psyche, and it is familiar to everyone who has attended middle school. This is compulsory violence, programmed by society, without which a person, after he has grown up somewhat, cannot fit into the socium and find his place in it. The force used against Krishnamurti had a somewhat different meaning and purpose. It was applied so that the plans and ambitions could come to pass of a small group of people who thought that the final Truth was known to them. Krishnamurti became a hostage to their ideas and an object of experiment to attract a higher being to a previously-prepared body. Therefore, particular attention was paid to the body, although the remaining components of spiritual training and teaching – of course, subordinate to the ideas in which the Theosophists believed – were attached in full measure.

To what extent it is permissible to raise a child in one's beliefs is a pointless question, because all parents are involved precisely in transmitting their beliefs, along with convictions and prejudices, to their children. Spiritual upbringing in this case differs

little from ordinary upbringing, only the violence in it at times becomes even greater. If the parents themselves are subject to spiritual ideas, for example, of purification then they begin to impose its principles on their children, instilling in them the need to follow vegetarianism, condemn their “bad” thoughts and even practicing celibacy. I know people who have passed through such an upbringing, and all of them to one extent or another are traumatized by it. It is one thing when an adult person by his own will imposes on himself certain restrictions and puts efforts into performing spiritual practices, and quite another when a child is subjected to such restrictions and demands. Everyone knows that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, but everyone also for some reason thinks that precisely their own good intentions will lead directly to heaven for the people to whom they are directed.

Krishnamurti’s life had to be placed on the altar of service to humankind – at least that’s what the Theosophists believed. It seemed to them that nothing could be higher than this and that every sensible individual could only dream of such a mission. Understandably, all the teachings of Theosophy, with its Teachers of Wisdom, theory of evolution of the races and the reincarnation of beings – was and remains essentially a teaching without God. It was the latest teaching, very characteristic of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century on the appearance of a race of super-people, for whom the Lord in fact was not particularly needed; after all, they themselves could bring his new incarnation on Earth. The expectation of the appearance of a new, sixth race on our planet which would possess entirely superhuman qualities exists to this day, and the Teachers who transmitted the dictations have been preserved as well, although they moved beyond the bounds of the Solar System. The ideas created by the Theosophists are alive to this day, although the form of their presentation have somewhat changed. But just as in Theosophy itself there had never been

God, so even now, in the new messages from nowhere, He is absent.

At first, Leadbetter accompanied Krishnamurti each night on an astral journey to the Teacher Koot Hoomi. That is, Krishnamurti would go to bed, but during the night, his astral body left his physical body, and headed to Tibet for instructive conversations. In the morning, of course he could not remember his journey, but the very fact of this teaching – in Leadbetter’s logic – was not changed. To maintain the legend about the existence of the Teachers and the increase in the authority of Krishnamurti himself, a book was written and published, *At the Feet of the Master*, in which the meetings of Jiddu with Koot Hoomi were described and his instructions transmitted. Many noticed the similarity in style of the young Krishnamurti with the style in which Leadbetter wrote his books but that did not bother much either the Theosophists or the readers of this work. As is known, we can believe (or not believe) in anything, and both the Theosophists and their successors constantly demonstrated such a belief. Krishnamurti himself in fact subsequently denied the existence of the Great Teachers, delicately evading the questions of his youth and meetings with them. He said that he didn’t remember anything about that period of his life, and here further continuation of this topic became pointless and tactless. Perhaps, he really did not remember his youth; after all, even then, he was not noted for having a good memory.



Several years later, the Theosophists moved Krishnamurti to England, where he began to take part in meetings of the Order of the Star of the East, which was created especially for him, in order to assist the work of the World Teacher. He couldn't now refuse the role of the Teacher, because everyone around him was expecting him to fulfill it. At the first meeting of the Order, Krishnamurti made his first speech. Then he began to speak a great deal and frequently, and he would do this without preparation, improvising. The Theosophists kept waiting for when the spirit of Maitreya would descend upon him, and tried to detect signs of the descending of the spirit at every convenient opportunity. In 1924, after Krishnamurti's next speech at a meet of Theosophists, Anni Besant, who at that time headed the Theosophical Society, wrote: "The spirit descended, and abides in Him. The World Teacher is here."

Some sort of things undoubtedly happened with Krishnamurti. Not all of them were pleasant. In 1922, he had a three-day mystical experience that greatly changed him, which, in fact, ended with an attack of severe pains in the neck and spine, accompanied by fever and loss of consciousness. Such attacks of various

length and intensity continued with him for his whole life, and the reason for them remained unclear. His speeches in public became more and more confident, and it was clear to everyone that he was *growing* – not only as an orator, but as a mystic as well. And how much of this was from Krishnamurti and how much was from an unknown higher being was impossible to understand at first, since the Theosophists could not allow themselves to be mistaken.

In general, the descending of a spirit is a mysterious thing. One can understand a situation when the spirit of a dead person uses the body of a medium for communication with the material world. This is, so to speak, a temporary possession, and the medium voluntarily becomes a channel for the manifestation of the spirit. Although as before, there exists many questions as to which spirits the mediums are communicating with – those of them that are not outright charlatans. There is also a permanent possession, and it is connected with demonic beings that use a seized person simultaneously as food and as a channel for getting certain energies from other people. Possession of this type occurs, as a rule, against the will of the possessed and is the consequence of fooling with black magic. In fact, the possessed himself may never have done so – it is enough for the magic rituals and practices to have been performed by someone close to him. Possession by a demonic being is encountered rather rarely, and that is a good thing.

Only an occultist such as Leadbetter could think up trying to summon a higher being (by definition, non-human) to a deliberate possession of a human, even if a specially-prepared one. No human spirit (or consciousness?) is capable of entering into another person simply by virtue of how he is constructed. And a being from other layers of Reality may not enter, but subordinate himself and create a solid tie between himself and the one whom it is controlling. Maitreya, however, was seemingly not supposed to be a person, but was supposed to be some kind of Lord. Then why associate him with Jesus or Buddha? Or, according to the theory of

reincarnation, after death they turned into higher beings like angels? But not a single higher being of light would possess a person, because it has no need for it. In general, no matter how you try to figure out this conception, you get the usual Theosophical delirium, in which there isn't a drop of sense.

**T**hanks to the efforts of the Theosophists, Krishnamurti gained wide prominence even before he began to seriously teach anything. He led a secular life (not violating, however, the restrictions imposed on him), and interest in him on the part of the public was fairly high. At first, his speeches fit within the framework of Theosophical doctrine, but gradually he began to speak on broader themes, and in the end, he also became aware of how little sense there was in what he had long been taught. His break with the Theosophists occurred in August 1929, when at the next meeting of the Order of the Star of the East, Krishnamurti announced the disbanding of the order, and that he was parting ways with the Theosophists. Of course, this was a risky but necessary step in order to start his own Work, being not bound to the expectations and demands in a special way stipulated by the followers.

It is quite understandable why Krishnamurti did not wish to take upon himself the function of the World Teacher or even Savior. For starters, in fact the world does not need neither saviors nor teachers on a world scale. He who needs salvation turns to God, and if his need is strong, he always receives an answer.

Neither Jesus nor Buddha were World Teachers during their lives. They became such later, when their teaching was reinterpreted for broad masses and turned into religion. To become a teacher of the world in our time means to turn into a pop figure like the Pope or Dalai Lama and utter various types of banality on spiritual themes. The broad masses will not accept or listen to anything else. And even these leaders mentioned above are heeded only by virtue of their titles. Practically, by virtue of habit.

The salvation of people is only the latest idea based on the notion that people are in trouble. Let's say, they have become mired in sin or in suffering. The person to whom the Truth is revealed sees that things are exactly as the Lord wishes, and the world is perfect in intent and execution. People's suffering is their choice, although not consciously, and without a certain measure of suffering the world cannot exist and its harmony would be irreversibly disrupted. All of this is unacceptable for the person who wants an easy life, not understanding that no matter what life a person is given, it will not be easy. Each person could accept suffering and death as a given, as an inalienable part of human life, but the majority don't want to do so. In the same way, each person can change his situation, having begun to work with the energy of his consciousness and freeing himself from the pressure of desires, thanks to which suffering in fact is created.

Even from this short paragraph the fact becomes entirely clear that all great Truths about human life have already been said, and repeatedly. Therefore, the World Teacher cannot say anything new. It is possible, however, to provide a new Way toward experiencing Truth and to being able to change oneself. That is what – in reality – the Work of all Masters of recent centuries without exception consists of. The difference between a Teacher and a Master consists of the fact that the first gives knowledge, ideas and a philosophy. The second works with a student's being, through practice and direct influence, although he also provides knowl-

edge – as needed. As the Theosophists planned, Krishnamurti became a Teacher, even if he himself, perhaps, did not want that. But the situation in which he found himself forced him either to continue his mission of teaching or to be left with nothing – without a profession and means of existence. But by the time of his break with the Theosophists, Krishnamurti had already sensed himself a Teacher, and continued to communicate with the public. All the more so because interest in him was inflamed with new vigor after the unexpected disbanding of the Order of the Star of the East and the renunciation of the role of World Teacher. He did not intend to preach the Theosophical “truths” anymore; he had his own message now.

Osho said that the main thing in Krishnamurti's teaching is the message "don't follow anyone except yourself." That is to say, long and sometimes forceful training has left its mark on all of his message. Truly, Krishnamurti claimed that the Path to Truth does not exist; that teachers and masters are not needed, just as no organizations, churches or orders are needed. "Truth is a pathless land," he would state, but continued to transmit the Truth to the extent he himself knew it. Exposition of that Truth that was revealed to him became the main cause of his life, and of course, it was far wider than a call to follow no teachings.

In fact, Krishnamurti always spoke about the state of awareness and about nothing else. Even so, he did not designate paths to it; he simply described it, as a person who was in a state of awareness, sensing himself and the world, and that was it. Being outside of time (that is, in "the here and now"); non-attachment to the past and the reactions of the mind; independence of any ideas; awareness without choice – all of this is the description of a state of full awareness, and in fact a fairly detailed one.

It worked this way: Krishnamurti would tell unaware people how an aware person behaves and senses himself, and they,

impressed with what they had heard, tried to behave in the same way. In other words, Krishnamurti gave them a model of behavior, which people could try to measure against themselves, making the Teacher an example for imitation. While denying the presence of the Way, Krishnamurti still provided a certain knowledge from which people could create for themselves a *surrogate* of the Way, since the Teacher could not provide them with anything else. That is the nature of the human mind – in order to begin to act, it needs an example of similar action, a certain algorithm, which by following, it could do something.

Krishnamurti's words provided *examples of an attitude* toward oneself and reality, and you could try to borrow that attitude and, from time to time, act by relying on it. Such an approach did not in any way rid a person of unawareness, but it did give him a certain new point of departure and evaluation of events; a new position for the mind. Thanks to this, a student of Krishnamurti could be inspired and for some time react and act anew, but then mechanical reactions would nevertheless gain the upper hand, and no profound changes would occur. Deeper layers of conditionality and ideas imbibed at an early age nevertheless prevail over new ideas, no matter how fervently a person tries to inculcate them in himself. The chief result of such efforts is a contrariness and confusion of reactions in a person who, for example, goes to church and observes fasts, but in many situations behaves like a true atheist, forgetting about Jesus and the Christian commandments completely.

Approximately the same thing happened with the admirers of the speeches and books of Krishnamurti. And the same thing happens, it must be said, with the followers of all Teachers without exception who appeal only to the minds of listeners. It may seem to you that truth expressed in words touches your heart and produces a certain inspiring effect; perhaps that is how it really is. But the dry remnants of the verbal effect remain only in



the mind, and all the rest of the reactions pass without a trace – you remember them, perhaps, and you wish repetition of these wonderful sensations, but that is it. Incorporation of new ideas into the mind gives it new means of action, almost never replacing old stereotypes and reactions. Sometimes a new idea enters into the old in a kind of symbiosis, broadening and changing it. But sometimes they contradict one another, and then a person's reactions entirely depend on which idea suddenly began to dominate in his mind, and he behaves accordingly. Without targeted work on freeing oneself of attachment to ideas, without non-identification with mind – it is impossible to change a given situation. Krishnamurti for some reason tried to forget about how he himself went through serious practical preparation for the fulfillment of the mission of a Teacher. Or does he believe that this preparation didn't give him anything, and it was completely unnecessary?

The books written by Krishnamurti express his message far more accurately than the answers to students' questions, which were also published in the form of a book. In live conversation, the Teacher permits inaccuracies which at times go against the very idea of awareness. Reading his conversation with the usual listener, the clear sensation arises that Krishnamurti himself is trying to grope for the right answer, but in the course of the discussion sometimes slides into some kind of debris from which he extricates himself with some difficulty. It is as if he is researching the topic offered to him, approaching it this way and that, and then discussions emerge which are easily subjected to criticism from the position of that very awareness. Even so, Krishnamurti's texts and answers are quite intellectual and to my taste, verbose. He often returns to one and the same themes, but such is the lot of anyone who takes it upon himself to bring the Truth to people. The question remains – if the teaching from the Theosophists did not give Krishnamurti anything, then how did he then reach the point that every one of his speeches attracted thousands of people? If we remember that did not graduate from any universities and from childhood was

known for a weak memory, then his later transformation becomes a total mystery.

Krishnamurti himself in one of his interviews says that he was already born with emptiness inside. And in its time, this emptiness attracted a certain Force to itself which supported his whole life and protected him. From that perspective, of course, the teaching from the Theosophists could not give him anything. And no matter how sad it is, Krishnamurti, too, could not give anything to the world, because his experience was too unique. In his words, he never prepared for a single one of his meetings with people. Outside of communication, his mind was always empty; when he had to begin to speak, it was as if he was filled, and what happened next, Krishnamurti could not clearly formulate. Sometimes he compared it with a revelation, which descended upon him at the moment of the start of the conversation, and in fact did not depend on the composition and quality of the audience. Another time he once again spoke of the Force which fills a space with itself as soon as a serious conversation begins. Whatever the case, Krishnamurti did not appropriate to himself the merits for creating a teaching; rather, he considered himself its conduit. It is possible that the Force, whose presence he sensed almost constantly, we would call Divine Presence. The description that Krishnamurti gave of this mysterious Force is quite consistent with the manifestations and experiences of the Presence. Krishnamurti himself did not have a clear answer to this question, but it seems that he did not try to find one.

He said that he always experienced an attraction to Buddha, and that in general, is small wonder, if we take into account that he described the state of awareness. Even so, he was visited by various types of mystical experiences throughout his whole life. In 1979, for example, Krishnamurti sensed the entry of a new impulse of energy which gave him an experience of the absolute. "It is not a state, a thing that is static, fixed, immovable. The whole universe is

in it, measureless to man.” It can likely be said that Krishnamurti thus expressed the experience of immersion in the sense of infinity. Even so, he believed that God was the usual idea and invention of people tormented by despair and other problems. This was quite in the spirit of an enlightened atheistic 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**K**rishnamurti's teaching is perceived as rather complex, and he himself characterized it in the same spirit, but it is complex only in the form of delivery and expression. Krishnamurti was inclined to excessive intellectualization and verbosity where it was possible to say everything more simply. It cannot be ruled out that direct communication with him made a far stronger impression on listeners – because of the force of his presence – and that is why he attracted people to himself. Possibly, it was just this form of delivery that attracted the people of that time, and perhaps Krishnamurti simply could not express his teaching otherwise. Furthermore, as we recall, the process of expression seemingly flowed in him spontaneously. Regardless of the case, his popularity during his lifetime was rather high. He was and remains a spiritual authority, whose books are constantly reprinted, and that means they are read.

Krishnamurti himself believed that if he were some kind of unique person, then his efforts to disseminate the Truth had no sense. I would say that that descriptions of states of higher awareness would not have sense if there are no paths to acquiring it. What sense is there in describing enlightenment, tempting people

with a description of higher inner states, but not showing them the way to achieve them? I do not know. Even so, the state itself of a higher or full awareness was reached by many people before Krishnamurti and is not unique in that sense. They were expressed somewhat differently, although the essence remained the same. Therefore, only Krishnamurti's destiny remains unique and, of course, he himself, but his teaching not at all.

There is one more question – what would have happened with the strange Indian youth if the Theosophists had not taken him on? Most likely, he would not have become a Teacher with world-wide renown, but would have turned into a provincial holy man, who are a dime a dozen in India. Thus, fate and the unknown Force led him – albeit on a somewhat strange and harsh path – toward the fulfillment of the mission and role of a Teacher. And as much as Krishnamurti himself denies the existence of paths to the Truth, he himself passed along one of them, refusing, it is true, to appreciate his experience. He fulfilled his Work in the way he could, or as he considered necessary. He gave people knowledge without presupposing the gaining of experience, but perhaps that is precisely what they needed. The Lord knows better.

**RAMANA MAHARSHI - A  
REAL HOLY MAN**

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It is customary to speak only well of Ramana Maharshi. Unlike Osho, Gurdjieff and other mystics of the last century, there are no dark spots or actions in his biography that could be interpreted ambiguously. Maharshi is simple, pure and radiant. Does that mean that perhaps he is a head above all the rest of the mystics? I am certain that there will be found people who will say precisely that. But there is, however, one explanation enabling us to look at the situation somewhat differently. Ramana Maharshi *did not do anything*, and therefore he could not be mistaken, nor end up in ambiguous situations, and in general, virtually nothing happened in his external life. He didn't need to look for students, because they found him themselves; the emergence of an ashram also happened almost by itself – out of necessity and according to the wish of the students. Osho travelled all over India with his appearances before he settled in Puna, and all the others had to travel a lot to disseminate knowledge with the purpose of attracting those who needed the Truth. Everyone had to take action, and only Maharshi refrained from any action; even so, he became a mystic with world renown.

Truly, the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. Why does one

person have to apply a lot of efforts to realize his mission, but for another, everything comes on its own? Regarding Maharshi, the answer is rather obvious – from the very start, he did not intend to be a teacher, and he had no clearly-realized mission at all. He was, in fact, a simple person, as much as the concept of “simple” can be applied at all to a mystic. It is known that his Way began when at the age of 16, Ramana experienced an awareness of death which began with severe fear of it, changing to a sensation of *dying*. It would seem that death came and its onset was absolutely inevitable. Then Ramana lay down on the floor and began to look at what was happening, contemplating about what was in fact dying. Everything that was happening turned his attention inside, to the nature of what was mortal inside of him and what was not. He internally accepted death, and from that moment, his life changed. Not without reason, many mystics claim that if you want to awaken from the sleep of unconsciousness, you should constantly remember the inevitability of your own death. The acute, sudden onset of the experience of the inevitability of death, and with the sensation of dying here and now, awakened Ramana and turned him inside himself. Judging from how Maharshi himself described his experiences at that moment, it could be said that he received an impulse of the Grace of God which is what brought him internal transformation. Why Maharshi received the impulse of Grace without any preliminary preparation is not given to us to know, and any explanations will be far-fetched, as in the case of Porfiry Ivanov. And here is what is interesting – with both Maharshi and Ivanov, soon after the transformation, an attraction to specific places was discovered – for the former, to Mount Arunachala, and for the latter, to the Chuvilkin Hill. Both Arunachala with Maharshi and Chuvilkin Hill with Ivanov were imbued with mystical significance as places possessing special power. Arunachala, of course, was and remains significantly

higher than Chuvilkin Hill, but the scale of Maharshi as a mystic was also more than the scale of Porfiry Ivanov.

Every place has its energy. Whether it is an apartment, a river bank or some hill – in each place exists its power which, in principle, every person senses, although he is rarely aware of it. Thanks to developed perception, mystics find certain places special to them, in which their practice or Work is easier to perform. Sometimes such places are discovered accidentally; sometimes the Will of God leads to them, and it also happens that there are places with a particular energy where mystical work was previously performed. Living in an apartment, a person unwittingly fills it with his energy. This is impossible to do on an open space in which any human energy instantly disperses. The performance of various types of magic rituals can fill a certain space with energy which, in fact, also disperses after awhile. But there exist places and spaces in which energy helps a seeker to rise above the endless grumbling of the mind, where he can easily enter into silence or imbibe a certain energy helping him to work on himself. In the slang of our esoterics, energetically powerfully places are usually called places of power, in each of which can be sensed a somewhat different effect. We cannot know what happen with Maharshi on Arunachala or Ivanov on the Chuvilkin Hill. We can only suppose to what extent the energy of a certain place can influence the development of a mystic, since quite a few of them got by without attachment to any particular space. It is possible that Maharshi's attachment to Arunachala was the very attachment which enabled him to remain in a body as long as possible.

In places of veneration of the graves of saints; in buildings where people gather for prayer or to perform spiritual practices, a specific energy is accumulated which positively influences those present. But the perception of it, like the perception of energy of any place, will not be the same for different people; moreover, a habituation develops in time as well to its influence – like any

other influence in the world. Mystics find places in which God becomes *closer* to them, and this closeness is not stipulated by the height of the given place above sea level, but depends on the energy of a concrete mystic and concrete place. If the energies are strong in a certain place of the Ascending Flow of Creation, then it is much easier to practice in it than in other places. And that means it is easier to come to an interaction with God. For example, Osho, while in Uruguay after he was deported from America, stated a number of times that the place in which he was then located was amazingly well-suited for meditation and that nowhere in the world had he felt such energy which so enabled its performance.

One way or another, soon after his experience of death, the young Ramana left his father's home and set off on a train to the sacred Mount Arunachala. That is where he settled, at first meditating in one of the temples located at the foot of the mountain, and later moving to one of the caves on the mountain itself. He sat in silence, being immersed in himself, and survived thanks to a tradition by which local residents fed the hermits of Arunachala, hoping to obtain for themselves spiritual merits and other goods by helping those who devoted themselves to the service of God. In other conditions, such undisturbed immersion within would hardly be doable, and the fate of Maharshi would have turned out somewhat different. Perhaps that is indeed what drew him to Arunachala, that this was from the outset the hand of God? If Maharshi had not regularly received food from devout people, then his position of total external inaction would have changed substantially. He would have either died from hunger, or he would have had to find himself subsistence, which would have substantially changed his entire position of total outward inaction. And as a result, his entire Way would have become different.

Sixteen years after his first experience of transformation,

Maharshi experienced a new death. Coming out of the cave to perform his ablution, he suddenly saw a bright white light before him. Then the powers began to leave his body and he began to die. His breathing halted and his heart nearly stopped. Maharshi remained a witness to what was happening, and did not experience either a wish to live or a fear of death. After some time, a powerful impulse of energy entered his body, and it once again became animated. Thus, yet another impulse of God's Grace was received by him, at least one which we know about. In fact, there may have been many more, but those two – connected to the experience of death – were from all appearance the most vivid. Impulses of Grace may be different in power and depth and the transformation evoked by them is also different. We have become accustomed to looking for only one or two big and main pulses in the life stories of the mystics, the obtaining of which most often is accompanied also by a sensation of dying; but in fact, such impulses usually come much more frequently. They lead to a less profound transformation – that is true – but the nature of the impulse remains the same. One way or another, Maharshi experienced an entire two *mystical* deaths, and of course went through a serious transfiguration. This is what made him a most real mystic.

Mystics are not born – they become. No matter how mystically a person is inclined, no matter how much he has developed in himself extra-sensory perception or extraordinary abilities, until he receives the impulse of the Grace of God, his changes will not have within them the qualities of transfiguration. He may develop, improve his mind, polish and become aware of his emotional reactions, but his essence and substance will not change. Only the impulse of Grace gives not improvement and development, but transformation. Or a second birth, as the mystics of the past said.

Maharshi spent about 20 years in the cave, living as a hermit and spending most of the time in silence. During that time, a group of followers appeared for him, who accompanied him

during his ablutions and tried to be closer to their silent guru. That is generally also part of tradition – if someone sits silently in India for a long time, without paying attention to what is going on, then students will soon be attracted. Although it is possible that Maharshi also radiated a certain power and light.

And then, after 20 years of seclusion, there was a fall – although again, only from the perspective of Indian spiritual tradition. Ramana had left home at the age of 17, and never returned to it. But when his mother and brothers came to him, Maharshi left the cave and settled in a little house on the side of the mountain, thus becoming a *householder*. From the perspective of the Indian spiritual hierarchy, Maharshi had turned into a commoner, but apparently that didn't bother him at all. By that time his search was completed, and in principle, he could live as he pleased, although he had become a subject for discussions and condemnation by those who remained in their caves.

Maharshi lived as a householder until the moment of his mother's death, and immediately afterward, on the place where his house had stood, he began to build an ashram, thanks to the fact that there were a lot of people who wished to behold Raman firsthand.

People love to chat with one another. For many, the opportunity to say something about themselves – even if it is totally stupid – is very important. Now this human trait is manifested particularly vividly thanks to social networks and blogs on the Internet. But to explain the popularity of Maharshi as merely due to “the grapevine” and people’s chattiness simply doesn’t work. People came to him who had simply seen him in a photo and immediately sensed an internal need to meet him in person. Others saw Maharshi in a dream – on the whole, the news of the existence of a great mystic spread in different ways. And here we return to the question I formulated at the very beginning of this text: why do some mystics have to find students for themselves, and to others they flow from everywhere on their own?

The answer is contained in Maharshi’s choice, which he himself made at the outset of his Way. Having chosen seclusion and silence, he created a situation in which he either was left to die in obscurity, or conditions would have to be created in which he would be forced to work with people. And here once again we return to the question of the fate of mystics – what in it is predetermined from the outset for each of them, and what emerges in the



process of their work on themselves. After all, one can't say that Maharshi sat and did nothing in his cave – immersion into oneself – take my word for it – is not easy work. But Ramana – by virtue of his individuality – embarked on the Way of non-doing, practically becoming a Taoist, and then miracles began. In order that Maharshi could send people to the Lord, first the Lord led them to him. Here is both a mystery and a paradox. One thing can be said in all certainty – Ramana did not at all count on such a turn of events. And even if someone would want to do something similar – forcing the Lord to bring people to himself – nothing would come of it.

Each real mystic has his own uniqueness, which is revealed in interaction with God. And someone must pass through humiliation, non-recognition and even attempts on his life so that his Work will be fulfilled as the Lord needs. Deprivations and burdens, the destruction of what was already built – these create the necessary friction in the Work of the mystic, at the same time opening up before him new opportunities. Thus many teachings and messages were forged, and for the majority of them, it would be impossible to appear on the earth in greenhouse conditions. It can be said that Maharshi didn't have them, either. Go and live in a cave (even in an Indian one on a sacred mountain), subsisting on alms, at least for five years, and you yourself will understand it all.

But outwardly, his success appears very easy and rapid and essentially, that is what it was. Maharshi's first followers appeared fairly early, and he did not seek them, although he did not drive them away, either. It must be said that even later, during the existence of the ashram, Ramana asked to allow to see him people seeking meetings both day and night – at any time of the day. Understandably, no one came to him at night; however, Maharshi continued to indicate his accessibility to seekers. It is possible that in this way, an objective conscience in Gurdjieff's meaning appeared in Maharshi – a sense of responsibility (or even debt) to

those who seek the Truth. The uniqueness of Ramana Maharshi was manifested in a situation where his presence was revealed to people in the most magical and mystical way, and then they could come to him and obtain what they needed. Meanwhile, Gurdjieff's active nature required constant changes and movement, which he was in, wittingly or unwittingly, all the time. Thus, each one receives the conditions for realization and fulfillment of the Work which best suit him. But far from all of them turn out to be capable of using them to the full extent.

At first the appearance of followers forced Maharshi to give them something, to answer their questions, to provide explanations and recommendations. Thus, followers gradually became students and Maharshi began to turn into a Teacher.

It is customary to reduce Maharshi's teaching to Advaita, on the principle of "to understand is to simplify." It simply never enters the heads of the majority of Maharshi's admirers that a mystic may not be one-dimensional. In the same way, many seekers find it hard to understand the multidimensionality of the Truth, the different positions and manifestations of which seem mutually exclusive to them. Then their minds begin to protest against the linking of what, from the perspective of their one-dimensional experience, is not linkable, and then the zealous seekers look for the "correct" explanation of those positions of the teaching which cause them misunderstanding and discomfort. This was the case not only with Maharshi; this is the case with almost all Masters and Teachers who consciously do not flatten their message in order that it may be perceived by the flattest minds.

This is how people behaved with Maharshi: everything that he said about God or gods was considered a manifestation of his mercy regarding the latest illiterate Tamil follower who asked him a question. That is to say, an answer which wasn't about God would not be understood anyway by the hapless Tamil; here the

beloved Bhagavan was speaking to him on his level. Indeed, the greater are the egos of the pupils, the greater is the renown of their teacher. It is hard to accept the fact that there are different levels of perception of both God and Reality. It is much easier to concentrate only on one of them, having declared for greater simplicity the aspect of the Truth chosen by you as absolute, final, and the only correct one. And then our beloved Ramana tells stupid people stupid things worthy of them, and to us, the smart and all-comprehending students, he preaches the pure Truth in the form of the Advaita.

There is another approach as to how to simplify and distort the words of the Master. Here is a wonderful example of how this is done, taken by me from the book *Guru Vachaka Kovai*. In it, the verbal instructions of Ramana are collected, and in fact the text was checked and corrected by Maharshi himself. But people thought this was insufficient, and they made up their own commentary in which they seemingly make the text more understandable.

“512. Despite the fact that non-dual knowledge is difficult to apprehend, the task is eased when the true love for the Feet of the Lord (Shiva) is strong, since then His Grace flows, the Light dispersing ignorance.

513. With love having strengthened in the Heart the Feet of the Lord, it is possible to break the shackles of misconception and thus, having put an end to constraint, to contemplate the true Light of higher knowledge, the flowering of one’s own Heart-lotus.”

And here is how a certain Michael James comments on this excerpt: “Here the readers should recall that in the teachings of Sri Bhagavan, the words “the Feet of the Lord,” “Grace,” and so on mean only the true ‘I.’” That is, in his opinion, Maharshi was either so mysterious, so out of touch, that he could not speak directly about the true “I,” and therefore brings in the God Shiva?

But of course, how can a great Advaitist speak of God; after all, this is a violation of the principle of non-duality! And a sin, a terrible sin. Therefore, all words that do not relate to the higher “I,” we will consider as relating to the higher “I,” in order to confuse all meanings, but preserve the bright image of Maharshi, the Advaitist. Meanwhile, the meaning of the above-cited quotation is rather simple – it is very hard (I would say even impossible) to come to non-duality without having received the transforming impulse of God’s Grace. Therefore, through humility and acceptance, through striving toward God, it is possible to receive “the Light dispersing ignorance.” But it is impossible for the Advaitists to accept the presence of the Heart, of love and everything else, because they are obsessed with the idea of non-duality. And that is why the majority of them are not fated to become mystics, nor even real Advaitists, either.

Modern followers of Advaita simply cannot understand that the state of experiencing non-duality is only one of the stages on the Way of interaction with God and knowledge of His Truth. On the Sufi Way, the stage of experiencing non-duality corresponds to the stage of *disappearance into God* – the stage of internal *fana*. During it, what is experienced is what the current Advaitists strive for – disappearance of the difference between external and internal, a merging with the endlessness of Being, the absence of distinction between oneself and God, and as a result – the absence of both God and oneself. One whole Being, one common space, without any divisions. But then in Sufism, the stage of internal *baqa* begins – the acquiring of divine attributes – but the Advaitists have never heard of it and therefore are inclined to consider the non-dual perception of the world as the highest possible achievement for a human. In time, everything degenerates – and Advaita has not become an exception to that rule.

Maharshi knew about the Way of following God, but he believed that this was the way of the *bhakti*, that is, the way of love. He relegated his teaching to *vichara* – the way of questioning, the way of knowledge. The only method which Maharshi offered to people was to ask the question “Who am I?” and to invest themselves into this questioning as fully as possible. By itself, the method of questioning is supposed to turn a person’s attention inside himself, simultaneously preoccupying the mind with a question to which there is no adequate answer. What results is a combination of a Zen koan (the unsolvable question “Who am I?”) with a deep immersion internally, if, of course, this can be achieved. Questioning should stop the mind, and attention directed into oneself enables a person to prepare himself for reception of the impulse of Grace, without which no deep change in perception is possible. It must be understood that the Maharshi, although he possessed knowledge and a vision of the Truth, himself passed through a unique Way which no one else could repeat in any way. Upon whom else has the impulse of Grace descended at the age of 16? And who else went deeper and deeper inside, attaining what is not expressible by words? When the

opportunity came to teach people, Maharshi chose an ancient technique which could work with a person who could enter into it wholly, without reservation. He didn't see the sense of inventing anything else, since he didn't have such a task; after all, Maharshi, as we recall, was a living incarnation of the practice of non-doing. But to enter within by means of questioning without preliminary preparation of attention and cultivation of the power of awareness is very difficult.

And the question "Who am I?" without the ability to concentrate and hold attention to it, not becoming distracted by anything, simply dangles in the mind, ceasing to have even the slightest influence on it after some time. Therefore, we do not know any stories about how this practice helped someone come to awareness of the higher "I". At least, I am not aware of any such cases. There are far more stories related to how a conversation with Maharshi changed a person and he began to see the world differently and sense himself in a new way. There were also people who meditated in the presence of Ramana and moved inward. Since they grew and obtained internal experience, they had a deeper understanding of both the teachings of Bhagavan and themselves. Hence there were conversations about how Maharshi, you see, teaches silence, since he is silent while they meditate, and that is all there is to it. In fact, Maharshi taught people, just like anyone, in words, parables and his own example. His presence produced an effect on people, enabling them to more rapidly move inside themselves and cultivate awareness. But effect and teaching are different things.

Ramana Maharshi was a mystic who succeeded without any schools, and I would even say without any Ways. His teacher was Arunachala – as he himself said. And if we take into account that Arunachala, according to Indian beliefs, is the incarnation of Lord Shiva, then the Lord himself taught him. Although the first impulse of Grace was received by him outside of Arunachala, that

does not change anything. While spending years in seclusion and silence, later Maharshi encountered the necessity to clothe his experience in words and began to read the sacred books of the Hindus. There he found the necessary terminology and even description of experience like his own. His experience was closest of all to the teaching of Advaita, and Maharshi quite often spoke in its language. Essentially, Maharshi did not have any special message; after all, he was practically forced to begin to teach. And there he had already to choose his words to express his experience and become involved in making sense of it. Thus he became an Advaita guru, although in fact Maharshi was a far more multifaceted mystic.



Only inside oneself can the door to God be discovered, and only by going inside and one know one's essence. By going within, becoming more and more aware, a person discovers that he begins to disappear, and God, on the contrary, manifests Himself more and more strongly. Therefore, Maharshi tried to direct any questioner inside, to knowing and experiencing his essence – no matter what that meant. As a goal, the concept of Self-hood or the higher "I" was used, of which the seeker should tried to become aware. It was implied that the true "I" was Atman, which presented itself as pure, stripped of attributes, Consciousness, pervading everything in the world. But Maharshi's Atman was identical to God, and here the confusion begins which all mystics usually fall into, trying to combine all concepts in general, in order to express the inexpressible. With Maharshi, conversations on the topic of God usually end with the claim that everything is God and "there is no 'everything' separate from God in the Divine Fullness." Only He in fact IS ("Be who you are.") Undoubtedly, this saying is both truthful and simplified. There is little sense from such words for the seekers, however, although they do

express one of the aspects of higher experience. Possibly, due to the “uselessness” of the idea of God for propaganda of non-duality, modern Advaitists dropped it entirely.

Ramana Maharshi became an icon for modern Advaitists, who brought Advaita to total degradation. For starters, they rid themselves of God. Now non-dual perception is a matter of consciousness which exists on its own, and that’s all. I would say that the majority of current teachers of Advaita known to me are hidden atheists. Moreover, now the entire search for the state of non-duality of perception is completely transferred to the sphere of the mind. Maharshi constantly speaks of the Heart, in which the seeker must immerse himself, but in the modern Advaita there isn’t any mention of the Heart at all. Modern teachers of Advaita do not know at all what a person’s internal space is, and speak only about how one must renounce the stereotypes of the mind, thoughts of separation of oneself from everything, and so on in that vein. Like Krishnamurti, they describe the state of non-duality of perception as it should be, in their opinion – and they stop with that, essentially. They call for simply becoming aware of the source of their thoughts here and now, arranging conversations during which, with answers to the questions of sufferers, they seem to push them inward, toward the awareness of consciousness. They try to create the miracle of their interlocutor’s turn within, but all of the effect occurs only at the level of the mind, because none of them have the level of being of Maharshi. They also refrain from the practice of questioning “Who am I?” since in previous years, it has not brought visible results.

Some of them speak of the state of awareness – as a rule, rather unconvincingly. In the description of the state of non-dual perception, they repeat one and the same formulas, which have already turned into clichés, and practice one and the same approach toward communicating with people – holding meetings at which they answer questions. When they reply within the limits of their

beloved formulas, everything sounds derivative, but not very stupid; if they are asked a question that requires going beyond the framework of their customary topics, then most often we see a lack of even worldly wisdom, let alone a vision of the Truth. People go to these meetings with two purposes – first, to see a living enlightened person, and secondly, to acquire enlightenment themselves with minimal efforts. But the modern teacher of Advaita does not even come close to enlightenment, because both the first and the second purpose of visitors of these *satsangs* and *darshans* are unattainable. Still, they obtain a pumping up of the mind through certain ideas, and for a time they manage to maintain a somewhat different attitude toward the world than what they had before. A kind of self-hypnosis takes place – after hearing his fill of beautiful words about how one must regard the world and oneself, a person keeps it in his mind as long as he can, then everything returns to the way it was, and then one has to go to a new meeting for a new “pump-up” of the mind. For that reason alone, the modern Advaitists may hold their meetings several times a week; after all, in order to maintain the mind in a seeming non-dual perception, their follows require repeated “pump-ups” of the mind by the same ideas. And if the teacher also possesses great charisma, then it is a double pleasure.

Ramana Maharshi was an ideal, real holy man. Mystical and miraculous events did happen around him, and the effect of his presence was strong and obvious. And no one can say anything bad about him. Nor can we speak of whether Maharshi’s mission was fulfilled, since he did not have a mission. He achieved what he achieved, and did what he did. There is a certain beauty and a certain grandeur in this. His fate is also unique; what else can you say. As for Advaita, there is the hope that yet another mystic will appear, yet another real holy man who will inspire in it a new life. Like Maharshi, who in his day appeared out of nowhere, so possibly someone else will come and explain the true Way to that

state which now is sold as a product of the activity of the mind, and not as a consequence of a spiritual transformation that took place. But all of that is, as is said, in the hands of the Lord, and those who seek the state of non-dual perception, I would advise to remember this.

**THE MYSTERY OF GEORGY  
GURDJIEFF**

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Writing about Gurdjieff is both a rewarding and unrewarding task at the same time. On the one hand, various theories and suppositions can be constructed about how he obtained the knowledge he taught, and to interpret his actions and contradictory deeds in various ways. On the other hand, to understand what Gurdjieff in fact represented is a hard task, and perhaps to understand the motives and reasons for his actions is simply impossible for us. To some, he seemed a charlatan with abilities, who cleverly fooled people; to others, he seemed a great Teacher with whom it was rather hard to study, however. In between these two polar opinions are numerous variations, combining within them individual elements of both.

The memoirs written by the students of Gurdjieff suffer from a prejudice of viewpoint, no matter how objectively their authors tried to write. Each one wants to hide something – in fact not necessarily about himself, although that, too, but about Gurdjieff. What the authors of the recollections cannot accept or understand, or what they are embarrassed about is covered with a veil of understatement and silence.

A vivid example of this is the famous book by Pyotr Ouspens-

sky, *In Search of the Miraculous*. It is believed that it fairly accurately conveys the teaching of Gurdjieff in the form that he presented it during the period of his work in Russia. Possibly, that is the case. But by separating the methods of Gurdjieff's work from a description of his teaching, Ouspensky removes an important part of the context in which the teaching was given. As we know, precisely because of Gurdjieff's methods, and also in part because of his behavior, Ouspensky left his Work. And that is the question: can theoretical knowledge be separated from the practical methods that are supposed to validate it, as Ouspensky tried to do? And in general, does anyone except perhaps smart philosophers need theory that is not confirmed by practice?

In his book, Ouspensky thoroughly ignores the methods by which Gurdjieff worked with him and the other students. A few exercises are mentioned, and the practice of self-remembering is more or less described in detail. But there was much more real work – and in fact, not only in the form of exercises. What is this – Ouspensky's unwillingness to remember what he didn't like, or a peculiar law of Omerta, a promise to keep silent about what happened until death itself? All the more so because while working with his own students in London, Ouspensky forbade them to speak with, greet, or even pay attention to those who for one reason or another left the group. Generally, Ouspensky was inclined to making the work secret, but it is not a fact that the reason for his silence was an unspoken agreement or promise given to Gurdjieff. There are serious reasons to suppose that precisely Gurdjieff's methods, which he used for work with students, were the reason for why Ouspensky broke off relations with him.

Let us imagine a situation in which you are inspired by certain ideas and you very much like them. You would like to live by them and somehow use them in your daily activity. But then you come up against the fact that following the ideas, a simple constant



reflection on them, is insufficient from the perspective of the person who taught them to you. Practice is needed, which does not at all correspond with what you imagined, and which “drops” you from the skies to the earth, and which even requires some sort of incomprehensible efforts that are disproportionate to your preparation.

At first you are patient and suppress protest, but then your dissatisfaction becomes unbearable, and you leave. That is what happens with practically everyone who leaves the real Work – whether Gurdjieff’s Fourth Way or the Sufi Way. As is known, they are to some extent similar. The very same story happened with Ouspensky, which he could never admit to himself, even with all his intellectual “honesty.” And none of those who leave admit this to themselves. They find justifications of the most diverse kind and sometimes they are obviously ridiculous. Ouspensky, for example, told his students that Gurdjieff had lost his mind. The recollections of other students – if these are recollections, and not a paraphrase and interpretation of Gurdjieff’s ideas – also contain justifications in which the authors justify either themselves or the Teacher. And the books of those who wrote about Gurdjieff, who were not personally acquainted with him are generally worthless. He was too incomprehensible even for those who associated with him for many years, whereas for those who formulated their point of view from others’ words, Gurdjieff was like an extraterrestrial.

When Gurdjieff would meet with applicants for his teaching – whether students of Ouspensky or people from America, where groups of his followers were formed – the typical evaluation of their state sounded like this: “Lots of knowledge, but little being.” From an ordinary perspective, this evaluation could be expressed as follows: the level of knowledge obtained from books did not correspond to the level of the applicant’s personal experience. But Gurdjieff had in mind something somewhat different – here was both a person’s level of presence in himself, and his ability “*to do*.” In other words, he evaluated the level of the applicant’s awareness and maturity of his will. The fact is that knowledge obtained by a person from books may not always serve as a basis for experience. There is knowledge that is conceptual, abstract; there are texts whose original meaning is revealed only with one’s own experience of the Truth; and there is, finally, knowledge that is false at its foundation. Numerous texts exist whose authors simply invented “esoteric” truths; there are now lots of books with such content. People inspired by false knowledge search for miracles and want to find simple explanations for complex things. They believe in obviously fantastic

things, and their level of being already determines the readiness to believe in this. People who try to find crutches for understanding themselves and those around them – such as those who revere astrology, numerology and other branches of “esoteric knowledge” – no matter how true they seem to them, also possess a rather low level of being. At least, from the perspective of Gurdjieff, and even from the perspective of the Sufis as well.

There are all different kinds of knowledge. The minds of modern seekers are filled with all kinds of nonsense, and in Gurdjieff's time, it was exactly the same way; it was just that this nonsense was somewhat different in content. And the less a person is capable of distinguishing obvious lying and stupidity from truly spiritual texts, the less his level of being – and it cannot be otherwise. The level of being of atheists who consider all spiritual texts as nonsense or, at the very least, wonderful monuments of culture, is often higher than people who believe in false knowledge, because they are somewhat more relevant in their evaluations and actions – at least, regarding ordinary worldly life. The level of being is manifested, among other things, in the appropriateness of a person's reactions regarding the world and people. Ouspensky's reaction to Gurdjieff's methods turned out to be appropriate for his level of being, and the fact that he undertook to teach other people Gurdjieff's ideas was no longer quite appropriate. And therefore, the disappointment which Ouspensky encountered at the end of his life was its logical finale.

Yet another aspect of the level of personal being are the skills a person possesses. In fact, these skills can be all kinds of features. If a carpenter, for example, is a master of his craft, and knows all its fine points and secrets, then his level of being is already rather high. Gurdjieff himself possessed many skills, and a good number of the memoirs about him are devoted to how he demonstrated and applied them. If we consider that the practice of awareness is essentially also a skill of separating attention and the direction of

it, then Gurdjieff's being was very high relative to the being of almost any person he met. And if we take into account that Gurdjieff possessed the skills of hypnosis and who knows what else, then the power of his being produced an unusual impression on those around him. His gaze always produced the first impression – practically all his students recall how penetrating it was. Gurdjieff's eyes are always mentioned – black and expressive, penetrating through people. For the majority of his students, Gurdjieff looked like a superman, and now it is no longer important whether it seemed that way to them or whether he was one in fact.

You can believe or not believe anything you like. There are people who deny the existence of objective reality and believe that it is a product of their consciousness. Therefore, Gurdjieff can be considered a charlatan and a deceiver – and quite a few people held such a viewpoint during his lifetime – and there are quite a few even now. Superpowers in general induce thoughts of deception in the majority of people, because the years of atheist propaganda and all sorts of exposures of miracles could not help but attune citizens' minds to denial and distrust in everything that does not fit into a scientific explanation. Therefore, you can decide that Gurdjieff was a great hypnotist who simply subordinated people to himself, and only particularly outstanding individuals like Ouspensky managed to escape from under his pernicious influence. Meanwhile, from the recollections of his students – written already after the death of their teacher – it follows that their staying with Gurdjieff was for good reason and all of them managed to develop their being to one degree or another. And if in fact we are to strive to express briefly the essence of what Gurdjieff did with people, then we can say with full confidence that he helped them to develop their being.

There were many Teachers and Masters before Gurdjieff, but no one formulated the main problem of humankind the way he did. They said that humankind was in illusions, in sleep, but no one said that people are machines *that cannot do*, and that everything merely happens to them. That is, the level of being was made what one ought to seek, and the main sign of spiritual awakening, transformation and development in general. Therefore, in the practice of Gurdjieff's students, there was always a lot of doing – that is, the most diverse actions, requiring patience, endurance, a high degree of concentration and ideally – awareness. I would say that the demands on the students were at time even superhuman – the attempt to use and develop simultaneously three bodies – physical, ethereal and the body of the mind – was not exactly doomed to failure right away, but it required enormous efforts from people.

Moreover, complicated exercises must always be accompanied by self-remembering, and essentially they were made so complicated in order to deepen self-remembering. Knowing from his own experience, that when rehearsing new movements or acquiring new skills, a person inevitably must be attentive and

aware, Gurdjieff created practices in which this principle was used. Thus, he began to give his students sacred dances which in fact combined in themselves all the necessary requirements for exercise – rehearsing movements, and a difficult choreography and interaction between participants, requiring attention and discipline. Here, too, conscious *doing* remained the central element of the practice. If we take into account that in the choreography of each dance, a description of some sort of sacred law of Being was embedded and participation in it implied a deepening of the understanding of the law itself, then it becomes entirely obvious how multi-faceted this practice was. Now these exercises are taught under the name of the Gurdjieff movements, and I have heard that now seekers first rehearse them, and then come to perform them. If that is true, then one of the chief components of the purposes of performing the movements is lost – studying them in the process of practice, acquiring the skills in a state of maximum awareness, with maximum attention and in general with the greatest strain.

Gurdjieff himself called himself a teacher of dances, and many write of him now in this way. But in fact, he taught being, about which the majority of his students write in one form or another. For example, it is noted that women in studying and interacting with Gurdjieff would become more feminine, and men, more masculine. That is, the features of their innate, essential being were manifested and developed stronger than before. Interaction with Gurdjieff was a particular ordeal which many found harder to do than performing the exercises. He had too many features and habits that shocked people and provoked protest in their conditioned minds.

Each new Master or teacher who begins to work in conditions where there is no corresponding spiritual tradition must prove his competence and right to teach people. And here he must either provide something entirely new in order to start working from scratch, or use terminology and concepts from long-existing traditions that are well known and enable people to identify what the new guru is offering them. Great mystics most often operate according to the principle of renewal, introducing the Truth to the world expressed anew, and expressed in a modern language and modern level of knowledge. An average-level teacher, and also all forms of false teachers always prefer the second path, since the first is closed to them in principle; after all, they themselves have not yet reached the levels of experiencing the Truth. Then their teaching consists of paraphrasing the tenets of classical Sufism or Vedanta, which is sprinkled with their own commentaries, often bringing more harm than good.

Gurdjieff brought people the so-called Fourth Way, and a new classification of Ways in general. He identified three “classic” Ways – the fakir, the monk, and the yogi. The fakirs attain realization through work with the physical body, through total subordination

of it to their will. The monks are realized through the emotional body, through love and prayers. And finally, the yogis primarily work with the body of the mind. The Fourth Way involves simultaneous work on all these levels, which is then reflected in the practices proposed in it. Understandably, the division of the Ways which Gurdjieff made is a serious simplification of them, but for the purpose of presentation of the new Way, they were quite suitable. Even so, the essence of the new Way was awareness, as old as the world, which in fact is the essence of any spiritual Way in general. But the task became far more difficult – not just dividing attention, keeping part of it for external actions and the other aimed at awareness of one's internal reactions – but internally as well; attention had to be divided into parts, being aware simultaneously of the body, emotions and mind.

This is quite feasible with the high level of awareness already achieved, but starting with an attempt to be aware of everything at once is incredibly hard, if not completely impossible. Moreover, Gurdjieff introduced the concept of centers working in a person, that did not coincide with the customary and long-known energy centers – the Hindus' chakras or the Sufis' *lataifs*. Gurdjieff divided the centers according to their functions, and the action of each center also had to be traced and recognized. This was an additional complication of the task of growing awareness, which also turned out to be impossible for anyone to do, because in itself, the isolation and separation of the centers was contrived. The attempt to create a new energy anatomy of the human being failed, since at its foundation lay a theory invented by the sophisticated mind of Gurdjieff – who in that sense also had a quite high level of being. Gurdjieff gave out quite a few theories and claims that had uneven levels of truth.

One such idea was a new idea for everyone, that a person is not born with an immortal soul, as it is described, for example, in Christianity. Gurdjieff said that immortality had to be earned, and



with this claim, he rather shocked his respectable public. Shocking people is what he knew how to do and loved. Immortality was possible, but only in order to grow a full-fledged soul in oneself; after all, Gurdjieff maintained, in ordinary people, it is in an embryonic state and no immortality is guaranteed. And only through persistent work on oneself could the soul become developed, and only then would a person attain immortality – to be sure, only within the bounds of the Solar System.

Already from that addition it can be understood how complicated was the teaching offered by Gurdjieff to the broad public. The idea of attaining immortality was always a strong motivating factor for a person's mind, and Gurdjieff also decided to make use of it; to be sure, teaching it in an entirely new light. That was the case with everything about which he spoke or wrote – take a well-known idea, but add something to it which will make his listeners' and readers' jaws drop and the persistent feeling arises that finally they have encountered true knowledge. What is his claim worth, for example, that our Sun neither lights nor heats, but the warmth which we seemingly get from it is a certain effect arising in the atmosphere of the Earth itself due to a particular process, the difficult and exhausting description of which are devoted several pages of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* – the main book authored by Gurdjieff.

Another – and quite impressive – theory which Gurdjieff brought to people was the Ray of Creation. According to this theory, the Ray of Creation emanates from the Absolute, creating various worlds, each of which is burdened by its own number of laws. In fact, the further this or that world is from the Absolute, the more mechanical are the laws in it, whose actions are impossible to avoid. According to Gurdjieff, the diagram of the Ray of Creation looks as follows: the Absolute – all worlds – all suns – our Sun – all planets – the Earth – the Moon – and once again the Absolute, which at the start of the Ray of the Creation is Every-

thing, and at the end – is Absolutely nothing. Each level represented in this diagram means another level of Being, and they are all interconnected. Here, Gurdjieff imbues the sun and planets with intelligence and power and begins to reason like an astrologist, stating that all serious events occurring with humankind are initiated by the influence of the planets. But here, too, he gives something of his own – since the Moon now represents a new sprout of the Ray of Creation, then humankind was created exactly for it, to feed it with its energies. That is, to guarantee the further development of the Ray. This was yet another shocking idea, with which nothing can be done until you receive your own vision of the Truth.

It should not be said that all of Gurdjieff's ideas are false, but they are given in such a form that always bears within itself a distortion. For example, there is the possibility of existence after death of the physical body, thanks to the mental body which in fact is not given a person in a ready form from birth, and therefore has to be developed through efforts of a particular type. And it is understood that humankind exists not in a vacuum and is subject to influences from higher levels of Reality, and the exchange of energies also occurs with them. I have written a fair amount about this in my books. But the constant simplifications to which Gurdjieff resorts – given the outward deliberately complicated form of exposition – sometimes deprives his theories and ideas of any practical use. They can take a long time to analyze, and his numerous followers are occupied with this to this day. If one wishes, the wheat can even be separated from the chaff in them, but then again, one has to know the Truth, and he who knows it will hardly begin wasting time on that.

I don't know how it goes with the world at large, but in Russia, Gurdjieff is very much beloved. Of course, I mean in this case in the milieu of spiritual seekers. Understandably, some are attracted by the power of his personality, and others by the originality of his ideas; but the interest and affectionate attitude toward Gurdjieff is caused not in the least by the fact that he smoke and drank a good deal of alcohol. Compared to the Hindus' demands for total abstinence from everything, Gurdjieff seems like a person for whom "everything is allowed," but even so, who demonstrates the highest level of personal being and awareness and other things that a person who has come to self-realization should have in himself.

Far from everyone likes a path to God in which it is forbidden to eat meat, and forbidden to have sex and drink alcohol. Gurdjieff not only did not forbid his students to drink vodka; he himself arranged dinners in which alcohol was an important part of the ritual activity. It is said that he could drink a lot, practically not getting drunk, and this also became part of the legend describing Gurdjieff as a superman. Therefore, many seekers, inspired by the

image of Gurdjieff's behavior, indulge themselves in drinking a lot in the hope that their spiritual path will not suffer at all from this. Just as Osho's students selected "do what you want" out of the message that said "Be aware and do what you want," so Gurdjieff's followers take from him what they like. And since people in Russia can drink and know how to do it, our seekers wish to approximate the image of the superman through alcohol. That is, to bring a dimension of spiritual work into their drunkenness. I will not say that this is impossible, but I will say that you should not attempt to imitate the state of a person who went through the most diverse practices, through discipline and self-restriction, reaching a level at which he could already allow himself to live as his nature demanded. Or as his Work and mission demanded. Imitating the outward behavior of a mystic, you will never become him, but we see such imitation all the time. In reality, it never leads anywhere, but feeds the ego, and in the case of imitating Gurdjieff, it also enables "the training of consciousness" by abusing alcohol.

When Osho lived in Pune, the air conditioner in his room was set to maintain a temperature no higher than 12 degrees Celsius. In Gurdjieff's Paris apartment, the heat was always turned up. Both of them grew up in hot countries, but Osho continued to live in India, and Gurdjieff moved to colder areas, where possibly his nature did not get enough heat. And the alcohol was a means to add it as well. Although that is only one of the possible explanations of his predilection for Armagnac, and several more could be given, but I do not see the point of going deep into this question. Even so, everyone sees what he can see or wishes to see. It often happens that he who strives for consciousness and keeps himself in a certain effort and struggle with his own unconsciousness, can see in the behavior of a conscious person, in his relaxedness, some

signs of non-consciousness. Although we only see the outward side, it is not hard at all to be mistaken in an evaluation. But the ego stands on comparison of itself with others and judgement of others, so mystics are measured by the same measure, which finds in them what is wished to be found.

Gurdjieff's relations with his students and his behavior in general are among the main enigmas which those who try to understand him encounter. Much has been written about the situation of friction which he created for his students, and here everything seems to be more or less understandable. He would be rude to them; he could ridicule them rather brutally; he could create difficult conditions for their work and in general assign tasks that at first glance seemed unfulfillable. He knew how to create difficulties for those who were near him, and their endurance and acceptance of what was happening often was subject to a serious test for reliability. As a creation of a situation in which the student could work on the level of his being, on detaching from his reactions through awareness, such methods could be understood and one could somehow reconcile oneself to them or even become accustomed to them.

In all the recollections, their authors note that as a result of association with Gurdjieff or study with him, their level of being unquestionably grew. That is, as a Master, Gurdjieff was quite competent. The demonstration of the dances which he arranged for the public made quite a strong impression on people, and not

for the least reason precisely because of the degree of mastery over themselves which the students demonstrated. The goal which he pursued in work with them, however, remained unclear even so, because many talented and devoted students were simply driven away or removed by him.

Gurdjieff himself wrote that his purpose in work with people was the continuation of research into the psychology and nature of man. In that case, all of his “Institutes for the Harmonious Development of Man” were supposed to pursue precisely this goal – that is, Gurdjieff made experiments and tested the action of various practices on the students, and sought proofs for some of his theories. I think that was in fact the case, but only in part. Understandably, you can make a fuss about ideas that shock society only for the sake of seeing its reaction. But alas, this reaction in all times is one and the same, and there is really nothing here to research. There was nothing in particular to research in human psychology, either, because Gurdjieff understood it perfectly even when he had only just begun teaching. As for experiments, every Master must make them in order to find the optimal method of work with people in a given time, in a given place. Some things always must be discovered anew, because the state of people’s minds and their general being dictates a choice of methods of teaching and also interaction with them. Furthermore, all these discoveries are made exclusively for the students themselves, in order to help them on the path to their own spiritual realization.

But teaching people was clearly not Gurdjieff’s main goal, because it was conducted strangely to some extent. That is, formally, everything was seemingly done correctly: there was a teaching – the Fourth Way – there was a goal – to awaken, to leave the state of a machine and become capable of “doing” – and there were methods – self-remembering and exercises that were supposed to develop the students. But it cannot be said that Gurdjieff consistently engaged in the creation of a spiritual school or

something like it. More likely, he was trying in every way to avoid the real creation of such a thing.

The community which Gurdjieff founded on the Priory estate outside Paris, after emigrating from Russia, can serve as an example. The action was to a certain extent forced, because Russians students came with Gurdjieff to France, who at that moment simply had nowhere to live and nothing to live on. It is possible that Gurdjieff wanted to see what would turn out under conditions of close quarters and constant work, which, of course, had to be organized. At a certain time this was a real "school": several dozen people gathered in one place, working on themselves in an extremely intensive regimen.

It was characteristic that Gurdjieff himself lived in Paris, coming to the Priory for several days a week. The students were occupied with heavy physical work for the improvement of the estate, and in the evenings, they would do the exercises. They were supposed to work to the limit of their strengths, in order to achieve an accelerated development of their being. Super-effort was what many strove for, because Gurdjieff demanded it of them. According to Gurdjieff, super-effort consisted of continuing to do something even when all your strength seemed to be exhausted. In the process of this overcoming of oneself, additional sources of energy were supposed to kick in, which in an ordinary state are inactive and not used in any way. A "second wind," so to speak would come, and a person could continue to work as if he had not exhausted himself earlier, as if he had only begun to do the task. Such a practice helped to develop the will; to learn to overcome self-pity and to discover hidden forces within a person.

Many students who were able to make the required super-effort discovered such forces; moreover, transcendental experiences happened to them in this context. John Bennett in particular described such things. It must be said that the practice of super-effort exists in many mystical traditions. Super-effort can be



connected to prayer, when a monk, for example, prays all night, while making a thousand prostrations – that is, kneeling down, touching his forehead to the floor and once again standing up to his full height. It has long been noted by mystics that when the physical body is exhausted, a person becomes more open to a higher impulse, and therefore practices requiring super-efforts from a person were developed practically everywhere. Well, Gurdjieff made the super-effort an ordinary matter for his students, and this worked for some of them.

The "school" at the Priory existed for two years, and then Gurdjieff landed in an automobile accident. His condition was serious, and nearly a half year went into his recovery. As soon as he was better, he announced the end of the work at the Priory and proposed that his students go away altogether. Some immediately departed; some a little later, and about a third of the students ignored the instruction to leave the Priory. Somewhat later, Gurdjieff again began to work with them, but there was no longer any talk of any "school" or even Institute (as he loved to call his project). Then the Priory was sold for debts, and with that, the story of the organized and cohesive Work was ended for Gurdjieff. Could he have found money to rescue the estate and continue the Work in such a form? If he had wanted to, of course, he would have. Could he have continued such activity in another place? Yes, he could have, but again, he did not wish it. And it is quite understandable why that happened.

No matter what strange things Gurdjieff would tell about himself, and no matter how much he shrouded his past – it is entirely obvious that he passed his basic study with the Sufis. The Fourth Way was constructed on the principles of the Sufi Work, even with a corrective for the uniqueness of Gurdjieff's approach. But the Sufi Way did not involve the creation of ashrams, communities or monasteries in which people permanently live and work. It takes place in the thick of daily life, where the seeker learns

both patience and acceptance, and also the discovery of the Divine Presence and the manifestations of the Will of God. The Sufi Work does not take place in the artificially-created isolation of its participants, although sometimes, of course, they can retreat for the purpose of performing some sort of practices that require this.

When Gurdjieff created his community, in part he was at the mercy of circumstances and in part he wanted to see how all this undertaking would turn out. It became clear that even intensive work cannot change the factor of time, which is required for the development of a person and the acquiring by him of experience and the necessary level of being. It is impossible to jump over the internal limitations the mind bears within it, and in order to remove them, once again, a fair amount of time is required. Maintaining the functioning of a community entails not only material expenditures, but again, expenditures of time – and one must live in the community oneself, giving it a large part of one's energy and life in general. If Gurdjieff had that purpose, and if precisely that purpose was the main one of his mission, then undoubtedly he would have achieved its fulfillment. It was just that his task was apparently something completely different. I would even put it this way: it is possible that Gurdjieff's main purpose was not to teach his students, but to study their reaction to teaching and new knowledge.

I dries Shah said that Gurdjieff studied with the Sufis, but did not complete his study. Nevertheless, that does not at all mean that Gurdjieff did not maintain ties to certain Sufi circles and that his Work was totally independent and performed by him at his own peril and risk. Again, in *Beelzebub's Tales*, there are places indicating that Gurdjieff was familiar with certain aspects of the Sufi Work about which not a single one of his students can tell us, because this Work was conducted in secret. And only a person who has taken part in it can find out about it, so things are more complicated with Gurdjieff than it seems at first glance.

For example: Gurdjieff may have not completed his study with the Sufis precisely because he ceased to need it, or because further advancement within the framework of the version of Sufism which he was given became impossible. Let us not forget that various orders in Sufism have different, so to speak, "specialization," and the unique being of Gurdjieff may have only fit in to a certain extent to the demands made to students of the Sufis. He was too strong, and furthermore, he had the Uwaisi transmission; that is, he received knowledge in a mystical way from one of the

Sufis who had died earlier. Precisely for that reason, Gurdjieff may not have completed the standard stages of the Sufi teaching – since in some way he already superseded his possible teachers. Rafael Lefort’s book, *The Teachers of Gurdjieff* is an obvious forgery, so we know nothing about his true teachers. At the same time, Gurdjieff could have quite likely taken upon himself the mission to bring new knowledge to the West and see what would come of it. In one of his texts, he mentions that he sent more than ten people to certain centers where they could get the necessary teaching. Meanwhile, it turns out that he himself worked with those who in principle were not suitable for such teaching.

Gurdjieff began his Work in Russia exactly because here, he – a person who arose out of nowhere – had family ties, and that eased his task. I believe that later he would have made his way to the West anyway, but fate – in the form of war and revolution – accelerated the pace, and he had to leave for the West earlier than planned. Gurdjieff had already arrived in Russia with a plan to attract the attention of the public to his person through staging the ballet “The Struggle of the Magicians.” But he had to stage it later in France.

There is a telling story going around the Internet, according to which the start of the second World War was provoked by Gurdjieff through staging the ballet “The Struggle of the Magicians.” Supposedly using the knowledge of ancient symbols and sacred movements, he turned the staging into a magic action, which awakened dark forces, clashing them with light. Then the second World War began. Gurdjieff is portrayed to us as a strong magician, influencing the fate of the world. There is nothing particular to comment here – it is total nonsense, written by a person who knows nothing about either Gurdjieff, or magic, or sacred movements. A lot of such nonsense is written, and the most fantastic stories are found – but all of them similarly emphasize Gurdjieff’s

exclusiveness, and the presence in him of powers unknown to us. Georgy Ivanovich, I think, is happy. He always had a wonderful sense of humor.

Gurdjieff's power of being was at the same time both a blessing and a curse for him. He knew about it, and moreover, was forced to arrange his work with people taking into account his peculiarities. Gurdjieff's power was such that he could enthrall people, but in response they would deify him. No matter what various malicious haters said about Gurdjieff, it was precisely this situation that he avoided his whole life. It is exactly for this reason, possibly, that he did not receive permissions to teach people – in its standard form – and precisely for that reason he was forced to behave repulsively and rudely. And even that did not save Gurdjieff from the superman status ascribed to him in the majority of recollections about him. If we take into account all of this, then we can guess why Gurdjieff rid himself of his devoted students from time to time. First, he had a limited mandate for teaching, which was not supposed to go beyond the bounds of his mission. And then from a certain time he could not give his students anything more without breaking his promises. And Georgy Ivanovich regarded his promises very seriously. Secondly, when devotion to the Work began to turn into servility regarding the Teacher, a person should have left Gurdjieff – even with hurt

and misunderstanding – but leave, for the sake of his own good. Someone like Ouspensky left on his own, but then the reasons for the departure were different. Gurdjieff pushed away people for the reason of either their state, or for the reason that teaching under his guidance could not be continued. Because he did not intend to form any schools, and furthermore, was not supposed to do that. And here we encounter the issue of how useful then the System he gave was, and for what reason in general he gave it.

Osho compared the position of a mystic to an ordinary person in the following way: a mystic sits on a tree, and a person sits under a tree. And thanks to his higher position, the mystic sees the cart which appears on the road several minutes earlier than the person sitting under the tree. What is the future for a person is the present for a mystic. Let us say the Sufi mystics knew about the threat of the final degradation of Sufism and sought means of changing this situation. In an orthodox setting, this was practically impossible, because precisely because of its orthodox nature, it had grown distorted. The mystics did not fear non-standard decisions, and therefore it is quite possible that Gurdjieff was sent to the West in order to verify the readiness of people to perception of new knowledge and new practices. The Sufis were searching for new lands and new people, which Idries Shah spoke about directly, and his first followers became adherents of the Gurdjieff teaching.

So that is how the whole picture looks – Gurdjieff brought not Truth, but a collection of ideas in which Truth was deliberately mixed with a lie. And this was one in order to test the average level of being of people who possibly later would be given more truthful statements. Only in this way can the obvious absurdity of some of Gurdjieff's theories be explained, because no matter how you look at it, he was not a fool. It was a provocation; it was a test of listeners and readers for the level of their understanding, and those who could separate the wheat from the chaff could count on

a real teaching. And we cannot know for sure how many people passed through this test, but we do know that to this day, numerous followers of the teaching of Gurdjieff-Ouspensky (which is already humorous) try to solve the riddles which one of the greatest mystics of the last century threw at them.

The time of mystics is different from the time of ordinary people. Mystics live by eternity and act by proceeding not from immediate tasks – although that can occur as well – but by the scale of decades and centuries. As is known, God's mills grind slowly, and mystics take direct part in keeping the millstones turning. It is hard for people to believe that there is Work whose effect can appear decades later, but for Sufis following the Will of God, this is a quite ordinary practice. Therefore, contemporaries may not know about the true purpose of the Work of this or that Sufi, just as they may not know that they are Sufis at all. That was how it was before, and it is that way now.

If we look at Gurdjieff's activity as researchers, then the entire essence of his provocations becomes much more comprehensible. To determine the form of conditionality and the fundamental ideas by which Western people are conditioned; their receptivity for new ideas; their readiness to perform the Work and for service – here is a large field for work. It can be said that to sacrifice one's life to research of this type is a major and imprudent stupidity, but if such a thought arises in you, that means your ego is now talking. It is searching for great meanings and great accomplishments. The essence of the Sufi Work consists in serving God, and here there are no important or unimportant things. It is just that what is required here and now must be done, without any hope that you will enjoy the fruits of your labors.

Not a single mystic is one-dimensional. Therefore, it is understood that the Work which Gurdjieff performed also had many aspects in it equal in significance. His *Beelzebub's Tales* is quite an ambiguous work, which has become for his followers a kind of



analogy to the Bible for Christians. It truly does contain many levels of meanings, but its main message is a report on the state of the minds of people with whom Gurdjieff dealt. And that report is intended not for you and me – it is addressed to those who initiated Gurdjieff to perform the research mission. We, too, of course, have something to profit from in this book, but in order to understand it, you must already possess that level of knowledge which is impossible to obtain without becoming a mystic. Approximately the same can be said about another one of Gurdjieff's books – *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. It is only in part autobiographical, and its main purpose is not so much to give keys to those who search for the Way as it is to test the level of the reader's being – that is, whether he is capable of distinguishing reality from fiction, or truth from falsehood.

Gurdjieff's strength of being brought some to a state of holy trembling, and others to a state of rejection and fear. Following his rule not to become a new god for people, Gurdjieff conducted himself with them sometimes exceedingly harshly, although it is not for us to judge about this. His holiness, manifesting itself from time to time, was balanced out by rudeness and bad habits, which not a single author of recollections could manage to ignore. And, strange as it is, it was this ambiguity of Gurdjieff's behavior and manifestations that continue to attract attention to his figure to this day. He himself made a mystery of himself, full of contradictions, and that turned out to be the best marketing trick; after all, *The Fourth Way* continues to be in demand and attracts people seeking powers. Now it means little that following this Way it is impossible to get anywhere, because no one understands that this Way itself was invented, created for the achievement of a specific goal which had no relationship to what real seekers are striving for. The Fourth Way is Gurdjieff's original invention, but it leads exactly to where practices of awareness can lead, and no more, and the entire entourage of ideas which it is seasoned are largely

useless. That has been proven by time, but people again and again, with stubbornness worthy of the best application, try to approximate Gurdjieff's state of being through a Way which in fact does not exist. And that completely characterizes the state of their own being. Truth is almost always mixed with a lie, but Gurdjieff made of this mixture an entire teaching. And that also demonstrates to us the level of his being – after all, to play seriously at what from the outset does not have the declared meaning really requires skill.

Gurdjieff was unique, as any mystic is unique. His level of self-sacrifice can be evaluated only by a person who has done a similar Work, and there are only a few such people. The work of Gurdjieff prepared the way for Idries Shah, and he created a situation in which the spread of Sufism in the West became possible. And even if this has not yet led to its renewal, the beginning has been made, and the millstones in the mills of God continue to turn. Perhaps we will see the flour that results from all of this even in our lifetime, and then likely we will understand more than we can understand now.

# **THE LINE OF TRANSMISSION**

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The development of human society directly depends on the possibility of preserving and transmitting knowledge accumulated by the previous generations. Without the accumulation of knowledge, there is no progress, and without the transmission of it to others, there is no development of ideas and their practical embodiment. As for what concerns external knowledge, it is all fairly simple. There exist descriptions of various types of laws, formulas and definitions which are now taught in schools and universities. This knowledge relates to the world, and therefore it can be mastered only at the level of the mind, by reading and memorizing. And learning to solve problems, of course. But it is somewhat different with mystical knowledge. It can be said it is precisely the opposite.

The transmission of mystical knowledge at the level of the mind is limited by the fact that it can be rather difficult to express mystical experiences adequately in words, and to perceive adequately even this “down to earth” expression is almost impossible. There is a similarity between the transmission of information about the outer world and about the hidden side of Being, and that consists of the fact that in both cases, a person receives a

collection of impressions about what he does not know. But in the first instance, this is information that has a relationship to reality, which is easily tested by experience; in the second, this is already the experience of a mystic, quite unique and describing the laws and manifestations of *another reality*. In fact, the language of expression of mystical experience most often is so complex that to understand it is sometimes harder than Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Furthermore, many mystics derive their own "formulas" by which people must come to God and acquire experience, and at times they contain radically different recommendations.

The transmission of mystical experience, from which essentially mystical knowledge emerges, in principle is a difficult task. All the more so because the experience itself can have different reasons, so to speak. There are certain "theoretical" revelations that are higher, such as, for example, the illuminations of Ibn Arabi at Mecca. And there is the practical experience of achievements of higher states of being in which it is possible to note stages and describe an entire Way to them, along with keys enabling a person to overcome the mechanicality of his reactions and to awaken himself to the perception of the mystical side of Reality. Furthermore, the experience exists of being in these higher states – at other levels of being possible for a person – and their own methods and their own language are needed for its transmission. Thus, the method and possibility of its transmission will directly depend on the way in which the experience was gained. Revelations can be transmitted only through expression of what generally can be formulated in words, and although some specific recommendations can be found in them, for example, how to pray and live in general, this is rare. Most often, they contain some general descriptions of Reality and different levels of Creation, in particular, the level of the existence of God. Or, as He is called in more modern writings, the level of the Absolute, or perhaps even the Source of everything. The language of revela-

tions is usually complicated, the contents vague, and they basically provide rich fodder for interpreters who translate the exalted ambiguous meanings into something more understandable and down to earth. There is no other form for conveying revelations – only in their expression, seasoned with the sauce of description of one's own experiences caused by them, and that is all. Even so, there are no doubt that the oral or written transmission of revelations produce a very inspiring action on seekers, bringing them a certain good.

Practical experience related to the achievement of higher states of being is conveyed according to the principle, “do as I do.” Here, as a rule, the presence of a living teacher is necessary, and in fact in our time, direct teaching most often is replaced by the organization of seminars and what are called *satsangs*. In transmitting such experience, living contact between the teacher and the seeker is simply necessary, although, theoretically, you can try to gain some practical knowledge from books in which it is described, although usually this is less effective. With a living teaching, there is always a practical part aimed at helping the seeker to repeat the path of the teacher, and as a result, to attain the same state of being. Far from always, however, a Master or teacher may precisely describe the reasons for his achievement. When the reasons and consequences of spiritual transformation are not always clear or are extraordinary, the principle of “do as I do” ceases to yield the desired effect. Porfiry Ivanov taught immersion in cold water, because the true reason for the change of his being was unknown to himself. With Osho and many others, a similar story occurred.

The gulf between the former and new state emerging after transformation -- after the descent of the impulse of God's Grace -- is sometimes so great that a coherent transmission of the achievement becomes almost impossible, because it ceases to interest the one who attained it. Acquiring higher Truth seems unconditioned

by previous efforts, and they seem senseless and useless in some way. Then it remains only to describe the state in which you are in now, in order to somehow help those who search for answers to their questions from you. Lone gurus such as Jiddu Krishnamurti are most often in such a situation, and what they relate may inspire one to a search, but help little in the practical sense. Their knowledge for a time becomes a kind of beacon toward which seekers orient themselves, but the difficulties of verbal transmission and the turning of words into inaccurate notions in people's minds nullifies all the possible use from it. Well, or almost all.



The preservation of mystical knowledge is possible only when the chain of succession exists – and first of all, this must be the succession of experience. Knowledge clothed in words means little; the main thing is one's own experience, without which understanding of the real sense of the words you have learned is simply impossible. The experience of revelations are accessible only selectively; the experience of achieving higher states of consciousness and being are accessible to every real seeker.

The direct transmission of experience is what guarantees the preservation of mystical knowledge. Such is possible if a certain *system* of teaching people exists, which to a certain extent guarantees the reception of one's own mystical experience for all those studying. Here you cannot get by with seminars and trainings, because human nature is such that repetitive action on it does not yield lasting results. Perhaps with few exceptions. In order to overcome one's habit of identifying oneself with emotions and the mind, in order to develop perception to the extent when mystical experience becomes accessible to it, a person must do certain work on himself, which is hard to carry out without the proper guid-

ance. Therefore, in all ages, mystical schools were created which described their Way – in accordance with the time, place and people. That is, at the level of knowledge which existed at that time, taking into account cultural and religious traditions customary where the mystics worked, and finally noting the state of the people seeking the teaching. From age to age, all these factors change, and depending on them, the mystical Work takes on various forms.

Mystics have existed in all times. Many of them saw their task to transmit and preserve mystical knowledge received by them in various forms and almost never without preliminary efforts. But knowledge is not preserved in books – they can serve as an impetus and a foundation for an internal search, but no more. The search must be carried out by a person, and only he who has achieved spiritual transformation may be a new bearer and preserver of what the Sufis call Knowledge. It cannot be full-fledged unless it is confirmed by experience, if it is not the result of one's own experience. Knowledge about God has no meaning if you do not feel His Presence, if you do not sense a connection with Him, and if you do not receive an answer to your prayers. You can collect everything there is, information about following the Will of God and of service to Him, but until you yourself sense the impulse of Will and fulfill what is demanded of you, your knowledge will be the equivalent of empty philosophizing. So only he who has advanced along the Way, working on himself, can preserve, accumulate and transmit Knowledge.

Therefore, the problem of direct transmission of mystical knowledge was always an urgent question for mystics. It can be said that for many of them, this problem was one of the most important. They created exercises and practices that were supposed to lead their students to gaining their own experience, and that means to a certain knowledge – as a minimum about themselves. But to penetrate the curtains which close people's

minds is hard even with the best practices. Certain limitations always exist – in both the student and in the exercise he is performing. For example, there is a restriction on time, when the opportunity for an internal breakthrough or transformation arises and disappears without being used. There are individual limitations for each student connected to his external life – with work or the place and conditions of residence, due to which both the performance of practices and live contact with a Master become difficult. But the main restrictions in teaching are hidden in the student himself. These are the conditionality and prejudice of his mind; customary psycho-emotional reactions; and a mass of suppressed energies in the ethereal body. The habit of identifying attention with all reactions and ideas of the mind is also a serious obstacle in the work on oneself, and a lot of time is also spent on overcoming it – and growing awareness.

Direct teaching enables the verbal transmission of knowledge to be done more effectively through constant contact, when the student's blunders can be indicated again and again, gradually breaking down his false conceptions of the Way, about himself, and other things. But that is still not enough. Therefore, the majority of Masters *share their being* with their students. In part this occurs naturally – being in the field of presence, in the field of Consciousness of the Master already produces an effect on the student, raising his *own presence* in himself. The student grows faster and easier due to this state of awareness, and in general his efforts in internal work begin to bear more fruits. A person can grow accustomed to anything, however – even the presence of the Master is not an exception to this rule. If a student does not apply constant serious efforts toward growing his awareness, then upon reaching a certain “ceiling,” the field of the Master no longer advances him in any way. This fact contains the explanation for why many people have found themselves side by side with great Masters in the course of many years, but they themselves never

reached the heights of the state of awareness. They relaxed – after all, the field of the Master contains the sense of comfort which turns into a trap for many students who have decided for themselves that everything is already fine.

Out of the necessity of transmitting experience and knowledge are born methods enabling the realization of it, bypassing the mind of the student. It is possible, for example, to create a situation in which a student can himself sense the Divine Presence. You can share with the student certain aspects of the higher levels of being which will become definitive for him and an impulse toward advancement, and new experience. Even so, it cannot be said that the creation of such situations somehow radically influences the student's being or greatly changes it. Basically, such demonstrations are supposed to give a person a taste of what is not attainable to him yet, but toward which he may go. Moreover, without a certain *preparedness* of a student, expressed in an already fairly-developed perception – such a demonstration is almost impossible to conduct. The Master may produce certain effects on the student from the level of his being, but most often he simply becomes a conductor of higher impulses. As a rule, this is developing impulses, although sometimes the Master may become a conductor of God's Grace, and then the student obtains a chance to pass through a stage of transformation. Of course, it will be far from full, but it will bring real changes in the student's being. Again – to the extent that the student will be *ready* for the acceptance of Grace.

Among the impulses coming through the Master, there exists even the impulse of Knowledge which represents itself as pure Light. Even so, the transmission of knowledge in the direct sense of that word does not take place. The Master does not transmit anything concrete, and the impulse of Knowledge also does not contain a clearly-designated message. Knowledge is acquired by the student through the effect of the energy of Light, which –

breaking through the curtains of the mind and feelings – enables a person to see the truth about himself, or some question whose solution is extremely important for him. The student's readiness for the reception of the impulse of Knowledge has great significance here, too, because no Light can penetrate to a person who has closed all the doors and windows to it. The lack of desire to interact, or internal resistance arising for the most diverse reasons make a student *unprepared* for such transmissions, although he himself may nevertheless believe that he is quite ready; it is just that the Master is not trying hard enough. But neither grace nor the most high impulses can be transmitted to a person who closes himself, even if unconsciously.

Practices and the changes that come with them give to the student his own experience of passing through the stages of the Way. What can be done, however, if none of the students – for various reasons – have turned out to be in a state to pass through the Way to the end? Then he *knows* only a part of the Way, and it is good if the student himself understands and admits this. But if the Master departs this life, before he can manage to carry out the full transmission of Knowledge – what to do then? And what is this full transmission, anyway?

Truth is endless, and the Way lasts for each person who goes along it exactly as long as he lives in the body. That at least is what is believed. The entire fulness of Knowledge of an individual Master or Teacher will be equal to which part of the Truth was revealed to him on the Way, and which experience he gained on it. Truth is known only through interaction with God – in following His Will or in later stages of the Way. At the earlier stages, the student receives Truth in the form of words, in the form of information, but not as experience. He is not yet capable of seeing Truth directly; he may only learn to distinguish truth and a lie in himself and in other people. Illusions fills his mind, and only

when they are dispersed will Truth begin to appear before him. This occurs to the extent of advancement along the Way, parallel to development of the higher abilities of perception.

Experience of the Truth becomes part of a mystic's experience, but it must be separated from that experience that was obtained by him in practical work. And although Truth is an integral part of a mystic's Knowledge, it cannot go into a transmission "by inheritance." Thus, only the knowledge which was obtained in fact in practice, in efforts, can be transmitted; whereas what is revealed later, as if on its own, alas, cannot be transmitted. Even words, which do not help very much become entirely useless regarding the highest Truth – which incorporates all contradictions and much else.

Mystical knowledge refers to methods of interaction with the Supreme, to laws according to which it occurs, and are hidden from ordinary perception to the side of reality. Truth is the culmination of this knowledge which is known by a person and changes him, but he cannot become its owner – only a conduit. The person who has known Truth changes more to the extent it is revealed to him, but he does not possess it; rather, he is bound to it. Since Truth is one of the attributes of God, it cannot be any other way, because God possesses a person, and not the other way around. Thus does Truth possess the person who has turned to it, but the mystic can only lead and broadcast it to the world to the extent he can. Whether this is poems, mystical tracts or special forms of practice – it depends on the situation of the mystic himself; how he expresses his experience and how part of the Truth will appear to the world through him. But it is impossible to organize a direct transmission of Truth even for the most prepared students.

In the Sufi tradition, various types of transmission of spiritual (mystical) knowledge are distinguished. There is transmission by inheritance – from father to son or from father to foster (spiritually adopted) son. Now, unfortunately, these transmissions have

become a basis for the degeneration of many Sufi orders, when spiritual power is transmitted by inheritance without serious grounds for this – in the sense of the level of advancement of the son or the nephew on the Way. In theory, the son of a Sufi Master or sheikh can pass through the entire Way under the guidance of his father and take his place quite deservedly. But now we see a somewhat different picture where what is happening is not the transfer of knowledge but the transfer of power.

There is also the transmission of knowledge from a Master to a student which occurs in the process of study, over a fairly long portion of time. What can be transmitted beyond the bounds of words? How can the Master's experience be transmitted to the student in the fullest way? How much does the possibility of making such a transmission depend on them both? And here is the strange answer: if the way continues until the very death of the mystic, then during his life, it is not possible at all to transmit the entire possible fullness of experience, because something is happening and being revealed almost constantly. New aspects of the Truth, let us say, are not subject to transmission in any way, but new experience still comes, one way or another. Therefore, I would put it this way: at each stage of the Way, there exists the possibility of transfer of experience in accordance with that stage, or if the student comes when the Master has already disappeared into God, then one of the likely most effective practices of transfer of experience through direct contact remains – disappearance into the Master. In Sufism, this practice has the name "*fana-fi-sheikh*," and it enables the student to try to unite his being with the being of the Master, and through this connection receive the transmission of knowledge and accelerate the process of his advancement on the Way.

One's experience and one's knowledge corresponds to each stage of the Way. It is impossible to accommodate the sum of all of them at once. Or to be more precise, it is impossible in the ordi-



nary manner. But the mystical possibility of transmission of *all the experience at once* arises only when there is a vital, urgent need for it. As a rule, it does not arise in principle in direct study with the constant opportunity for contact with the Master. Teaching follows its course, some kind of transmissions are happening all the time, and the student grabs them in abundance, especially if he is already applying the maximum of efforts to work on himself. Therefore, a gradual transmission of knowledge takes place, which each receives and assimilates exactly to the extent of his readiness and need for it. In that case, they receive a transmission of knowledge, perhaps a great deal, and it is carried out sometimes almost unnoticed by them.

The individual experience of the Master cannot help but leave a mark on all of his Work, including what concerns his work with students as well. He cannot impose his experience, because doing so would suppress the student's individuality and his uniqueness in what concerns the Way to God. Nevertheless, there exist keys by which *inner doors* are opened and they are the same for everyone. For example, the opening of the Heart does not occur without an act of acceptance – when a person passes through internal or external situations which previously were unacceptable for him – accepting them, letting go and relaxing. This moment is what serves as a key, leading to the miracle of the opening of the Heart. Acceptance is one of the main keys on the Way, and the easier the student can accept what is given him by life, the Master and God, the faster he advances, changes, and grows.

If the Master teaches only from his own experience, his teaching will suit only a small number of people close to him in construction of essence. If he can detach himself from his own experience, choosing the most important – the very keys to passage of the Way and attaining spiritual transformation, the

keys to interaction with God – then his Work maybe useful for the most diverse types of people. If he detaches completely from himself, becoming a pure conduit of the Supreme, then he may work with everyone, but the gulf between him and people will become too great, and instead of learning from him, they will make of him an idol. For effective work with people, the Master must have something within in him that would enable people to see the human in him; this enables him to avoid deification on the one hand, and also provides hope for a breakthrough to those who are still concerned about their imperfection and are tormented from inferiority complexes.

If the Master is *too far from the human*, an even more acute sensation of their own inferiority and “deformity” arises in those who associate with him. They lose any hope of changes of their being and rapidly fall into the temptation of worship and praise of the Master, hoping now only for a miracle or for his “all-powerful” help. Therefore, of course, the false master always strives to manifest as much inhumanity as possible in his behavior, and demands from his followers the observation of almost inhuman asceticism and sacrifices. Thus a break is artificially created, thanks to which the false teacher obtains reverence and authority.

Following God’s Will enables one to surpass prior individual mystical experience, but gradually from following new experience arises that which also must be surpassed. Only the keys must be left through which the stage of renunciation of one’s own will in favor of God’s Will may be passed by others to maximum effectiveness. They should be taught.

When the Master’s individual experience is received within the framework of following a certain Way, then the Way becomes the context in which the transmission is carried out. Then what is called the *line of Transmission* appears; that is, the chain of succession of Knowledge and Work appears. In Sufism, the line of Transmission from the living Master is called the *silsila* and is traced

usually from the Prophet Muhammad and the righteous caliphs to our times. Affiliation with the line of Transmission of *silsila* involves obtaining permission to teach people and automatically confirms the legitimacy of a sheikh's or Master's actions. This, so to speak, is a visible and documented line of Transmission which enables the protection of the Work from invasion by imposters and the preservation of mystical knowledge. And also to transmit spiritual power to him who really deserves it.

*Silsila* – in the ideal – is supposed to be a mystical transmission of both experience and knowledge. Despite a certain bureaucratism which is expressed in the obtaining of the *ijaza* by a newly-made mentor, the essence of *silsila* should be to remain mystical. *Ijaza* is official permission to teach people – it is formulated in writing, and is essentially an official Sufi document which must be presented upon demand and necessity. But the new sheikh or Master becomes the preserver and conduit of Knowledge, as I have already noted above.

**T**he Mystical Path is full of mysteries and secrets just as all our lives are, in fact. Sometimes it preserves itself, and when there is no opportunity to carry out the direct transmission of knowledge during the life of the Master, this occurs after his death, without long study by the student. A mystic who has received a transmission in this way – from the spirit of a dead person – is called an Uwaisi in Sufism, after the name of the first person who received it from the Prophet himself. He was Uwais al-Qarani, who never met with Muhammad but who received knowledge from him, however. The changes that followed after this transmission produced such a strong impression on Uwais' contemporaries that his name became emblematic, and became the name for all mystics who obtained knowledge in similar fashion.

There are examples that the phenomenon of the transmission of experience from the spirit of a dead person to the spirit of a living person (figuratively speaking) existed long before the appearance of Sufism. It was in Sufism, however, that the testimonies of this transmission were most preserved, and even the image of the Khidr (or Khizr) arose, which appears to Sufis some-

times in dreams and sometimes while awake and instructs them, that is, teaches them. He transmits knowledge.

It was believed that the Lord chooses a person who should receive knowledge in mystical fashion, and sends one of his saints for carrying out this transmission. Understandably, a Sufi comes to a seeker on the Sufi Way for transmission; it could be no other way. The Uwaisi mystics were considered to be chosen by God, but even so, if an Uwaisi did not enter official teaching with a sheikh, and did not receive the *ijaza* on common grounds, the Sufi community did not recognize him as their own. Truly, there exists great temptation to announce that you have received a transmission, for example, from Baha-ud-Din Naqshband himself, and to begin to broadcast all sorts of dubious truths, basing them on your status as an Uwaisi. Therefore, a strict attitude toward such mystics on the part of the Sufis is quite understandable.

Since I myself am an Uwaisi mystic, the various sides of this question are well known to me – both the attitude of the Sufis, and the wish for all kinds of exalted personages to pass themselves off as the latest Uwaisi mystic. But I also know what is not known to those who do not belong to this line of Transmission, to which I am fortunate to belong. I have already written a lot about the conditions without which it is impossible to become an Uwaisi mystic, and therefore I will speak briefly about this here. In order to become prepared for a transmissions of experience from the “spirit” of a dead person, you must possess good medium abilities, but the main thing is to have in yourself a very strong need for guidance, a need for a Master. It is to this need that those Masters do respond whose transmission of knowledge has remained incomplete.

Creation is grand and endless; therefore, of course, there existed Uwaisi mystics connected only with the Master from whom they received the transmission. Moreover, if they themselves did not find a person who could receive it from them, then

there the chain breaks off and no line of succession is formed. Such a thing does happen, because the opportunity for making *this* sort of transmission of knowledge also exists for a limited time. If it nevertheless occurs, then what is called the line of Transmission begins to be formed, although it can no longer be fixed on the physical plane of existence.

The ephemeral body lives somewhat longer than the physical; the body of the mind lives longer than the ephemeral body. The mental body, fully developed during a person's life, is preserved even longer; I would say even an order of magnitude longer. Thanks to the mental body, the opportunity for the transmission of knowledge even appears after the physical body of a mystic ceases its existence. There, on the mental plane, the line of Transmission of Uwaisi mystics does exist, and in fact there are more than one.

There are quite a few differences between the *silsila* and the Uwaisis' line of Transmission. For example, you cannot know all the Masters who created it. There are no lists or documents with names and titles, because each one who has received such a transmission may know only from whom he received it, and no more. Such is the essence of this action – you receive the experience of a specific mystic who has passed along a certain path and transformation, and no other additional historical details are contained in it. There is only knowledge, only the spiritual and mystical component of experience. The transmission, of course, very strongly influences a person at the very outset, but then he acquires his own spiritual experience, and this is what is transmitted to the next seeker.

There are a number of rules concerning the Uwaisi transmission from the Master to the seeker. First, it can only be done one time. One person can become the student of a deceased mystic, and the experience may be transmitted only once. Second, this transmission may be done in the course of a limited time, that is

when only a few decades have passed since the departure of the mystic. It will be impossible to carry it out in a thousand years, because the mental body is also not eternal. The interval in which the transmission is still possible does not exceed one hundred of our earthly years, I would suppose. It is different with each Uwaisi mystic, and if in the course of this interval a person has not been found who is prepared to accept the impulse of knowledge, then it disappears forever and the chain of transmission is broken.

In Sufi texts, cases are described of the appearance to seekers of one and the same mystic named Khidr (or Khyzr), who was the secret helper of Sufis and was also an Uwaisi. Idries Shah called him the secret helper of Sufis, and judging from stories and fables connected to Khidr, he also sometimes made the Uwaisi transmission, and repeatedly, in fact. Taking into account that the transmission may be received even from a mystic unknown to you, especially in the Middle Ages when dissemination of information was much worse than now, it must be admitted that Khidr became a composite character, to whom were ascribed in fact the transmissions of other mystics and their appearances to people. Thus, yet another myth arose in which truth was mixed with fiction, but the truth is nevertheless there. The seeker received the transmission of an energy impulse, which changed his being, from a certain person unknown to him, and he could only say of him that he was clearly a Sufi. He had no idea of his name, although he gradually assimilated the experience and realized how much this experience changed him. Khidr began to personify all the mystics who had transmitted knowledge from the other world, and if a lot of people began to turn to him for help, then thanks to some Sufi egreore, he could acquire his own form – for example, a shimmering, green robe. And in this form, in fact, some messages from God are brought to those who need them, and most often appearing to them in dreams. So the story with Khidr has several layers, as in fact the majority of real mystical stories.



Only the Uwaisi transmission guarantees the reception by the seeker of all the possible fullness of the experience of the mystic who carried it out. It occurs either simultaneously, or in two or three sessions, after certain intervals of time. The seeker receives an impulse of energy containing a certain “mold” of the experience of the Master, from whom the transmission is coming. Like a hologram, the impulse contains something like the footprint of the Master’s ephemeral body and the body of his mind, plus it contains information about his experience, or to be more precise, his understanding which has grown out of the experiencing of passing along the Way and carrying out the Work. In a mysterious fashion, the impulse brings with it the possibility of acquiring certain skills which the Master had. And what is more, through the transmission, the Uwaisi may convey even habits the mystic had who made it. Upon reception of the impulse of the transmission, no transformation occurs, but a process of assimilation of another’s experience begins, higher by comparison to your own.

It is rather complicated to describe this process, because it flows latently and not very noticeably for a person. It seems as if at first, nothing in particular is occurring – and it takes a rather long time and then “suddenly” your understanding grows, and the things which you understood little of quite recently become evident. What is not your experience becomes yours in a hidden way, and enables you to *know* what you yourself have not yet even lived. The impulse of experience-knowledge differs from the transmission by the Master of the impulse of knowledge, about which I wrote above and which consists of pure Light. Here a transmission of concrete and to a certain extent personified knowledge takes place, based on experience. The stronger the receptivity of the seeker, the fuller and more rapidly its assimilation takes place, and the weaker it is, the longer this process takes. In live work with the Master, the same processes take place, but there the impulses of experience-knowledge are transmitted in

small portions, whereas in the Uwaisi tradition almost everything is given immediately. In live work, the student receives the transmission of experience also in impulses, according to the measure of his readiness – and sometimes years of conversations and performance of practices go into preparing him for this.

Gurdjieff claimed that knowledge was material, exactly like the experience of receiving the transmission of an Uwaisi; after all, he himself was just such a mystic. Yes, transmission of experience occurs through the impulse of energy, which can be considered wholly material. Gurdjieff, however, disseminated the materiality of knowledge to the whole world, saying that it can and must be gathered everywhere, but there he somewhat overdid it, so to say. If he were speaking about experience, which really can be obtained from everywhere, although experience is already materialized inside us into knowledge, then there would be nothing to find fault in his statement.

British scientists, if I recall correctly, not so long ago made a discovery concerning people's heredity. According to their information, with age, the experience acquired by a person is reflected in DNA structures through the accumulation of specific protein markers containing this experience in a coded form. It has long been noted that "later" children whose parents are already over 40 years of age at the moment of conception are more capable and talented than their peers born from parents over 20 years of age. Possibly, it is the experience accumulated by more mature parents that is transmitted in the genes and makes the child more talented. Therefore – theoretically – direct inheritance of spiritual power from father to son as well has a real basis, although in practice, usually it does not justify itself very often.

In any event, the Master transmits his experience to his students not only at the verbal level. Examples from his life give students an algorithm of possible action – certain illustrations of how they ought (or ought not to) behave in various situations. A

true spiritual transmission consists of the Master transmitting to his students a part of himself – in the form of an energy “mold,” which fits into their internal structures, changing them. In the Uwaisi tradition, this takes place by virtue of the acute need of the seeker for guidance when he searches with his whole heart. Then, the possibility arises of receiving help from someone from whom you do not expect it at all. In living studies, such an opportunity occurs more rarely – for the reasons which I have written above. In Sufism, the opportunity of transmission of experience-knowledge is best prepared by the practice of melting into or disappearing into the sheikh (the Master) – *fana-fi-sheikh*. Working with the image of the Master, the student prepares himself for the possible reception of the transmission which is even so, carried out by the Master himself. And if the student becomes prepared for it, then it takes place.

There are different kinds of Uwaisi mystics. Someone receives the transmission, but does not go along the Way, being content with the knowledge which begins to appear in him and with the opportunities that arise in the seeker as a result of his reception of experience of a higher order. Taking into account the conditions accompanying the opportunity of a transmission, that happens rarely. Most often, thanks to the transmission, the seeker acquires a sense of the direction in which he must move, and continues to apply efforts to work on himself, revealing along the way the knowledge which was received “from on high.” The impulse of knowledge-experience then is revealed gradually – when the seeker reaches the next change in the level of his awareness, then the next “revelations” occurs and the surge in understanding, and the Way becomes more clear and concrete.

When the experience of the mystic is received in the context of a certain Way, then the transmission contains part of this context. Only for that reason does the appearance of the line of Transmission and the chain of succession become possible. And while we

do not know all the mystics who have taken part in its creation, he who has developed in himself the perception of the mental plan can see it – as a separate line, standing outside the common Pattern (and perhaps even *above* it), and guaranteeing the preservation of that part of it with which is connected a given field of Sufi Work. The impulse of another's experience inevitably pushes a person to the search for conditions similar to those in which it was received, and thus even he who is far from Sufism gradually turns to it.

The internal expanse of a person, in creation of which the ethereal body and the mental body take part is truly enormous. It can contain within it an enormous amount of energy and anyone who has worked with his suppressed emotions, desires or feelings knows this from his own experience. The impulse of the Uwaisi transmission lands in this expanse, and gradually is “dissolved” into it, influencing both the structures of the mind and the state of the ethereal body. Something similar actually occurs as well with the acquisition of the so-called *attributes of God*, which occurs at the stage of the Sufi Way, called the stage of *internal baqa* – residing in God. The attribute also comes as an impulse of energy which is then assimilated for a fairly long time, and the changes brought by it are manifested far from immediately.

If a seeker who has received an Uwaisi transmission does not rest on what has been achieved, then at some point he will exceed the experience given to him, acquiring his own realization on the Way. Then the effect of the transmission is ended, and the newly-made mystic follows God, developing his uniqueness in this interaction. The knowledge received by him in the transmission ceases to be very important and even may be subject to criticism, and is also clarified and supplemented in some way. In the final analysis, the mystic begins to rely now only on his experience, which is also subjected to re-evaluation at each new stage of the Way. And only later – after the departure of the mystic from the physical plane of

our reality – does the possibility appear of transmitting the entire sum of this experience (or at least its main part) to him who needs it. Thus, the preservation of knowledge and the line of Transmission occurs, and thus the mystical Work is renewed and supported. Necessity drives our world, and since such a line of Transmission exists – fantastic from the perception of non-mystics – that means the need to support mystical Work is so high that even the death of the Master is not an obstacle to its renewal and continuance. Apparently, the value of this Work, which is conducted invisibly for people, is so high that the Lord by His Grace created the possibility for its continuance under those conditions in which, it would seem, it must disappear. Therefore, the Uwaisi line of Transmission will exist as long as humanity exists, and new mystics will appear as if out of nowhere, reviving and renewing the Work that was about to be extinguished.

In conclusion, I will say that in Sufism, several Uwaisi lines of Transmission existed, and the one to which I belong has relationship to the Naqshbandi order. And although it is impossible to know exactly the names of the predecessors who supported and continued this line of Transmission – there were quite a few of them! – I know that Baha-ud-Din himself is one of those who was also in it. Even so, it was begun long before him, and I cannot see its origin. There were such Uwaisi lines of Transmission in other Sufi orders as well, and the transmission of experience in them bore the imprint of the particularities of the practices of each one of them. I do not know if these lines of Transmission were interrupted or whether they are still active. It would be quite logical to suppose, however, that new Uwaisi mystics keep arising seemingly out of nowhere in the world again and again – after all, God is great and his Grace is endless.



# **GURDJIEFF AND I**

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Every human life is a drama. Sometimes the elements of tragedy comedy or even farce prevail in it, but at its root, human life always remains a drama.

“Judge not, lest ye be judged,” Jesus once said, but people either do not remember these words, or ignore them when they undertake to make conclusions and inferences on the Work of certain mystics. To judge others means to justify yourself, and to discuss who has attained what and come to what – this is the best way not to remember where you yourself are. You can totally forget yourself only by switching to an analysis of the situations of those around you, and to know everything about everyone without knowing about yourself. Or by trying to forget what you know about yourself and what you do not at all want to know about yourself.

Without noting anything about themselves, people nevertheless undertake to judge the life and deeds of mystics. They judge them, as is appropriate, by their deeds; if one of the mystics has departed our world without leaving behind anything except a teaching; if those people now have no one to learn from, then usually such a result is evaluated as unambiguously unsatisfactory

and unsuccessful. They do not know that the work of mystics does not have to be available for general view, and that it is not at all required that they must create comfortable conditions for “new” seekers. The chain of succession does not at all have to be visible for all those who wish; taking into account that people fall under the influences of authorities and celebrities, it must be hidden, so that the successor does not drown under the flood of all sorts of idiots.

Nevertheless, for some reason it is considered that only the successor of a teaching equal to his predecessor, or best of all, superseding him in everything, will be an indicator of the success of the Work of a given mystic. Even so, no one imagines that the successor far from always must continue the cause of his teacher since his task, too, in the following of the Will is perhaps different, and he himself will obtain his unique experience from which he will begin to act. Ordinary minds like copies and a predictable path, but there is neither the one nor the other on the mystical Path. Modern adherents of Sufism yearn to discover the so-called *idjaz* (permission to teach people given by the same patented mentor) from each one who claims to possess Knowledge or a confirmation of membership in the chain of transmission of the *silsila* – that is, the list of teachers who preceded your Master, and through whom you and he received it. All of this spiritual bureaucracy appeared precisely because now there are no high-ranking mystics who do not need pieces of paper to understand with whom they are dealing; and it contributed to the fact that ordinary individuals could declare themselves true Sufis. A closed heart needs a mind in order to “understand” the spiritual level of a person, and a mind needs rules, rituals and certain confirmations of the right of the mystic to the possession of the Truth. God – as the Source of Truth and right to its transmission – is forgotten, and now everyone is ruled by dynasties and the names of those who have the right to transmit a right. This is exactly how mystical movements and schools degenerate.

**A**t one time I myself was inclined to judge people about which I had no idea, by what they had left behind them. It seemed to me that I was capable of understanding what a given mystic had left behind. And if his Work seemed to hang in midair, and it was not understandable how to become as he was, then that meant that it had not succeeded very well. There are no doubts that this was fostered by the books of Osho, in which he criticized everyone and everything; for immature and insecure minds, the overthrow of authorities has always seemed a very attractive notion. In fact, I did not consider even the Work of Osho himself to be very successful, because all of his “attained” students with whom I managed to talk with, I would not consider examples of what should be the attainment of Truth or Love. None of them had *individuality*, and that is exactly what a person who has reached spiritual realization attains. All of them parasited off the legacy of Osho – off his practices, words (thanks to the fact that he left more than enough) and his approach to life, adding their own, as a rule, rather primitive “understanding” of it.

Thanks to Osho’s speeches, under whose influence I was under for rather a long time, the Work of Gurdjieff seemed unsuc-

cessful to me as well, although I did not know even its approximate goal. All seekers think that the main purpose of any Master is to lay the way for those who come after him, and no one understands that the Way must be laid for yourself by yourself, and that the maximum that a Master can do is to prepare you for passage along your own Way. Yes, the Master is a door; yes, the Master embodies the Way, but having embarked on it, you begin your own journey. The help of the Master is inestimable, but only you can pass along the proposed Way, and your experience will still be only yours, and quite unique. No one can do for you what you must do yourself.

The world is constructed in such a way that everything in it opposes the Work of the mystic, and therefore it practically never can be successful from the perspective of the ordinary human conception of success. Even so, they work, and now I understand that for many of them, leaving behind a digestible teaching or even a whole school of followers headed by the “lawful” successor of this teaching is not the main purpose for many of them.

Like many other seekers, I learned about Gurdjieff from Ouspensky’s book, *In Search of the Miraculous*. I read it in early 1993, and it made a quite strong impression on me. First of all, of course, the image of Gurdjieff itself drawn by Ouspensky impressed me – the image of a person of Knowledge, who had entirely unordinary views on *all things*; a person who possessed incredible abilities and powers, and on the whole of a person who was on an entirely different level of being compared to others. If the content of the teaching outlined by Ouspensky in his book is not taken into account, the image of the Master alone was already enough to want to become as strong and wise as he. In fact, the majority of those who go to modern Gurdjieff groups or who are interested in his teaching first of all are drawn to the image of Gurdjieff created both by Ouspensky and other authors of memoirs with names like *The Unknowable Gurdjieff*. As a rule those

who are drawn to Gurdjieff are looking for strength and to a lesser extent, those who wish to create in their minds a beautiful, mystically-based yet consistent picture of the world. His ideas to this day remain quite original although (let his followers forgive me!) largely not very useful from a practical perspective. To be more precise, attempts to apply them in practice lead people into a dead end of thinking and endless philosophizing. Just as happened in the end with Ouspensky.

Of course, I wanted strength. The knowledge which Ouspensky set out on the whole was interesting, but a significant part of it at that time had almost no meaning for me. I was looking for what every real seeker is seeking – not descriptions of the laws of the world, which although they weighed on me, I could nevertheless do nothing about them – I needed concrete recipes for advancing to the state of being which Gurdjieff possessed. They were nowhere to be found, and as I understand now, they could not be.

There are numerous situations and states which cannot be understood with the mind; they can only be experienced, and the mind later chooses certain words for describing what is lived. Faith in the power of the mind or, if you like, reason is very widespread among modern atheistically-conditioned people. It seems to them that everything can be understood if it is well explained, and therefore intellectuals usually live with illusions of understanding of what concerns internal work and mystical experience. Both Gurdjieff's fate and experience were too unique to try to convey them in words; moreover, his Work required drawing attention to himself, and the mysteriousness of the Teaching and the source of the Teaching were part of the concept for its embodiment. Describing the exercises that Gurdjieff did in various places under the leadership of various people was pointless due to the fact that they had to be performed under guidance; furthermore, at that time the tendency was still strong to conceal practice and

knowledge from the uninitiated. The mystical Way was the domain of the chosen, and this was emphasized by the outer secrecy of the activity of Sufi orders and the secrecy of their practices. Now, much knowledge has become open, and for that reason it has been immediately corrupted, whereas the mystical Way, just as it was the domain of the chosen, has remained so.

Even so, Gurdjieff was not a Teacher of the mystical Way, although undoubtedly he was a Master; the purpose of his work with Western people was different. He wrote about this himself, but people are usually not inclined to take seriously what they don't like, therefore few believed that his purpose was to continue research into human psychology. Of the Western person, I would add myself. And it would be impossible to say that at the moment of the beginning of his Work in Russia and then in the West, Gurdjieff did not know human psychology. He understood it wonderfully, which is absolutely clear from his published conversations with his students and even from the book *In Search of the Miraculous*. That means his task was not so much the research of psychology as the study of the peculiarities of the conditionality of Western people, their typical psycho-emotional reactions and the possibilities of conducting the Work with them.

The first thing that amazed me in Ouspensky's book was Gurdjieff's claim that all people are machines. All of my conditionality rose up against this, and to this day I recall how severely outraged I was for several hours in a row. When I finally calmed down, the truth of Gurdjieff's words were suddenly revealed to me, and I seemed to see myself from the side – a young man, living under the power of habits and neurotic reactions, inclined to be offended over any excuse and dependent on the most diverse external influences. I understood that Gurdjieff described my situation quite accurately, in which I had been a prisoner of my mechanical reactions, and therefore I could quite well be called a machine. This discovery sobered me a great deal, and next I began to read with doubled interest and diligence. Undoubtedly, Ouspensky's book contained numerous revelations, but the second strong impression (and extremely useful information) was for me the place where the practice of self-awareness is described. The image of the double-edged arrow, pointed both in and out of oneself simultaneously helped me to understand *how to really* began to be aware of myself. Before that, I had read of awareness in Osho, but from what was read, I could not understand at

all *how* to practice it. Ouspensky's book helped me a lot in this, and from that moment, awareness of myself (or self-remembering) became my chief practice.

The difficulty for the majority of seekers trying to practice awareness is like what I once experienced – lack of understanding. For a person who has become accustomed to living in his mind, for whom attention was never a separate force, a separate energy, and always merged with external things or internal states, to understand how to separate and divide attention is rather difficult. It is not enough to receive exact instructions; you must understand how to carry them out in reality. Problems usually arise from this. The separation and holding of attention is a practical skill which once he has mastered it, a person can always use. It is not easy to come out of the habitual identification with the mind, but regular, correctly-performed efforts always yield results. In understanding how to act correctly, Gurdjieff's words, as expressed by Ouspensky, helped me. The beginning of the self-awareness practice became for me the first step toward embarking on the Way, and toward discovering it at all.



Just as it was then, so it was later – Gurdjieff’s level of being seemed to me to be an unattainable height. With time, however, I understood that the level of being of the mystic can be different at different moments – that is, it may change. There is a basic level of being – for example, the degree of fullness of awareness, the connection with God and the opportunity to interact with Him and a number of other “parameters,” in fact different for each mystic. And there are opportunities and super-efforts, emerging at a time when the mystic, for example, becomes a conduit for a certain Will of God, acquiring the highest level of being, unattainable for him in an ordinary state. At such moments, he can work real miracles, but later once again returns to his customary level of being, and the abilities demonstrated by him may never appear again by virtue of the lack of conditions and the need for their manifestation. Thus, for example, the base level of the being of Porfiry Ivanov enabled him to endure any cold while remaining undressed, but the opportunity to heal incurable diseases far from always occurred. Such “flights” occur with each mystic of a high level, and on their basis, people sometimes

ascribe to them an entirely incredible and extreme level of personal being, but it isn't so. Flashes of the extreme do occur, the opportunities for this also occur, in order to reveal the presence of God, but that is not what the mystic lives with constantly, although each one, of course, has in his basic level of being a number of qualities and abilities which those around him do not have.

The same was true of Gurdjieff. Interaction with students revealed before him at times the possibilities of manifesting super-abilities, and on the whole, this happens with the majority of Masters. The entire world rests on interactions, and thanks to them, sometimes short-termed opportunities arise for influence of the highest level – under the condition that a person may conduct the Will and is open for the manifestation of the Grace of God and His blessings. I will not claim with full certitude, but I believe that the Uwaisi transmission – the posthumous transmission of spiritual Knowledge – also relates to the number of super-powers that are opened up for the mystic when he has the appropriate conditions for them.

Even now, I cannot say why Gurdjieff made his transmission of Knowledge namely to me. I had, without a doubt, a high need for spiritual guidance without any opportunity to receive it under conditions of my then-existence. I very acutely sensed the need for a Teacher, but I could not find him, and did practice by books, choosing practices at random and applying them chaotically – sometimes using Orthodox prayers, sometimes yoga exercises. Such an approach could not bring tangible fruits, since there is no use from the application of practices related to various traditions and Ways; after all, each Path has its egregor and its *conditions* of work on it, but I had no one to learn this from then, either. The most tangible results were brought by the practice of awareness, but they all lay in a dimension of freedom from suppressions – practically in a dimension of psychotherapy, which is also, of

course, important but is not very helpful in finding the path to God. Apparently, the force of my need is what created the opportunity for the reception of the transmission, which led to my becoming an Uwaisi mystic.

Various mystical traditions have their ways of transmitting spiritual Knowledge. The transmission existing in Sufism under the name of "Uwaisi" is not only a transmission of Knowledge, but a transmission of personal experience as well, and even several qualities of the base level of being of the mystic who performed it. By itself, the transmission is a mystical act of the purest form, connected to the reception of an energy impulse of great power and delayed action. A person who receives such a transmission is not in a state to assimilate it at once, because the power of a received impulse, if it were released at once, would simply kill him. Therefore, the impulse of experience and Knowledge "dissipates" slowly, giving the opportunity to the person who received it to make discoveries initiated by it gradually. Assimilation of the received Knowledge occurs in such a way that the person begins to perceive it as his own, and not as alien; after all, the growth in understanding that comes along with it in fact is his own. Approximately the same thing, in fact, occurs when the mystic receives the Divine Attributes on the stage of the Sufi Way, called the internal *baqa* – the stage of presence in God.

Like many other Uwaisi mystics, I received the transmission while asleep. Sleep is a form of changed state, in which a person becomes open for receiving the most diverse impulses from different levels of Reality, and for the reception of the Uwaisi transmission, such a state could not be better suited. Even so, the content of the dream was very simple. Gurdjieff stood before me, dressed in a black coat, dark trousers and black boots as well, and I bowed, or rather, fell to his feet, as is customary in the East. I didn't see Gurdjieff's face in that dream, but I knew for sure that it was

he. In the dream, it seemed to me that I was receiving some sort of dedication or blessing; the dream was brief, and in fact, after I completed the prostration before Gurdjieff, it ended. When I awoke, I didn't feel anything in particular and did not ascribe to this dream any serious meaning. Moreover, when I didn't feel like sleeping the next night, and I did various creative things until morning, and went to work after that, as if nothing had happened, I also didn't connect it with the dream that I had had the night before. I did not sleep for 36 hours, but even so, I did not feel any particular tiredness, but it never occurred to me, that such a surge of energy, not at all peculiar to me, could be initiated by a dream with the presence of Gurdjieff – who, by the way, had never come to me in a dream before that.

It must be said that for another few years, I did not understand what had happened in June 1994, when I had the dream that influenced my entire life. The first changes began two weeks later – I suddenly realized, I saw very clearly, that all my practices were not getting me anywhere. Moreover, no less clearly, my spiritual ego was revealed to me, which I had developed in myself, after having become a vegetarian and giving up smoking and alcohol. This revelation was shocking, and therefore I instantly changed my entire lifestyle, keeping the basic practice of work on self-awareness, and dropping all the rest. This was the first, but far from the last manifestation of the influence which the impulse of the Uwaisi transmission made on me, and then almost imperceptibly to myself, I began to shift in the direction of a Sufi understanding of the Way and the Work, sensing them as something quite naturally relevant to me.

Later, I thought now and then what would have happened to me if I had not received the transmission from Gurdjieff. There is no unambiguous answer to this question, but most likely, my search would have ended with nothing, and it is quite possible that the mystical part of the Way would never have been revealed

to me. I would have continued to grow a spiritual ego, dabbling first in some practices, then in others, and wandering in the darkness of my own mind. And it would have been quite unlikely that I would have come to Sufism, although it is completely impossible to say this for certain.

I continued to read everything I could get my hands on concerning spiritual development, the practices of awareness and various Ways in general. In the early and mid-1990s, the assortment of spiritual and mystical books was far poorer than today, and I was able to buy a complete version of *All and Everything*, for example, only in 1997. Reading books of various orientations, I gradually realized that closest of all to my understanding – although it was not entirely clear where it came from – of the Way and the Work were the books of Idries Shah, in particular the Sufi parables published and adapted by him. I had an unexpected understanding of their levels of meaning; I would say that reading them opened in me a certain knowledge about whose source I myself did not have the slightest understanding. Then, as before, I did not know anything of the existence of the Uwaisi mystics, and had no idea that such a transmission of Knowledge was possible at all. Nevertheless, my interest steadily leaned toward Sufism, and what is more, toward Islam, although I had no notion of becoming a devout Muslim, neither then nor later.

There is no disagreement that Sufism and the Sufi Way emerged and were formulated under the shadow of Islam. But no

matter how much the orthodox wanted to leave everything as it was a thousand years ago, this will not be possible to do. Whatever does not develop then degrades. It simply will not work to live with experience received by other, completely different people living in other conditions. While Islam was developing, when it was on the rise, Sufism was developing. Now the situation has become different and the degradation noted in the majority of Sufi orders is obvious to everyone. In order to give Sufism a new impulse of development, it had to be brought out from under Islam, and this work was done by Idries Shah. The Way remains the same, but the forms of work on it are renewed, and the teaching is renewed in keeping with the times and the possibilities of understanding by modern people. Without this renewal, a collection of dogmas remains which no longer work, and the mystical part of the Sufi Way will finally be lost. People will speak correct words, sanctified by centuries, but will not have the experience relevant to them.

I went the entire Way up to the submission to the Will of God, practicing awareness. Mystical Knowledge of various degrees of significance began to be revealed to me approximately in 1996 but it did not play any decisive meaning in my practice. My level of understanding of many aspects related to the mystical side of life grew, but radical changes did not occur. Even so, I did not know the stages of the classic Sufi Way; even if perhaps I read about them, I did not lend them significance. The opening of the Heart for me was a complete surprise, and the possibility of submitting to the Will as well. Now I don't remember precisely when the essence of the dream with Gurdjieff was revealed to me, and when I became aware that I had received a transmission from him, sending my entire search into a new direction. It seemed that this occurred already after the submission, but perhaps it was earlier. Simultaneously with this revelation, I realized that Gurdjieff himself was an Uwaisi mystic, and in fact belong to the Line of

Transmission of the Uwaisi in the Naqshbandi Tradition, although Baha-ud-Din Naqshband himself was not at its sources at all. Then I began to sense the connection to this Line of Transmission, and through it, with the Tradition, although I could deal only with Gurdjieff himself, and no one else.

Approximately in 2008, Gurdjieff once again came to me in a dream, and in fact, came to me in a dream for three nights in a row. The first night, the dream was somehow insignificant, and now I can't remember it at all. On the second night the dream was strange. In it, Gurdjieff and I were traveling in a limousine, the kind which is usually hired for weddings, and he was asking me something, and I was answering him. Gurdjieff was irritated, and did not hide this. We rode along together for about 20 minutes, then he asked the driver to stop and opened the door of the car. On the side of the road, there was a gypsy ensemble, who were invited into the back seat of the limousine, which immediately grew crowded. After that, without further ado, Gurdjieff pushed me out of the car, and the limousine drove away. It was a winter evening, and I sat on the snow and look after the departing car. Gurdjieff was about 50 years old in this dream.

The third dream that came to me the next night, was quite different. Gurdjieff appeared before me as an old man, as he became in the last years of his life. It was not very cold, autumn had just begun outside, but he was dressed in a black coat and an astrakhan hat. We sat on a bench near some sort of playground and talked. Gurdjieff radiated kindness, meekness, and I would say, love. He mainly did the talking, and I listened. Our conversation in the dream continued about two hours. He taught me certain things, and I understood that I received a certain additional transmission. When I awoke, I did not remember a word of what was said, but the feeling that something was transmitted to me remained.

I maintain that the Uwaisi transmission contains not only



Knowledge, but the experience of the person who made it, and I am not just saying this – I was able to experience this myself in full measure. At first, before the dreams described above, Gurdjieff's methods of work with people began to be revealed to me. The famous dinners, where Gurdjieff himself prepared the food, and at the same time conducted with individual people and a general influence on all those in attendance, did not have for us such a strict ritual form, and at times were not dinners but breakfasts but the essence of my interaction with students present at them was the same. I did not know how to cook at all, and suddenly, in early 2007, an interest in cooking appeared, and I very quickly mastered its basic principles. Furthermore, food preparation became for me a form of creativity, and in some way also a manifestation of the presence of certain superpowers. I felt the energy of the dish which I was making, and learned to infuse it with *baraqa*, because a number of spices and foods can absorb particularly well the energy of the person using them, and can also become a wonderful “conduit” of blessing. This knowledge came to me suddenly, just as I suddenly became a good cook. I prepared many eastern dishes, and it was absolutely clear to me that all my abilities that had been revealed in a mysterious fashion were the fruit of the Gurdjieff transmission. For more than a year, every day I prepared the most diverse dishes, making a special “sacred” food for holidays, infused with *baraqa*. At that time, our meetings with students around the table became more and more similar to Gurdjieff's dinners. I must say that all of this ended as suddenly as it began. In 2008, I began to write books, and the theme of creativity related to food began to recede, and then the ability to sense its energy disappeared. Although the knowledge of the properties of various spices and foods, and also the ability to prepare them with a mixture of *baraqa*, of course remained.

I never tried to imitate Gurdjieff or conduct myself as he had. What was happening was assimilated one way or another by me in

my own way, consistent with my individuality and the situation in which I was working. I began working with people a year and a half after I accepted the Will of God, and the principles of the organization of the study was dictated by it, and not the transmission of Gurdjieff. What I received from him thanks to the new dreams related only to my personal abilities which, essentially, had little influence on the general Work. After the dream of the talk with him on the playground, for example, the ability appeared for me to cast *illusion* on people – that is, to force them to see in me what I wanted. Ouspensky wrote about this ability of Gurdjieff, and I for a time also received it. I used the new power I had received two or three times, and in fact the first time, everything occurred spontaneously, and another few times it was for the sake of an experiment. Now, I don't sense this power in myself, but even so, I practically didn't use it even when I did have it. There were also manifestations of *exactly the experience* of Gurdjieff; it could be said that there was a certain transferal on me of his habits, but I do not see the point of writing about this in details.

Later, I received the ability to call on Gurdjieff directly. Perhaps, in the classic variation, it would be more correct to say that I called on the spirit of Gurdjieff, but I sensed this as if I was calling on a living person, even if he was not existing on the physical plane of our reality. A few times, I called on him for help in situations when I had wound up in a dead end in my individual work, and as far as I recall, always received help in one form or another. Several times, I had occasion to call on him with questions about the content of his teaching and the Work, and I also always received answers. Now there is no need for the one or the other, and I have not made contact with him for a long time.

In recent years, I had another two dreams involving Gurdjieff. The first dream was in the summer of 2011, and I was in an old, wooden two-story home. I went up the stairs from the first floor to the second, and between floors there was a large platform on which were placed chairs. Men and women sat in them, dressed in the fashion of the last century, there were about 20 of them. I understood that these were students of Gurdjieff waiting for the start of the lessons. Gurdjieff then appeared here on the platform, having gone up the stairs behind me. His appearance was about 45 years of age. "My head aches," he said, turning toward me. After that, he lay down on his stomach right on the floor, and sitting on my haunches, I began to massage his head. After some time I managed to remove the pain from him, and he got up and said: "Well, now they're yours, work with them," having in mind the students waiting for him. Having said this, he left, and I remained with his students, I sat on a chair began to say something. The dream ended there. After a few months, I began to work in Moscow, and people began to come to me who were in one of the Moscow Gurdjieff groups. On the whole, the interaction was not

very fruitful, but several of those who had taken part in these meetings became my students.

The last dream to date in which Gurdjieff was present came to me about a year and a half ago. It was somewhat unusual. In the dream, I was laying on a bed, and seemed to have just awoken. The room that I was in was not large, there were no windows in it, and in the corner opposite the bed was an armchair in which Gurdjieff was sitting. Outwardly, I didn't recognize him, but knew for certain that it was he. He was 28 years old (I knew this precisely from somewhere), his head was not shaved, and he had a thick, black head of hair. Silently, he looked at me and I looked at him. This lasted for some time, and then the dream ended. What did this dream mean? It is possible that Gurdjieff could not give me anything more, and I had outgrown the stage at which he could teach me. One way or another, he no longer came to me in a dream, and I did not enter into contact with him.

The knowledge received by me from Gurdjieff, and also his personal experience changed my whole life, that is a fact. Nevertheless, I am traveling by my own road, and I have my own Work. I am not the heir or successor of his cause, and the fact that I live and work in Russia is not related at all with the fact that he began his Work here. Such, as I understand, is the intention of the Creator, and I do not undertake to judge it. From all appearances, the Work which I am now performing is needed exactly here and exactly now, and what will come of it, time will tell.

**T**he Fourth Way, which Gurdjieff offered almost all those who wished an opportunity to know, in fact is the Way of awareness, and nothing more. Unfortunately, speaking in the language of his time Gurdjieff represented man as a machine, and then developing this image, began to speak about various centers within it. Moving, instinctive, sexual and other centers must be made aware of, and their interaction followed and corrected where there is a breakdown in work. The machine had to be repaired and adjusted in order to have the opportunity to awaken and develop. And everything would have been good, if all those centers described in fact existed. That is, they exist, of course. For example, what can be called moving center is located in the pyramidal pathways of the brain; the instinctive center is the medulla; and the sexual center is spread over the glands responsible for producing sex hormones. But here's the catch: it is impossible to become directly aware of their work, it simply will not work. You can become aware of very many processes occurring in the mind, physical and ethereal bodies, but you will not be able to become aware of the so-called centers, because it in no way is separated from the general flow of energies; moreover, it does not have to be

separated. But when you establish the goal of separating the impulses and energies of each of the centers, you will not become aware of them, but will think about them, because you cannot find their manifestation anywhere, or you will have to imagine these manifestations and persuade yourself of them. As a result, instead of awareness, philosophizing begins, which Ouspensky demonstrated perfectly in the book *The Fourth Way* – completely pointless and useless from a practical point of view.

Working with intellectuals and giving them food for thought, Gurdjieff advanced quite a few new ideas which were also of little suited for practical use. The Law of Three, the Law of Seven, the Enneagram and other *general information* are useless for practical work, although they give all who wish the basis for various types of fantasies and speculations. Self-remembering has receded to the background behind the ideas and thinking about them. Sometimes it seems to me that in modern Gurdjieff groups, people are working not on awakening from the sleep of mechanicality but on deepening it, accompanied by a sense of special election.

Nevertheless, Gurdjieff knew what real Work was, and his statements about it, as well as about human psychology, have not become outdated to this day.

Gurdjieff anticipated the coming of Shah, and prepared the ground for the beginning of his Work. Shah created the possibility to develop Sufism outside Islam, in countries where it did not play the main role, dominating over all other religions. I work within the vein of that possibility which was created by them both.

The life of every human being is a drama. The life of a mystic is doubly a drama; after all, he lives on the crux of energies and circumstances about which the majority of people have no idea. The mystic always loses in our world, because that's how everything here is already arranged – any ideas are distorted and simplified, and the means of awakening brought to people in time cease to work, because the situation changes and people change.

Moreover, it cannot be said that every mystic has only one purpose in his Work. Following the Way, following God, each mystic must face the fact that his Work takes on new forms or else acquires new, even if short-termed goals. Such is the stream of life, such is the stream of Being. The life of Gurdjieff in that sense was not an exception to the rules. He did what he must, and what he could do in that situation in which he found himself. All mystics do the same, and God alone, whom they serve and for Whose sake they live, knows what works for them and what does not.





# **DISAPPEARANCE INTO GOD**

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The Sufi Way is written quite clearly, although it is rather hard to find information about its later stages. There are several reasons for this: first, not all reached these stages; second, if a person did not begin the transfer of his experience even earlier, on the final stages of the Way it is quite difficult to speak or write about it. It is all the more difficult to describe what lays beyond the edge of everyday experience, and here one cannot get by without a certain system of coordinates, in which what is described can be placed.

The description of the Way arises as one passes along its stages. In the book by al- Hujwiri, *The Revelation of the Veiled*, written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, there are chapters devoted to disputes of that time that arose in the Sufis' community. This was a time when Sufism was developing, and the formulation and understanding of the Way which was revealed to them was going on. Now it is rather funny to read this, because it is entirely clear that the arguments about the extreme states of the Sufi, mentioned in al-Hujwiri's book, and all the disagreements over which they actually arose are nothing more than the arguments of people who are on various stages of the Way. The book, however, is valuable precisely

because the living atmosphere of early Sufism can be sensed in it, after which the final formulation of the Way began to gradually disappear and by our time disappeared completely. Everything became prescribed, as if by notes, and although the Way did not become easier from this, the knowledge of its basic stages still prepares the seeker for what awaits him. But to know something at the level of the mind is one thing, and to live it through experience is something entirely different. As it is said, knowing the Way and passing through it are not at all the same thing.

The Sufi way includes within it a stage of purification and development – work with the *nafs*, to express in its commonly-accepted terms – and the ensuing stages of interaction with God. The first part is spiritual and the second is mystical. The division of this, of course, is arbitrary, because the purification, for example, occurs also at the stage of following the Will of God. The Sufi way presupposes several forms of *completely different* interaction with God at its different stages; and in this simultaneously is manifested both its beauty and its difficulty. And perhaps it is better to call the events and processes that occur on the Way, not interaction, but *growing closer* to God; after all, their essence, in the final analysis is exactly such. Later stages of the Sufi Way incorporated two stages of *fana* and two stages of *baqa*. *Fana* means disappearance, and it is internal and external. The external relates to the disappears in a person of his own will (read: wishes), and with this is directly connected the stage of outer *baqa*, which is characterized by acceptance and fulfillment of God's Will. I have written a fair amount about this already, and I will not dwell on it in detail here. The stage of internal *fana* means the transition of the Sufi to the disappearance in God, and of this very little is written, if not to say almost nothing.

Modern Sufis hold on hard to the terminology worked out many centuries ago. They can be understood; after all, all the teaching stands on it, including those parts of it which far from everyone manages to live through their own experience. Time has made sacred practically all Sufi terms, and anyone who does not want to fall out of the common context must use them. As a result, what happens this: some terms in the past had not a quite unambiguous or vague interpretation, and therefore we must to some extent discuss them approximately. For example, *nafs*. It is commonly acknowledged that it means the animal nature of a person, but there are other interpretations. The Sufis say that *nafs* is a fine substance, embodying in itself will, feeling and life forces. And if in the first interpretation, the animal nature simply must be tamed and subjected to the spirit or the soul (although sometimes the soul also relates to the *nafs*), then in the second interpretation, the *nafs* becomes what can be changed.

Then the stages appear – the commanding, judging and other forms of *nafs* (of course there are all of seven of them) in which can be traced the changes of these very feelings and wishes (read: will). The choice of method and the horizon of possibilities in the work

with this very *nafs* depends on the interpretation of this or that term and the designation of its meaning. The more broadly this or that concept can be interpreted, the less definite the methods of work on the Way become. Of course, one can pray and turn over everything to the Will of God, but as experience shows, in order to really advance along the Way, that is not enough for the majority of seekers. The modern level of common knowledge enables us to specify and even develop certain customary concepts, and after that, to explain the methods enabling work to be done in eradicating the ego and developing a person's essence more effectively. The conservatism common to the majority of today's Sufi orders and schools maintains ambiguity, and from this, Sufi methods begin to seem like magic rituals.

Here, for example, is the work with energy centers – *latifa*. There are various forms of exercises aimed at their activization, but a coherent explanation of what happens during this work is practically impossible to find. Points open up, light appears in them, and this is extremely beneficial to the spiritual state of the student. There is a sense that no one has achieved success in this practice for a long time, because there is no way to explain further that a more modern description of its effects and tasks has never appeared. And if the experience of the Truth that occurred in the Middle Ages was sufficiently adequately reflected on the level of common knowledge available then, in the context in which it was expressed, now it is completely obvious that it is outdated.

In this, in part, is contained yet another reason for the degeneration of Sufism – the descriptions are too general and diffuse, and the methods, which have ceased to be understandable, have turned into notions of people into exercises acting in some magical fashion. When understanding is lost, even really working practices inevitably turn into rituals. Modern books seemingly written by Sufis either re-tell the works of Sufis of the past, or offer some strange and at times mysterious practices, or are filled with

long and hazy argumentations on common topics such as the Heart, Love and other concepts popular among Sufis. Those who hold tight to the Koran do not even need to move anywhere because its message is not subject to criticism or review or renewal. Moreover, quotations from the Koran always confirm the truth of the claims of the speaker and Koranic Sufism is not supposed to be renewed and change by definition. It cannot be ruled out that this is precisely why Sufism had to move to where modern expression of the Truth is still possible.

**A**t the stage of external *baqa* – following the Will of God – everything happens rather simply. The Sufi receives the impulse of Will and acts according to it. In fact, the energy necessary for completing the action is brought with the very same impulse of Will, and if we do not take into account that the demands at times can be hard to fulfill, there are no other problems here. The Sufi carries out his service, meanwhile receiving new experience and the Grace of God. All of this can go on for a fairly long time – in my case, the stage of following Will lasted almost 10 years. Then everything changed – suddenly, without any portent or warning, and a completely new stage of the Way began.

A person must himself accept the Will of God – a choice exists here. The stage of internal *fana* – disappearance – begins as an irreversible process which he cannot direct, although he can resist it. Of course, only up to a certain stage. But the difference between following the Will of God and disappearance in Him are so striking, that for the first while, the Sufi who has embarked on this stage of the Way has a very hard time.

First, the sensation of the open Heart disappears, and then along with it, the sensation of the constant connection to the



Source, to the Creator. At first, this is experienced as a fall, as a return to a long-forgotten state of alienation from God. In place of the endless space which was in the open Heart comes the ordinary sensation of internal space, that is essentially all there is. This disappearance contains a real shock, but the next shock is the disappearance of the impulses of Will to which you had become accustomed to living for all the recent years. It is as if you find yourself weightless, because the energy that sustained and supported you suddenly ceases to come. This change demands a radical change in your lifestyle, and it becomes clear why the Sufis say that while on the stage of internal *fana*, you must retreat and distance yourself from people. To continue living as if you are still following the Will is a very serious mistake. This will lead to an excessive strain on forces, and slows the process of *dissolving* and the new transformation. The first test on the stage of disappearance into God will be the ability to accept the first changes of your state and to be able to arrange your life according to them. The force which the Will gave you is gone; the old experience is not useful, and the previous opportunities for interaction with the Supreme and work with energies also seem to fall away or become very weak. Acting and living are as if *from nothing*, but the old motivations providing the energy of Will also cease to work.

The entire preceding Way gives the seeker both endurance and patience. At the stage of disappearance into God, these two qualities become extremely necessary. At a certain moment, you begin to lose interest in everything, and it is impossible to go on living on the strength of will, because it is also already gone. There remains only to endure your powerless state, and remain an observer of what is happening around you, and of course within you, as well. Such states occur with seekers at early stages of the Way as well, but they pass "in a soft form," so to say. At a certain moment, motivation falls away, interest in performing practices is lost, and in general in the achievement of previous goals. Depression does not

ensue, but everything that a person lived with all the previous time suddenly becomes pointless for him. As a rule, such a state does not last for a long time, and it comes on the eve of transformation, as a consequence of the impulse of the Grace of God received before this. Then, everything gradually comes full circle, and motivation once again returns and awareness of the need for a searching, but a person becomes somewhat different, having gone through what is a transformation nevertheless, albeit not a deep one. The disappearance into God is accompanied by a most profound transformation, and therefore here it is all far more vivid and more difficult.

The Will of God is directly connected with action and with various forms of activity. Disappearance into God – especially at the beginning – requires inaction. Therefore, those who embark on this stage of the Way had better limit external action to the minimum amount possible. It is activity that makes painful the process of *internal dissolution*, which is unleashed at the stage of internal *fana*. As soon as the shock passes, provoked by the sudden internal changes, staying in the state of disappearance becomes quite comfortable. The need to overcome yourself and be occupied with external affairs is what brings the greatest discomfort at this moment. Furthermore, the matters related to fulfillment of daily needs are also not burdensome. The main difficulty is the matters related to other people and obligations not directly related to you yourself. It is hard to force energy to move outside in order to do what is not in the scope of your life's requirements and needs. A super-effort must be made all the time, which exhausts you yourself, and slows the process of disappearance. Outside of these efforts, you are calm, satisfied and detached from everything, and there is nothing – neither internally or externally – that could seriously disturb you. You gradually cease to exist for the external world, and internally as well, you do not feel any particular heaviness in the presence of your-

self. You become an empty vessel, but as before, you cannot act from this emptiness.

It cannot be said that from the moment of the beginning of internal *fana*, the Sufi no longer has any connection with the Supreme at all. Direct instructions continue to come from time to time, and even at that stage, the Sufi may take part in serious Work, for which, as a rule, the Lord gives him particular motivation. These instructions very much differ from the impulses of Will which came before. Now the Sufi simply knows what must be done; in fact this knowledge emerges seemingly by itself, without prior reflections or contemplation. This is not an apparition, not the manifestation of spiritual vision, and not a particularly transcendental experience. It is simply knowledge of what must be done here and now. It does not come very often, but in the event a Sufi takes part in a certain mystical Work, the appearance of such knowledge becomes regular. At any rate, it comes until the Work is completed. Moreover, dreams remain, in which the Sufi may receive instructions and warnings, and the vision does not go away -- it is direct perception which is developed to the extent awareness grows. That is, it cannot be said at all that a person who reaches the stage of internal *fana* immediately loses everything previously attained along the Way. It is simply that his situation changes -- and first of all, in the mystical sense, and as for the spiritual side of his development, it also changes, although not as obviously.

The length of the passage through each of the stages of the Way is very individual, and depends on many factors. Here it is both readiness for changes which a person possesses, and what Work he must fulfill, and finally, the destiny preordained for him. All factors may change to the extent of passage along the Way, but the Way is nevertheless tied to the factor of time. Some processes cannot be accelerated no matter how hard you try, and certain external events must be experienced even so. Thus, all stages of

the Way last according to the individuality of each person, and all the above-mentioned factors that are formed by him himself or personally for him.

The loss of the feeling of connection with God which comes at the very beginning of the stage of disappearance is somewhat later compensated by the fact that the Sufi begins to lose the borders of his internal space as he finds unity with Infinity. There is no individual God, but the individual space of a person begins to disappear, which suddenly is sensed as one whole with the endless space of Being, and even Non-Being as well. The Sufi becomes united with what is almost impossible to describe – with endless energy, with a feeling of joining in which his physical shell ceases to be an obstacle. God, earlier lost as the Source, manifests Himself anew, but there is no object about which one could say: here He is, God! If such an object existed in the connection which originated in the Heart of a Sufi, and the Source of Creation was perceived quite clearly, now there is nothing like this. There is the sensation of dissolution, the loss of distinction between the internal space and the outer, although it does not relate to physical reality, of course – and there is Infinity, in which there is no time, and we somehow do not have to speak of space, either.

The process of disappearing into God is reflected on all the bodies except, apparently, the physical. Although a certain reorganization takes place in it, it is nevertheless minimal. The energies of the ethereal body change, but I will not undertake to describe this process in more detail. Various transformational processes take place, and they are sometimes perceived ambiguously. For example, once in the course of several weeks, I had the sensation that my ethereal body was filled with a dark, cool water – to be more precise, an energy which created such a sensation. The “water,” which appeared in the area of my heels, gradually rose until finally it flooded over my head. Virtually at once, after this feeling of otherness, the energies flooding me disappeared,

although I did not notice any radical changes. Transformational processes flow undetected, and far from always will you see a specific result from this or that transformation.

The changes of the mind are the most obvious for a person who is on the stage of internal *fana*. Part of the “living” memory is erased – that is, many formerly relevant recollections lose their vividness, and it becomes hard to recall various types of matters and obligations. Presence in the “here and now” is reflected on the mind – it cannot hold in its memory lists of various tasks. Even vitally important things may be forgotten by virtue of the fact that the general state of unification with Infinity influences the mind in such a fashion; it is simpler for it to stop than to think purposely and hard. If it has no dominants concerning the Work and proceeding from God (even if He is sensed differently now), then all the rest has an entirely trivial value and is poorly remembered. It is not only the insufficiency of energy of Will that makes performing external tasks difficult, but the new state of mind as well, which from the perspective of external effectiveness begins to work more poorly. The rest of its functions, as far as I can see, do not suffer at all.

There are exercises in which dervishes are trained into dissolution – for example *fana fish-sheikh*, when a student strives toward disappearance into his sheikh. As a rule, disappearance concerns only the dervish's personal will, which strives for elimination of his own desires, and acceptances of the desires of the sheikh. Logically, if the sheikh is a conduit of the Will of God, then the dervish, too, strives for the fulfillment of the desires of God, which, of course, can become the strongest practice advancing a person along the Way. The danger exists that in his zeal, the student may come to deify the teacher, but not a single true sheikh will ever permit that. All serve only God; all are equal before Him, that is all. For the dervish, such a *fana* is a good preparation for later coming to acceptance of the Will of God, that is, to enter into the stage of external *baqa*. No particular participation of the sheikh in this practice is envisaged, because it amounts to the dervish following his instructions as unquestioningly and as accurately as possible, and that is essentially all there is. Let us say outright, in any serious study, you will not advance far without performing this practice.

If the sheikh himself is at the stage of internal *fana* or has

already passed it, then he himself may attract dervishes to fulfill another version of the practice of *fana fish-sheikh*. In this case, you cannot get by without the active participation of the sheikh, because he shares with his students the *state of his being*, becoming for them simultaneously both a conduit of higher energies, and a gateway to an accelerated change of being. Dervishes perform special practices aimed at strengthening the energy connection with the sheikh and *dissolution* into him, and the sheikh, for his part, helps them in this. Such a form of the practice of *fana fish-sheikh* is far more difficult to perform and cannot be carried out without direct participation of the sheikh himself in it. Only the teacher may select those who are ready for its performance, because the student himself does not always soberly evaluate his own state. And performance of this practice by a person who is not ready for it may push him off the Way and push him away from the sheikh, causing a lot of harm and little use. Preparedness – as in everything on the Way – here also plays a decisive role.

The performance of the practice of *fana fish-sheikh* has a limitation in time, as in fact does the performance of any other practice. Following the will of the sheikh is completed at the moment of the beginning of following the Will of the Lord. Disappearance into the sheikh is completed by the dervish receiving the sheikh's transmission of experience. Essentially, a transmission is completed then, like that which ends the stage of internal *fana* for the Sufi, and the stage of being in God begins. As is known, the stage of internal *baqa* is characterized by the fact that the Sufi mystically receives certain attributes of God and enters into the final stages of possible transformation for himself. Thus, the dervish also receives the transmission of experience from the sheikh, and it can be said that this is the moment of receiving the attributes which, in the final result, will change his entire being.

**I**t is impossible to practice disappearance into God – it can happen to you, but it will not work to cause it by some efforts or special subterfuges. You can strive toward God, search for His Truth, pray to Him, but – until there is a certain readiness – nothing special will occur with you. Even a high degree of necessity does not always mean a person's readiness for changes. But when it is present – everything happens even without your requests. And what is more: you must remember that to desire to receive something is one thing, but to be prepared for it is something else entirely.

Some sources describe the state of internal *fana* as non-being, explaining that the mystic simultaneously may be present and not present in himself. That is, his being becomes multi-leveled, and I have also written a fair amount about this. On the whole, this description is acceptable, but it comes earlier than when the stage of internal *fana* begins. I would say that *fana* ends that disappearance which begins much earlier. The presence with half absence in which the Sufi lived previously begins to change to a kind of interim state. This is neither presence nor absence in its pure form. It is a state. In which everything seems to be there, but there



isn't that part or center in a person which manages everything. Moreover, along with the loss of internal separation, even after merging with infinity, it becomes more and more difficult to describe this state. He is not the witness of action, but is not its source, either. He is not in action, but he is not in inaction, either. He does not witness anything, because everything that is done and occurs is immediately perceived by the Consciousness of the Sufi, and there is no process of becoming aware. And in the field of his Consciousness, there is no center from which something could be made aware. He could carry out actions seemingly from himself, but even so, a large part of them are directly or indirectly inspired by the Presence of God, and then the Sufi is both a doer and non-doer simultaneously. It is not within my power to describe this state in more detail without distorting its essence.

The stage of internal *baqa* beings even before the end of the stage of external *fana*. The same thing occurs with both external *fana* and *baqa*, so there is nothing to be particularly surprised at here. The disappearance of one's own will proceeds to a certain degree parallel with the acceptance and following of the Will of God, and on the whole, this is logical. The receiving of the attributes of God may occur even then, when the stage of disappearance in Him itself has not yet come to completion. Then a person begins to live in the presence of God, which is even more difficult to describe – if not entirely impossible. But as it is said, that is a completely different story.



# **THE LOVE OF MYSTICS**

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A person always has to live with something. Live for the sake of something, have a goal, a cherished wish or a wonderful dream. And the majority of people live with just this – wishes, dreams and hopes for the future. Hope is the main narcotic of the mind, enabling it to perceive its situation not quite normally or even quite abnormally, and to believe that everything will sometime become better in some mysterious way. On the whole, people live differently in form, but by essentially similar things. One strives not to experience fear; another strives to possess everything on the earth, but the essence of the matter does not change from this. Both fears and desires are connected with the world, and the world is where they are realized.

The seeker at first also is moved by desire, and it is desire that became the source of energy for performing practices and changing something in one's life. Of course, at the same time the pressure of other desires is present, and hence as much as the desire for God, Truth, emancipation or enlightenment become stronger than all the other strivings, so a person may invest more heavily in a spiritual search. Any person begins his search from the darkness of desires, and the goal of all seekers without excep-

tion consists essentially of attaining light – clarity, understanding, peace and inner freedom.

Even “spiritual” desires can contradict and oppose one another, if, for example, they have through their sources ideas extracted from various teachings. And of course, the fulfilling of worldly desires often enters into serious contradiction with the goals that a person wants to achieve in the spiritual realm. And the poor seeker inevitably must divide his desires into “good” and “bad,” battling some and trying to achieve the realization of others. The main problem connected with “spiritual” desires is that their realization requires a very long time, whereas many worldly desires may be realized right in the here and now.

Of course, it is possible to renounce the worldly in favor of the spiritual and on many ways, just such a decision is proposed. Even so, the seeker must store within himself rather a lot of energy which would have been spent if he had gone the way of satisfying desires. This energy cannot suddenly disperse without a trace; it will lay in the internal space of a person, creating obstacles and blocks in him. If work is not done with suppressed desires, it will be impossible to come to a state of completely cleansed interior space, and that means becoming completely conscious will not work, and the more or less serious impulse of the Grace of God will not have the slightest place to enter. In other words, refusal to work with suppressed desires (and fears also, what is more) *closes* the road for a person to serious achievements on the spiritual Path. In fact, it is possible to hope for a miracle – so to say, the Lord will grant me the impulse of Grace with His Will, and then I will immediately attain all spiritual and mystical heights. Hope, as I have already said, is the greatest narcotic, maintaining a person’s unconscious state.

That is why where it is suggested that people suppress their desires, they practically never attain God. They have not lived through what they must live through; they left inside themselves

the seed of desire, even if so heavily suppressed that they themselves forgot about its existence. They left inside themselves a hidden striving for the world; desire which holds them on earth like the most heavy anchor. Thus, in some traditions, a person is proposed to at first obtain life experience, to realize his worldly needs, and only later, after their relative satiation, to turn to a spiritual search. An ordinary person lives with desires, and to hope that you are for some reason constructed differently is very stupid. Therefore, you must begin with desires, and the chief task of the seeker at this stage is work with them. And internal unity must become the result of such work, a situation in which remains only one main wish, and all the rest are either subordinate to it, or exhausted. Then the situation becomes balanced, and work with desires is possible without detriment to the achievement of your main goal.

With further development of desires and growth in awareness, the seeker comes to a vision of what moves him in fact – to awareness of his necessities. Confusion in the mind, which is present in those who do not deliberately work with it, does not allow for the separation of need from whim and habit; therefore questions of necessity are not recognized at all by many. Often, people cannot distinguish vitally important things from secondary things, because it seems to them that the need for the secondary things is even higher than for the main ones. This, too, is the consequence of suppression of desires which, constantly restrained, acquire particular force and blind a person; here, also, is the disruption of the system of valuations in modern society, where consumption is cultivated as the highest value and achievement.

The seeker – to the extent of his work with desires – begins to distinguish true necessities from imaginary ones. If he works correctly, then part of the desires formulated even before the start of his search have already disappeared, and he does not produce new ones, aiming all his nearly-received vital energy into the

channel of his main desire, connected with spiritual transformation. Thus, step by step, he moves from desire to necessity which gradually begins to live. His vision is purified, and he himself is cleansed from all kinds of suppressed energies and may distinguish subtle nuances in his reactions. He begins to understand that the Lord responds to true necessity, and gradually necessity becomes what sustains him in life, and life in him.



Internal necessity may also be different in different people. All people in one form or another search for unification with something larger than themselves, and they all experience a need for service. We are thus constructed, and even if it seems to you that egotists do not serve anyone, do not doubt that as an object of service they have simply chosen themselves. The need for unification, merging with something larger than you yourself, is a distorted need for the return to God, for disappearance in Him. For the return to a lost paradise, to employ the Biblical symbol. To be a member of a family, team, order, political party, VKontakte group – all of this is a manifestation of that same yearning to once again become part of a whole, losing your sense of alienation and the burden of one’s own “I.” To be united, to cease to be separate – this is what all people, without exception, really need. They search for external unification, but only mystics come to what is impossible to find outside – they unite themselves with God, ridding themselves of the cursed separation.

Service is a means of sustaining a connection with *the whole*, and therefore some must serve the family, and some their favorite rock group or terrorist underground. The need for service explains

why people are prepared to die for the sake of an idea. The explanation is simple: each of them has chosen for himself an *object of service*, with the existence of which he has totally identified his own existence as well. If I must die so that an idea lives, that means it is to be. All of this is an echo of the true need for service, in self-sacrifice and merging with the Whole. The problem is that only by working on oneself and freeing oneself from desires and the idea connected to them can one come to true service. As long as you serve ideas, you are blind, but in order to acquire vision, which can lead you to real service, you must seriously work on yourself.

True service begins when you can follow the Will of God, manifested personally and specifically to you. Understandably, you can speak here of psychological disturbance, but as I have already written, mystics are distinguished from the insane by a far higher degree of sanity. In fact, they are distinguished from ordinary people by a higher degree of sanity as well. But even before the possibility of accepting the Will of God appears, life out of necessity may reveal to you those necessities whose role for your life was nearly completely hidden. Working on himself, advancing along the Way, a person discovers in himself needs that are in no way explained by ideas or desires. Thus, someone is drawn to preaching; some to sharing being, and someone else, to oppose the Darkness. All of this is discovered only upon awareness of the level of your true needs, and all of this is related to what is called the *predestination* of a person in the Work. It must be revealed, and it is revealed in service to God, in following His Will. You may see and feel your predestination, but until the time comes for its realization, until you and all the necessary circumstances mature, it cannot be embodied in reality.

Thus, becoming aware of the need in service of also ridding yourself of yourself, you may come to a renunciation of your own will (read: wishes) and accept the Will of God as your own. From

this moment, you live with the desires of God, and participation in their fulfillment is the engine of your life. This is a later stage of the Way, but work continues on it with desires, only now you are led by the Will, and in part you serve the Lord, and in part He serves you, leading you through situations in which you can finally purify yourself and rid yourself of remaining desires.

**M**an is constructed in such a way he must live for something, and all real mystics understand that perfectly. Buddhists speak of one wish which must be left in their mind, in order to continue living in the body. He who breaks away from all earthly things ceases to live, and here it cannot be said that this is bad, or on the contrary, that it is good. For some, possibly they must leave at once; for others, they must be among people, supporting themselves, for example, with a feeling of empathy toward them. Suffering along with them, and even, in part, for and instead of them. The problem of this approach is that once you have grabbed hold of people, of the wish to ease their suffering, you remain and will remain together with them without reaching the heights of experiencing unity with God.

In that sense, passion for attaining the Truth is far more useful from the perspective of further advancement on the Way toward God. Preserving in yourself an interest in how everything is constructed, and interest if not to the world, then to the highest levels of Reality is very useful. To live by the Truth, by the growth of knowledge and understanding is quite possible, and the majority of mystics who have passed along the Way to the end

lived precisely with Truth. Even passion for the Truth is one day exhausted, however.

At a certain moment, the majority of mystics do not have anything at all to live for in this world. Those who have a mission – to bring a new teaching, to disseminate knowledge, to conduct the Will of God – hold on to it, and live by it. But when after the stage of following the Will comes the stage of disappearance in God, then to live by fulfilling a mission no longer works, either. A gap appears, and not every one is given to overcome it, because there is a great temptation to disappear into God finally and irrevocably. And here the last reason is revealed, and the last driving force, helping to continue to live, and its name is love.

All mystics, after reaching a high level, come to love, one way or another. Some start with it, but love toward God at the very beginning of the Way is love for an idea, for a certain feeling of the great, and no more. It cannot be otherwise, and is not otherwise. We cannot love what we do not know, and the greatness of God at the start of the Way we can only sense, but to love these feelings of ours would be somehow strange. Therefore, the love for God, with which previously all Sufis began, was only a love for the idea of God, through the inspiration which sacred texts and their own mystical experiences had on them. But to live with love for God is also an option, and not the worst option. The love to which mystics come at the end of the Way, however, has entirely different features.

A mystic passes through many transformations, the essence of which is entirely incomprehensible to those who are at the beginning of the Way. For example, the process of awareness, which is familiar to all those who work with attention, trying to grow awareness, is absent in him. The mystic possesses Consciousness, which is totally manifested in his being, and his attention is no longer divided between someone who sees and someone who is aware. Consciousness is present in everything that occurs with

him, but there is no process of awareness here. Everything that is done, and that occurs, is immediately present in Consciousness, and that is all. But Consciousness is passive, and you cannot live only with Consciousness, anyway. A certain active force is needed which can be what keeps a person in the physical body. Love will become it, when nothing – including the “I” of the mystic – remains any more. It can be said that this is the attribute of God which all receive who have reached the final stages of the Way. When almost nothing else remains, one can live only with love – not conditioned by anything, not having a concrete object of application, and essentially not requiring any actions. It is full by itself, and does not require some sort of special expression. The only thing that requires expression in this state is gratitude to God, but there are no appropriate words for it; therefore it – like love – is practically inexpressible in words. There are no words to express the infinite, and it does not require expression in words.

I went along the Path of Truth – and came to love. All mystics come to it sooner or later, therefore it turns out to be the same force which is discovered at the very foundation of being. Although, of course, one must still come to this. But whatever Way you have chosen, I suspect that at the end of it will be love. And that is good.

# **CHOSEN BY GOD**

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**L**ife requires movement, and Creation constant renewal. Movement is present in the processes of development and decay; the existence of matter is supported by the movement of particles; and any energy manifests itself through movement, through interaction. Interaction, whether with God or with people, is also a process in which movement and the exchange of energies are necessarily present. Even if there are no concrete physical actions, energies still move; their state and balance change, and the state of a person changes along with them. A person who is full of fear has one round of possibilities, and a person who fears nothing has another. The state of people's minds is also determined by the energies dominating in them, and the same information will instill hope in some and horror in others. Relying on their reactions and their perception, they will decide what they should do, and this choice predetermines the result: development, stagnation or degradation.

For communities - states, nations, even all of humankind - there is a similar choice. Only the interactions of energies take place on a somewhat different level, but the essence of what occurs does not change from that. And historical patterns of devel-

opment and the fall of human societies can be found, which, undoubtedly, also existed, but we must not lose sight of the factor of the *need for God*, so that development has a definite vector and direction. For atheists, no ambiguities exist in this question, because they totally ignore the mystical component of human existence. Religion for them is only the consequence of the immaturity of the human mind, the fruit of fantasies and delusions. The fact that the majority of atheist communities create new forms of religions inside themselves, in which the objects of worship are national leaders or the imagine of the ideal person, is usually assessed as the usual manifestation of the imperfection of human nature. That an inalienable part of human nature is the need for service and for merging into something higher, escape from the limitations of oneself must also apparently be considered an imperfection. All attempts to improve human nature have failed precisely because it cannot be perfected, moreover changed by only moral restrictions. A person cannot change his own nature himself; he is able only to change his own habits – that is essentially all there is. Only transformation change human nature, but it is impossible without external interference, which is what the impulse of the Grace of God is. And that is the factor which is usually missed by all the thinkers who dream of the welfare of humanity.

A person lives by desires, and society by ideas on the basis of which concrete desires are also formulated. Ideas emerge seemingly from nowhere – but is that the case? I maintain that any development of human communities is initiated from above, and ideas are brought to the world by people who become conscious, or their unconscious conduits. The human mind operates from what is known, relying on notions received from outside and adapted to one's own experience. When the mind finds a solution to an external problem – for example, how to build a bridge or a dam better, interference from above is not needed for this. But when an insight comes to a person, revealing an entirely new idea, concerning the community or the organization of people as a whole, then practically always, its appearance in the mind of a given specific person is initiated from above. This is well known to writers, philosophers and scientists who have discovered at least something new. Many of them have spoken about inspiration, but that does not always correspond to what I am writing about. Inspiration emerges from an impulse of energy, an impulse prompting a person toward creativity, demanding to express itself somehow.

Often it is in no way connected with the reception of a new vision and a new understanding of things.

Graphomans and various types of arts craftsmen are sometimes visited by inspiration. Insight visits far from all, even the most talented creators. But it is through insight that new ideas come to people, which lead to changes in the life of large human societies.

The story of Albert Einstein is a vivid example of such an insight. By the time he was 25, Einstein had made five discoveries that changed physics and our notion of the world. He himself described the process of discovery of new truths as an act of contemplation, in which their vision was revealed to him. This process is known to each decent mystic, but Einstein came to it seemingly spontaneously. And here is what happened later: after becoming a world-famous person following the invention of the theory of relativity, Einstein headed off on a world tour, where he was feted in every way as a great scientist. It lasted three years, and by the time of Einstein's return to Europe, scientists had been found who developed his ideas, establishing quantum physics.

And here is what is funny: Einstein could not understand their conclusions, nor quantum physics itself at all. He still remained an icon of world physics, but for all his subsequent life, he could not do anything especially serious. He tried to invent a unified field theory, but did not succeed in doing so. In other words, his genius was manifested exactly in that he could become a conduit for new ideas, and then either he lost this ability of perception, or he did what he was supposed to do. The life drama of a person who has become a conduit for a short time is expressed in the fact that he usually has nothing more to say. Either he develops the ideas that came to him, or he remains on the side, observing how others develop them.

A striking story of the development of ideas can be traced through the example of the theory of the origin of the species

discovered by Charles Darwin. Of course, he, too, was a conduit, but he really tried to make "his" idea grounded. And that happens with everyone, because while an insight is an insight, any idea requires work to ground it. So thus, the idea of evolution proposed by Darwin not only overturned the notion of the world in which everything was created by God within seven days, but it provided other ideas that directly flowed from it, very impressive in results.

From Darwinism, for example, the idea emerged of the evolution of human races, presented by the Tibetan teachers through Blavatsky. Or perhaps she invented it herself. The theory of evolution of human races, the next stage of which must be prepared for, was supported by the Roerichs and to this day continues to ferment in the minds of people prepared to believe in messages from higher beings, no matter through whom they come. The idea of the origin of the species enabled the introduction of the concept of higher and lower races (in the sense of nationalities) and the justification of the claims of the Nazis to world domination, which led to a new world war and the Holocaust. Applied to the history of the development of humankind in the economic sense, the idea of evolution gave birth to Marxism, with its concept of classes and the theory of the development of society from bad to better. It is also alive to this day, although the social experiment set up on its foundations failed miserably. And this occurred for the very same reason: people may change themselves only to a certain extent, only within the framework of habits and sometimes reactions. But that is only in the cases of purposeful work on oneself, which is not encountered so often, and therefore the building of paradise on earth never succeeds.

**T**he most important question tormenting people regarding the reality of God is the question of the existence of evil. Truly, why does He, Almighty and All-Good, allow so much evil to be created in the world, so there is so much torment and suffering? Why, for example, do some insights advancing science and the development of humankind, somewhat later turn into the appearance for it of ideas leading to a new evil? All religions find their explanations for why the world is so harsh, and why people are so brutal to one another. And why, finally, do children die and others we love?

The most diverse answers are invented, but the truth is that it is impossible to create a world in which movement would be absent, which would be absolutely static. And that is exactly what would happen if, for example, people were made immortal and their power of desire was removed. Such a world would be dead from the outset. Death is the main evil of our world, but it gives people's lives the value that the majority of them do not recognize. And without the moving force of desires there would also not be any development, although they are what bring people a great part of all suffering. The more a person identifies with his suffer-

ing, the more unjust and incorrect his life seems to him. Suffering is just the reaction of the mind to what is happening, and therefore it is quite possible to rid oneself of it. Pain can be experienced but without suffering, and you can suffer for any reason – due to any triviality which becomes an obstacle to what you want.

From the perspective of mystics, the world seems quite perfect. But they see and are aware of those levels of Creation which are hidden from ordinary people. And therefore their vision is more complete, and their understanding more profound. Moreover, mystics go beyond the bounds of human limitation, acquiring a connection with the whole – with the Supreme. They know what life is, but also know what it means to go beyond its bounds. They know the price of suffering, because they themselves have suffered, but having become mystics, they have overcome suffering as well. The mechanism of the construction of the world is perfect. People have everything that in fact they want. The opportunity for interaction with God and experiencing His Truth is open to everyone. For some, the world is suffering; for some it is a game; and for still others it is Work, but here everyone chooses himself for himself. The greatness of God is manifested in everything, and everyone who ceases to identify with his desires is capable of seeing it.

History, which is usually rather hard to understand, is connected with the almighty God. Imagine an endless Force, which rests within itself, not manifesting and not acting. At that moment, its potential will be absolute, and the choice of possibility of action and manifestation practically endless. As soon as it begins to act, however, and begins to create, then every manifested action begins to bear the fruit of consequence, really restricting its possibility in a given place and time. While there is no Creation, there are no rules, but as soon as it begins, the almighty nature of God becomes restricted by the rules of the existence of the world, which He Himself created. I would put it this way: any almighty

substance ends as soon as the rules of the game are introduced and must be obeyed by everyone. Our world is finite; space and time exist in it, and therefore the endless Force may manifest itself in it only within certain limits. Any creation is subordinate to certain laws which, in the final analysis, limit the creator, and even force him to act according to them, against his own will. Thus for example, the characters of literary works suddenly begin to live their own lives, and the author may only go along with them, at times deviating from his initially-designed plot. Sometimes similar happens with God's Creation, too.



If there were no higher need for it, mystics would not appear at all. The movement inherent in the Creation itself, the play of forces represented in it, require that someone actively influence what is happening. The Lord may not directly interfere in ongoing processes, since then He violates the laws established by Him Himself. Therefore, conduits are needed who could fulfill His Will, maintaining a balance of forces in the world. There exist the forces of Ascending and Descending Streams of Creation which ensure all of its dynamism. Both the life and death of every person is directly connected with the energies of these Streams. The Darkness and Light, of which mystics speak, are the energies of the Ascending and Descending Streams, respectively. Darkness and Light are in dynamic balance, and the prevalence of the energy of one of the Streams directly influences the conditions of life of people and their state.

The majority of people live in darkness; after all, the energies of the Descending Stream dominate them, feeding and maintaining all their desires. As we know, people have all sorts of desires, but this is not the point. Not only mystics become conduits of energies, but every person on the Earth transforms and

“pumps” through himself energies of the most diverse qualities. And the outer influences at times have the most unexpected and not always predictable effect on the state of energies, people, and the Streams as a whole. The very same idea of evolution led to the fact that mass murders became nearly the norm – both in Russia and in Europe. The dynamic balance of the Streams is maintained through people, but sometimes the fluctuation of the forces are so rapid and unexpected that the price of balance becomes too great. The Pattern of Creation – in which variants of the turn of events always exists – may be disrupted, and then our branch of Creation comes to a rapid and irreversible end. These words may seem excessively dramatic and serious, but such situations have already occurred, and in fact some of them have happened quite recently.

If the majority of people pump energy and are subject to external influences without being aware of this at all, then mystics take part in these processes entirely consciously. And here we must understand the energy situation in which mystics live. In the process of work on themselves, in the process of interaction with God, mystics rid themselves of desires, and in so doing, come out from under the influence of energies of the Descending Stream. They grow the state of awareness and the waves which force masses of people to follow certain new ideas do not touch them. They come out from under the general sleep of life, which is full of projections and hallucinations of the mind, passions ignited over nonsense, and all forms of negative feelings and emotions. Having experienced transformation, mystics change in such a way that they themselves become conduits of the Light, conduits of energies of the Ascending Stream of Creation. Therefore, their *presence* alone already influences the balance here of energies of the Streams, on the balance of Darkness and Lightness in our world. Massive psychoses, fascination with the latest idea and other reactions of the crowds influence this balance no less (although in the direction of increasing Darkness), but the energy

radiated by the mystic himself, who has undergone transformation, is different in quality. It is *higher*, and therefore to maintain balance less of it is needed. And a living mystic is needed in order to directly bringing into the world higher energies which cannot be manifested here without a conduit.

The higher the level of a mystic, the higher the level of his influence on the balance of Light and Darkness. I have already written a fair amount about these Forces, but I will repeat that for any serious mystic they are what he must constantly deal with. There are periods – already not dependent on the general state of people – when either Darkness or Light dominate on the planet. Such periods quite tangibly reflect on the state of all of humankind, and under the domination of Darkness, mystical Work becomes far harder to perform, whereas in the abundance of Light, it flourishes. But balance always returns, and it cannot be disrupted for long. Moreover, there exist mechanisms aimed at maintaining this balance, and therefore great mystics are forced to overcome great obstacles. Nevertheless, the laws of the world will still nullify the effect of the Work of every mystic in time, yet even its performance is always fraught with the overcoming of the inertia of people and the world, and the direct resistance to the energies of the Descending Stream, one of the components of which is the mystical Darkness.

If several dozen great mystics appear in the world simultaneously, then the balance of Forces may seriously suffer. Thus, there are never a lot of them, but not a single century has not gone by without their presence. But presence alone is not sufficient; otherwise there would be no talk of the Work of mystics. The presence of a mystic in the world increases the quantity of Light in it, that is, strengthens the manifestation of energies of the Ascending Stream. This then influences the situation of people in beneficial fashion – the general level of unconsciousness is reduced, and the quantity of forced suffering is reduced (when people land in

various types of external troubles which releases the energy of suffering), and even the amount of violent deaths also decreases. This is the simple law of the equilibrium of energies, and all mystics encounter its action – each in his measure.

But support does not imply *development*. As conscious conduits of Will, mystics can take part in the development of Creation. In that case, they become helpers of Creation, and then they receive what the Sufis call the Work. All great Sufis were people of mission, that is, they became aware of a certain task which was set before them by the Will of God, the fulfillment of which they served. This fulfillment of the highest mission leads to the emergence of the Work. The tasks set before mystics of various levels can be different, and as a rule, they never disclose them to the uninitiated. Great mystics have some tasks; medium-level mystics have others. And even so, they are all different. The work of each mystic strictly corresponds to the needs of Creation, although as a rule it is not given them to see and know its long-term results. The Pattern of Creation is changeable, and it is impossible for the mystic to predict the long-term consequences of an effect – at least, at the human level of understanding. Of course it can be said that the fruits of any Work disappear after some time, and new sprouts can lead to results that the Work should have prevented, but all of this is known to mystics anyway. “Incorrect” consequences of the actions of some mystics are removed by others who come in their place, and who are performing their Work needed here and now. Thus mystics take part in the development and maintenance of Creation, and thus they serve God.

**M**ystics bring new ideas and new meanings to people, which then turn into premises of conditionality and are overgrown with rituals. The action of each mystic is subordinate to the demands of the moment and that line of development of Creation which is now pleasing to God. Great mystics leave a trace for the ages, if a world religion grows from their Work, or a certain persistent community of followers in the form of a mystical or spiritual school. Mystical Work sometimes engenders a chain of continuity, and sometimes not. Sometimes it happens that a mystic must set the beginning of a new tradition, and in fact in the most banal meaning of that word. In it, people will discuss his ideas, nourish their minds with them, and perform certain actions enabling the production of a certain form of energy which is required for Creation. Actually, this does not rule out that the people following this mystic will obtain a certain development and quite tangible satisfaction, but most likely they will not become true mystics. The limitation of the task of that Work which the mystic was performing, in the majority of cases pre-determines the possible results of the work of his followers. And here it is time to heed Krishnamurti, and his call not to follow

anyone searching for his road to the Truth. The problem, however, is that without a conduit, without help rendered in time, it can be very difficult or nearly impossible to find that road.

It is impossible to go beyond yourself without outside help. Everyone who thinks that they have managed to do this independently either lives in illusions or does not understand what has occurred with them. That happens, and in the stories of the destinies and the teaching of mystics we can see this quite clearly. You must help either the Lord – and that also happens sometimes – or the Master, and here there are no other options. But neither will happen if you yourself do not wish this outcome, if the world still lures you and unrealized worldly desires still seem vitally important to you as before. In this simultaneously is both the question and the answer to it: if you have not become satiated by the world and have not lost hope of obtaining in it peace and happiness, you will not manage to go beyond the bounds and lose yourself. Not a single Master in the world can open for you the door to the Beyond, because you yourself keep yourself within the *limit*. The Lord, of course, may make you his chosen ones, bestowing the impulse of Grace just so, but this occurs extremely rarely.

The goal of every mystic is to enter into direct interaction with God. People who propagandize enlightenment, in which this interaction is missing by definition are not mystics, and we are not speaking of them now. What they are doing and what they are pumping out is their business; the mystic, however, seeks direct communication and service, without which this communication also does not have much meaning. All teaching in mystical traditions and schools is aimed precisely at this, in order to bring the student to the possibility of a conscious interaction with God – not only with His Presence, but with the Will which directs a person further, where it is needed by the Supreme. The sense of any mystical teaching consists of this, but in order for it to be success-

ful, a spiritual component is needed as well, which, in its main part, consists of development of human consciousness.

There are people who believe that they sense the presence of God in their life anyway, and therefore they do not need any other teaching and guidance. Well, such things also happen. Chosenness manifests itself in different ways, but sometimes it is false and feeds a person's ego, and sometimes it is real, and then his ego is erased in service. To be chosen by God does not at all mean having an easy destiny; after all, taking part in Creation is always participation in renewal, and the introduction of the new. Let us recall the story of Jesus, who introduced the New Testament; let us recall the story of Mohammed, who was stoned for preaching monotheism near the Kaaba, and in general, let us recall the story of any great mystic. They always had to go *against*, because otherwise, no renewal would occur. This is the most difficult Work, which in principle cannot be carried out without help from above. But without their participation, the Work will also not exist – therefore some quantity of those who carry it out will always be in the world. It is impossible to directly interfere, but it is also impossible to do everything through unconscious conduits; therefore the Lord will always chose someone for conscious help to His Creation. And it must be said that it is in regular need of such help.

**I**n our age of surrogates and the overabundance of information – and in fact often fake information – both mystics and God may seem unnecessary in some way, a kind of vestige of the “primeval past” of humankind. Especially because many mystical schools have degenerated and now discredit the Way more than they help to embark on it. And many of them from the outset were not mystical, and therefore there was little use from them. But that does not at all mean that the correlation of forces in Creation have changed in any way.

The work of mystics always had a hidden and manifested part. But the majority of people have an incorrect notion of even its visible part, because their level of understanding is determined by their level of being, and they cannot see the whole picture. People usually see that part of the Work which is turned precisely to them – to their awakening and teaching, but it is most often understood wrongly. The majority of people do not know about the hidden part of the Work at all, because it is not turned to them directly, although usually it is connected with the continuation of their existence. Those chosen for its fulfillment know about the Work,



and for the rest it either does not exist, or has turned into myths, like those which Idries Shah created around it.

No matter what times come on Earth, while humankind is still alive, there will always be people inherently bearing within themselves the seed of pure striving towards God. There are those for whom awakening is the only means of realizing themselves, and the world no more than one of the means toward the goal. They become seekers, and they come to God. In the end, they become mystics of all kinds of levels and do what is necessary in the world. They turn into the connecting link between God and the world, and their Work is needed both to the earthly and the transcendent. Essentially, their presence and the Work is one of the conditions of the continuation of Creation, and that means one of the conditions for the existence of our world; thus mystics will live in it just as long as it will live. And perhaps even a little longer.



**THE PHENOMENON OF THE  
ADVAITI**

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There is practice and experience, and there is expression in words. The formulation of experience in words creates the opportunity for transmission of *knowledge* obtained from a specific person, and makes his experience accessible for application by other people. Knowledge of this type relates to the purely practical questions and usually amounts to advice on how and what to do, in order to obtain the necessary result. This enjoys enormous popularity in our time – books with practical advice sell well, and the Internet is full of videos with advice for all occasions in life.

There exists knowledge in which the experience of many people is combined, and certain patterns are extracted of how everything is constructed. This is already knowledge that is more general, and is not entirely practical. It helps to understand something not so much about the subject of experience, as much as how it is obtained in general and about the people who come to it. In the framework of the spiritual Way, practical knowledge, for example is the description of efforts in self-awareness by those who have applied them for a rather long time, and can speak of the obstacles and traps they encountered. This is the living experience of one person who has attained something and is sharing it

with others. More general knowledge in this example would be the compilation of experience of dozens or hundreds of seekers performing the same practice, and the discovery of patterns of what happens in general in it with a person, the showing of its stages, and so forth.

Experience may be laid out with the use of various forms – either in the form of direct instructions, or in the form of discussions on a topic, or even dialogues between an author and listeners. In fact, it is this form of transmission of experience that all modern Advaitis prefer. But there is still another form of making sense of the experience of another, as a rule – the creation of various types of theories. Or, to put it more simply, the creation of a philosophy. The experience of the development of awareness can provide someone with a reason to reflect on the nature of consciousness and about its source. Here the experience becomes the point of departure for the beginning of philosophizing – that is, for the construction of a system of claims that must not be contradictory from the perspective of logic, but not only -- in theory, it should lead to discovery of new knowledge.

In the distant past, philosophy took the place of almost all forms of existing sciences, since a person was technically limited to the possibilities of studying himself and the surrounding world. The basis for his knowledge was the mind with its reasonings and logic, and out of this was born numerous systems describing the world, and not only the world. God also became a subject of research, which rarely relied on people's own experience and often on sacred writings. In the West, under Christianity, theology was thus developed, and in the East, thus new forms of religions emerged.

Advaita-Vedanta, with which the story of modern Advaita begins, arose as a pure philosophy. Advaita means the absence of duality, the claim that the individual soul (*jiva*) and God (Brahman) have the same nature, or more simply put, are practically the

same thing. Besides, in the original philosophy of Advaita-Vedanta, it was claimed that the world is illusory, and only God is real, and all of this was extracted from the Upanishads, which are part of the Holy Vedas. Essentially, Advaita was form as an interpretation of certain places in the Upanishads, and the interpretation was rather revolutionary. The Upanishads, in turn, is a collection of mystical texts which in all likelihood reflected the mystical experience of their creators.

Sacred texts are always subjected to reflection and re-thinking, because they become a basis for the spiritual creativity of numerous people. Any sacred text must contain a mystical part within it; otherwise, it will not have the necessary depth. The Upanishads became such a mystical part of the Veda, and therefore on the basis of the deciphering and development of ideas contained in them, quite a few philosophical schools appeared. Advaita was one of them, and the founder of it was the wise man Gaudapada, who advanced a number of quite categorical claims. Any seasoned debater knows that the categorical nature of claims seems to prove their truth, and we will not forget that debates of wise men in ancient times were commonplace. And why just in ancient times? Osho repeatedly made long trips around India in order to take part in such debates. But that, so to speak, is a small comment, possibly not having direct relationship to the essence of the matter.

Thus, proceeding from the phrase “*tat tvam asi*” (“*you are this*”), Gaudapada deduced the thesis of the identification between God and a person’s individual soul. On this, essentially, all of Advaita stands to this day, and in that sense, nothing has changed since the



very beginning. We cannot know whether Gaudapada himself experienced what he talked about, and whether he sensed the commonality of the nature of the soul and God, their indivisibility, perceived at a certain highest level of awareness. All claims were directly or indirectly based on references to the Upanishads and the further reflections of Gaudapada himself. But his own judgments about God and the world enable us to suppose that the wise man did not have any experience, and was involved in pure philosophy, not confirmed by mystical experience. The claims about God and the world only underscore the purely philosophical nature of all of Gaudapada's constructs. Proceeding from the texts of the Upanishads, where it is said that God does not have any characteristics or qualities, and that true reality also does not have them, which is what He is, the wise man makes the conclusion that the world visible to us and its abundance of qualities and characteristics is an illusion. To this is appended various amusing justifications such as that a sleeping person perceives his dream as actual reality, although there is no reality in a dream whatsoever. Not a single mystic will deny the reality of our world; only a philosopher is capable of this, for whom his own mental constructs are generally the only thing that is really real.

Gaudapada's constructs seemed impressive, but not very convincing regarding the illusory nature of the world. This idea, in fact, attracts many people to this day, those who like mind games with strong ideas claiming certain extreme things. Another wise man named Shankara set about correcting the situation. He made the concept of the reality of things more complex, introducing the concept of true reality which belongs only to Brahman, the main God, and also distinguished the categories of conditional reality and transparent reality. Conditional reality is all of our world, along with its creator, Ishvara, who is the facilitating god, and also all kinds of knowledge and principles guiding human life. Thus, Shankara tried to overcome one of the claims of Gaudapada in

which it was said that the eternal cannot give birth to the non-eternal. The eternal God, who has no cause cannot engender causes for the existence of numerous objects of the world; otherwise He himself disappears into them and loses His eternity. That is, God cannot be the cause for the emergence of the world, because then He himself must have a cause. We can find lots of senseless but impressive reflections by Gaudapada on this theme. By introducing an intermediary god, Shankara seems to eliminate the question of the eternal, true, reality of Brahman, untouched by anything. But of course this is just the usual philosophical trap, because the intermediary god must have his cause by which he arose. Otherwise, how is he different from the main, almighty God, existing without cause? Philosophers always have had problems with God which never arose with mystics.

According to Shankara, phantom reality is relegated to a purely philosophical category of obviously false claims, whereas true claims are relegated to relative reality. To these, by the way, are relegated dreams, which in Shankara have a relative reality, but one nonetheless.

The relative reality itself is the product of Maya – a special substance without consciousness, which comes from the god Ishvara. Maya creates projections and illusions, due to which the individual soul senses itself as alienated from the main God, and does not realize that it is one whole with Him. Maya itself is fundamentally unknowable and indescribable. Scholars believe such a description is closest to the sense of what is laid out in the Upanishads, but even so, this all remains pure philosophy, with which there is nothing to be done, although Shankara himself proposes a way out of the situation in which people find themselves. The way out is through liberation (*moksha*), which is achieved through realization that you and Brahman are one. Well, or that you are the same thing.

For those who want to come to liberation, Shankar recom-

mends first studying the Vedas properly, and only then coming to performance of *jnana* yoga. Other forms of yoga are not particularly encouraged by him, and it could hardly be otherwise; after all, the yoga of knowledge (as *jnana* is translated) is, to a certain extent, the yoga of philosophers.

Intelligent people are such that the conception of a personal God does not always suit them. A personal God, in their view, is limited, and the stories that are made up about Him in time seem very naïve or even wild. Intelligent people are not able to accept such things also because the higher the population's common level of knowledge and education, the less popularity gods enjoy who have a long history and hence are perceived as certain personalities. Then the stories begin about World Reason, Existence, Universal Consciousness and the long well-known Absolute. It is easier for intelligent people to deal with a certain abstraction, because it fits better into their complex sense of the world and does not require fulfilling ritual actions in its honor. And since intelligent people have existed in all times, then the idea, too, of the impersonal Highest Being, which even so, had to be called something, appeared here and there. It can be said with full confidence that the apogee of rejection of the personal God became atheism, also conceived not by fools, but that was already the complete finale of the development of philosophical thought, after which is had nowhere to go. Atheism closed off philosophy, since all remaining questions of human existence automatically

began to be resolved by various sections of science – from biology and chemistry to sociology and psychology – although the latter was never able to become a science.

The idea of an impersonal God without any qualities expressed in human language is good as an idea, but does not help much in practice. You can somehow think about such a God and still somehow imagine him for yourself but it is fundamentally impossible to interact with Him. The idea from which any teaching begins predetermines possible methods. In Advaita, the negation of all forms of reality except the reality of the Brahman led to negation on its own becoming virtually the main method, enabling liberation from illusions. At least, it is this negation that is at the foundation of the messages and preachings of all modern teachers of Advaita.

Jnana-yoga also employs negation as one of the chief methods of achievement. Besides the standard demands to purify the mind, internal renunciation of the world and a pious lifestyle, the practice *neti-neti* known to many is offered, for example. Or in English translation, “not this, not this.” The practice consists of disidentification with everything that is not your true nature (the highest I, the *jiva* and so on) through asking yourself questions like: “Am I this body?,” “Am I these thoughts?,” and the answer to them, as you understand, is always negative.

Theoretically, this practice should lead the yogi, having separated himself from everything that is not him, to obtaining the experience of the divine part of his being and coming to enlightenment and awareness that he and God are one. In practice, it is rather difficult to come to this, because the mind, to which, moreover, the correct answer is given in advance, is involved in the work. Furthermore, the state to which the seeker must come is described in advance, and therefore to imitate its achievement is not a very difficult task for the human mind. And no matter what the teachers of Advaita have said about the state of non-duality

seemingly being indescribable, all of them from morning until night are occupied with describing it, creating an ever greater temptation for the minds of their followers to fall into a dangerous self-deception. Let us suppose that you ask yourself the question, "Am I this body?" The answer is obvious – of course you are more than a body. At that moment, your attention supposedly should be aimed at that very "I," but the very posing of the task – in the form of questioning – leaves your attention in the field of the mind. Alright, you constantly hold within yourself these questions, turning questioning into something like a Zen koan with an answer known in advance. You increasingly and for a longer time delve into the fact that you are not a body, nor a mind, nor feelings. This becomes a new program in the mind; you seem to look on yourself as if not on yourself, but this hardly guarantees you a breakthrough to the experience of something greater than these thoughts. You may even begin to speak about yourself in the third person, as Jiddu Krishnamurti did occasionally, but will this lead you to the desired experience? Experience shows that the mind rapidly grows accustomed to any similar practice, and it turns into a mechanical repetition, without any energy within it for any breakthrough internally, toward authentic experience. It is possible that in the past, people's minds were not so trained to acquiring habits and to turning into stereotypical reactions all with which the mind works. But now the years of teaching in middle school train the human mind exactly in that fashion.

There exists a practice that is nearly the same, but expressed positively. This is also the fairly famous technique of self-questioning, which Ramana Maharshi gave to all who wished. In it, a person must ask himself, "Who am I?," discarding all replies as predictably untrue. The result also should be a breakthrough and insight, but the problems are still the same – the trained, modern mind and the state known in advance toward which one must come. Any Master will tell you that if you inform students in

advance what they should get from a practice, many will imagine to themselves the necessary result and hypnotize themselves to that degree in order to clearly sense it. Moreover, I have seen quite a few “enlightened ones” who have attained “liberation” precisely by that means. Among the modern Advaita teachers, let us say frankly, there are quite a few of such “attainers.”

The practice, “Who am I?” can work only when a person is obsessed with it in a good way. That is when this question is not brought from outside, but is his present, vitally-important question, and no external answers will help in quenching the thirst for an answer. But a person with such a thirst is blessed, and of course he will receive an answer in the form of an experience, although this will also not happen very quickly. Spiritual thirst will bring the seeker to where he will be satisfied – to the experiences and insights that he seeks. It is not a fact, however, that they will be like the Advaitists predict, foreshadow or describe. Because philosophy is good for debates and books, but life, God and the Way (which the Advaitists, as they should, deny) is broader and deeper than any philosophical constructions.

There is still another method, used in jnan-yoga, and it is related to observation. This is the practice of awareness, which is also given and explained in its final form. Here the yogi must observe all his manifestations and actions as a detached witness. The observation must take place from inside, and not from the side, because one can look at oneself from the side with the help of the mind as well, without any deep awareness. Even so, the mind takes the position of an outside observer, imagining himself by it, and evaluating all the actions of a person. Evaluation is not related to awareness; it always comes from the mind with its notions of correct and incorrect. Therefore, the explanation that the observer must be within, points to precisely the awareness of what is going on, and not to the mind game in looking at what is happening from the side.

If a person is capable of being aware of everything happening inside him, and also his own actions in a detached way, that means he has already reached a quite high stage of awareness. But a seeker comes to this only through efforts in disidentification, in separation of attention, and no one manages to do this quickly and easily. We are thus constructed, and no matter how much you tell



yourself that the mind with its thoughts and attachments is no more than an illusion, the process itself of growing awareness from this is not accelerated and is not made easy.

The logic of this practice consists of the fact that having disidentified with everything which in fact he is not, a person may finally see and become aware of his true nature, identical to the nature of God, and become aware, finally, of what is sacred, that their nature is the same. That is, awareness here is used for achievement of the very same goal – awareness of the unity of the true reality of a person and God. The world in this conception is not viewed in any way because it is by definition real quite relatively, and the state of non-duality has no relationship to it at all. The true Advaita exists only between the *jiva* and the Brahman, and all the rest is sheer delirium and nonsense. But with the course of time, everything changes, and therefore the interpretation of non-duality has changed as well.

**I**t is hard with complete confidence to say how affairs now stand with the Advaita in India, but judging from information coming from there, the grief there is exactly the same there as it is in all the rest of the world. The so-called neo-Advaita is now spread in it, which significantly differs from the original Advaita-Vedantas. The majority of modern teachers of neo-Advaita directly or indirectly trace their origin from Ramana Maharshi and try to imitate his methods of interaction with people. The problem is only that Ramana was never a real Advaita, although most often he did speak with people in the language of the Advaita.

Ramana achieved a higher state without studying scriptures and without targeted practices of jnana-yoga – simply by the Grace of God. He had not intended to become a teacher; rather, he was forced into this, and I really like reading, as the later teachers of the new Advaita describe in every corner, that they did not want to teach anyone, but people came, and therefore they apparently had to teach. Maharshi became the object of subtle imitation, at times even not aware of those who imitated him. The majority of them wanted to repeat the miracle of a person's awareness of his

higher “I,” which, judging from the recollections, at time occurred with Maharshi’s followers in his presence. Therefore, at their meetings, they strive to direct a person’s attention to himself, to what is here and now, and everyone would like it if he would begin to laugh madly and announce that he finally understood everything. For some reason, it is laughter that the neo-Advaitists consider the chief proof of a person’s attainment of his true nature. Therefore, the most capable of them laugh often and a lot, and those whose actor’s talents are developed somewhat less simply smile to the extent of their powers. Laughter during enlightenment or insight is the usual cliché, a kind of stereotypical image, but not very accurate, albeit understandable and visible. Papaji would distribute a video with the insane laughter that overtook people whom he had seemingly lead to an awareness of “I,” but the reality of all this is not worth much.

In any event, all the new teachers look over their shoulders at Ramana, trying to act in the same vein. But the problem is that Maharshi himself in fact did not act, but swam with the current, which brought him to Advaita.

Maharshi did not deny anything, as is customary in Advaita; on the contrary, he gave a positive image of the higher “I.” *Jiva*, or the individual soul, has become somewhat outdated for describing the internal nature of a person, so the image had to be somewhat updated then. Ramana’s experience was far broader than what he had to say, but the demands of his followers and the need to speak with them in the same language led to the necessity of finding it. Maharshi found the necessary words in Hindu texts which he began to read after he left the cave and people began to gather around him. Before that, he had no need whatsoever of writings. But in order to find the opportunity to more or less adequately express his experience, he had to resort to what was written before him, and to that language which was already known to his listeners. Thus was born his “Advaita” message, which was constantly mixed with entirely non-Advaita concepts. What is his mention of the Heart worth, for example, in which the famous “I” of a person is found? But now all that is now ignored, as something irrelevant to the matter. As is known, a dead saint is far more convenient than a live one – because everything can be done with him which comes into one’s head.

The problem with Maharshi's message is greater than it appears at first glance – especially the glance of a person who has no spiritual experience at all. To be truthful, this relates not only to the books with Maharshi's texts, but to all books of such type in general. You begin to read a text in which a mass of terms at first incomprehensible to you are used, which tells you what you do not yet sense and do not know, and you are left with either believing all this and accepting everything at face value, or denying what is written as not corresponding to your expectations and conditionality.

And if you also read a text created in another culture, in another time, and for people who were in a situation very different from yours, then here it will be practically impossible to fathom its essence. But a text not totally understood will still have an influence on your mind, and on the one hand, will begin to motivate you to action, and on the other hand, will implant in your mind new, previously unseen concepts.

False teachers exploit this – they began to speak with people, using endlessly foreign terms, and listeners see in this a manifestation of a great competence. In reading the texts of any confession or tradition, you must at first study their language, but even that never guarantees you full understanding of their message.

And it is good if a text comes across in which the Truth is reflected at least partially, and bad if there is none in it at all, or else it is given in a severe distortion. Truth, of course, can never be reflected by words in all its fullness, and most often it is subject to simplification, but there is still another factor that renders the use of spiritual texts null. It comes from the *limitations* of each specific mystic, who, by virtual of the particularities of his achievement of spiritual transformation knows only a certain part of it, and thinks up the rest on demand from the public.

There are questions that do not have answers, and there are students influencing the teacher. I have already written that the

quality of the students directly influences what the Master says, and the form he chooses for expression of the Truth. No matter what is said in Hindu myths about the omniscience of the enlightened – it simply does not exist. Each mystic is limited by the level of knowledge of his time and that Work which it is necessary for him to fulfill. Only God has omniscience, and the words of any mystic still do not reflect all aspects of the Truth and often willingly or unwillingly contain falsehood or incorrect definitions. One must regard this calmly, but for beginners, such mystics' texts contain ever new traps, into which their minds fall, and they themselves along with them.

For that reason, the followers of the majority of mystics do not end up in the place to which they strive – after all, their way was set incorrectly from the start. And no matter how sad this sounds, the confusion of ways of practices and methods is also created by the mystics themselves, who are simply unable or cannot explain them more or less coherently, or do not understand the essence of their achievement.

Ramana Maharshi achieved transformation by the Grace of God, for which he prepared nothing to receive, as far as we know. This glaring fact left its imprint on all his subsequent activity. And no matter how much you speak of the greatness of Maharshi as a mystic, and no matter how much you agree with him on the questions of expression of the highest Truth, some of his words do not help very much in the attainment of that goal that he himself indicated.

Self-questioning, which consists not only of repeating the question “Who Am I?”, but is accompanied by a constant direction of attention within oneself (as Maharshi indicated) is, of course, a good thing. The direction of attention within oneself is in general the foundation of any spiritual development and one of the conditions for attaining transformation. And the state of awareness is grown by observation of the body, emotions and thoughts – this is

a fact. But when a concrete task is proposed – awareness of the higher “I” or Selfhood (according to Maharshi), then attention must be directed exactly in such a way that this Selfhood is discovered. That is, the task of holding attention in non-identification, already not easy, becomes even more difficult.

Usually, the practice of becoming aware is based on detachment – that is, removal from everything that you observe without bringing the mind into this task, that is, without evaluating what you see. Even if a certain evaluation arises, then it, too, is observed, like everything else. On that principle stands all the internal work – to look without desire, condemnation, and everything that comes from the mind. Thus, essentially, disidentification with the mind is achieved. If a person wants to work with a specific desire, for example, or wants to become better aware of it, then he looks within with the intention of “dragging out” the given desire into the light, and then he uses the power of awareness for resolving a concrete task. The attempt to directly become aware of one’s Selfhood is a task of the same kind; it is only the desire to find that is far simpler because it wants to be found itself. When we look at desire, we look at the mind in which it lays. Where do we look if we want to see Selfhood? The answer “nowhere” is not suitable, because the practice of awareness is in fact looking at everything that happens, but specifically at nowhere, and no Selfhood is discovered in this way.

If we simply become aware of everything that is taking place within, then it is possible to become completely aware of the body, in which afterward there will constantly be present a portion of attention – in the entire body immediately. It is possible to trace and sense the energy of the ethereal body – beginning with the rather coarse emotional energies and ending with the finer ones, for which a name has not even been invented. The mind with its movements, thoughts, desires and reactions is still perceived. With its depressions, anxieties, and layers on which various activity

occurs. To the extent of awareness of all this, disidentification, attention with observed objects grows, and then the sensation of a *witness* appears – that is, a certain center, from which a person sees the mind and everything else. But the witness cannot be called Selfhood, because this is only a new point of fixation of a person's attention, which is shifted from his previous position into the new becoming seemingly “above” the mind, but even so not leaving the bounds of the ethereal body or the body of the mind. The witness is not independent; he exists for a certain time, and to the extent of the growth of awareness, he disappears completely, but his entire function is to watch, that is, to bring the light of the individual human Consciousness “downward” – to the mind and other two bodies. No other center, particular body or substance which could be called Selfhood will be managed to be found. And that means it can only be invented.

Maharshi himself maintained that Selfhood (the higher “I”) is found in the spiritual Heart, situated in the right half of the rib cage. And here once again we must attempt to figure out what is meant. It is known that all spiritual teachers call on a person to go within, to himself. But where that “within” is, and where he should go, the seeker does not understand at all at first. It is so dark, and there is no space into which one can really enter. Under the condition that the seeker persistently is aware of himself, this space opens up, but this, of course, is not entry into the space of the physical body. The space of the ethereal body and the body of the mind, which to the degree of awareness cleanses itself of the energies suppressed within it, becomes accessible to our attention. This is the first step within, the space perhaps at first is not very large, but to the extent of a person's growth in awareness, to the extent of awareness by him of the emotions, desires, and feelings suppressed, it continues to increase. And then the Heart opens.

I have already written a lot about the Heart in my other books, and I do not see the necessity of dwelling on this question in too



much detail. I will only say that if the internal space opens for our awareness as a consequence of efforts made by us, the opening of the Heart occurs as Grace, as a mystical act, and we cannot summon it only by our own efforts. Most often it occurs when we refrain from efforts, accepting what is. And since the space of the Heart no longer relates to the internal space, but serves as a door to other dimensions – both to God and to the experience of a kind of local feeling of infinity – then it may be accepted as a higher experience accessible to a person.

Maharshi spoke about the spiritual Heart, located to the right, apparently opposite the physical heart. Some Sufis have also spoken of this, but the Heart may be sensed in the center of the chest also, and the space opening up with it generally leads us to a loss of boundaries, although in order to go within, attention must be directed to the Heart. Localization of the feeling of the Heart may be somewhat different, but the essence of it – like doors to the beyond – does not change with anyone who has come to its full opening. Yes, immersing himself in the Heart, a person experiences the feeling of calm, serenity, and if you like, silence. But can these states be called the Selfhood of a person? If not, then we will not find any Selfhood in the Heart, either, because it is simply a channel linking a person to the higher levels of Being.

And here is what is obtained: in trying to formulate his experience in the language of sacred texts, Maharshi encountered the necessity of somehow describing *jiva*, the individual soul, which must, being found, be identical to God. Otherwise, we would have to depart from the scriptures, but numerous Orthodox followers would hardly be able to accept that. And Maharshi did not have the need for his own expression, anyway, judging from everything. Thus the higher “I” appeared then – it is also Selfhood, which, no matter how much you seek is impossible to find.

The understanding of the higher “I” emerged as an opposition to the lower “I,” which traditionally correlates to the human ego, born in the mind. The higher “I” was supposed to be located outside the mind and represented our highest unchangeable individual nature. The individual soul – as something eternal and which everyone possesses – was quite suitable for that role. On the one hand, its presence explained the strange and inexplicable sense that there is no death, which is familiar to everyone, and on the other hand, is completely consistent with ancient versions of the creation of the world. Therefore, the version of the individual soul, which, on the one hand completely corresponded to the personality of the person and bore his sins, and on the other hand, was immortal, that is, unchangeable – existed a very long time, and to this day is very widespread.

If you look at the question of the soul at the level of commonly-accepted notions, then we must admit that if the eternal soul predetermines all the special features of a person’s individuality, all of his bad and good traits (after all, it is eternal, and that means it is incapable of change; after all, what can change cannot be eternal), then that means what is now defined as

the ego is also part of the soul. And then it cannot be in any way the same as God, except for its immortality. And if it is really unchangeable, then all the whims of the body do not mean anything for it, and then it does not have the trait of a specific person, with whom it is seemingly united, and therefore there is totally nothing to judge it for at the Last Judgement.

This contradiction was realized perfectly by many mystics of ancient times, and they sought a way out through the complexification of the description of the construction of a person, introducing, for example, the concept of Spirit, which was higher than the soul and bore within it this very unchangeability and identity with God. But the level of common knowledge always predetermines the inability of more clear formulations and in general a deep clarification of the question. There simply do not exist suitable terms; there are no relevant concepts, and that is why mystics must get by with what there is, and call the rest inexpressible. Or think of some sort of terms of their own, but to raise them higher than the level of common knowledge does not work particularly well anyway, because all explanations are needed not so much by mystics as by those who listen to them.

In our time, for the definition of the eternal and unchangeable part of the human being, almost everyone uses the term "consciousness." Undoubtedly, it reflects the situation far better than both the soul and Selfhood. But even here, far from everything is fine for the contemporary Advaitists.

Following the previous Advaita logic of the opposition between the world and *jiva*, or the higher “I” with the lower, now the teachers of non-duality have attacked the mind. The idea of the lower “I,” which is almost never spoken of now, but which is based in the mind, leads to the mind, its thoughts and in general everything connected with it, becoming one of the main objects of Advaitist renunciation. The mind has become the main Advaitist illusion of our time, and here we cannot help but note that the modern level of knowledge has forced them to reject even the classic “correct” claims of Shankara. It is rather stupid now to call the world an illusion, whereas almost everyone is familiar to various degrees with the illusions produced by the mind. All the more because modern teachers of non-duality do not bother themselves with explanations of the structure of the world, considering them their thoughts as well, which must be renounced. Everything must be renounced, except Atman, which now is also seemingly identified with consciousness, although the Upanishads meant all the same higher “I” and the Absolute, being conscious of itself.

One must look at one’s own little Atman, and that leads to

awareness of the greater Atman, that is, to the awareness that you and the Absolute are one and the same. This is the good old dream of the Advaitists. For its realization now – aside from the methods cited above – it is proposed to become aware of the witness, or to become aware of awareness. But that is from what generally can be called at least some sort of practice. Because sometimes, it is simply proposed to understand here and now that you are not a body, not a mind – and so on, down the list. But the understanding itself will indeed lead you to the desired result. A kind of “jnana-yoga-lite” results.

From my perspective, the term “consciousness” more accurately describes *that what is*, but the use of ancient terms lends the speeches of new teachers greater significance. But let us return to the recommendations to become aware of consciousness or to “turn attention on who is watching.” Logically, one must turn attention inside or somewhere else and direct it to the same source. Osho often spoke of such things, but the problem is that this in principle is not possible to do.

The channeler of attention, which is the function of Consciousness, is the mind and nothing more. If it knows what to look at and where the object is located that requires attention, there are no particular difficulties. But if the object is located in an unknown place, then the mind becomes useless, and attention itself does not have its own active power. It always shift toward the strongest irritant – whether a loud sound or an irresistible desire. What is Consciousness and what is attention are passive, and you cannot force attention to move, if you do not use the mind. But if you cease to use it, then attention begins to wander by itself to and fro, outwardly or inwardly, depending on where new irritants arise. You cannot think up or invent anything more here, and the entire essence of the work with consciousness is to ensure that your channel of attention is expanded to the maximum, and the passive light of Consciousness has begun to be present constantly

in all your bodies simultaneously. When you are filled with the energy of Consciousness, when it has appeared in you in all its possible power, then the mind, as a channeler of attention, ceases to be greatly needed, because everything inside, including it as well, is already in its field. This then occurs and there is no possibility at all to change this situation with sort of superpower. Therefore, the task of awareness of an incomprehensible internal object most often leads to this object being created inside the mind, and there, too, the process of its “observation” occurs.

Consciousness also cannot be observed because attention is the light coming from it, which it is also impossible to turn back. There is no center in Consciousness, because its power is the same at each point of its presence, but this is realized in full measure only when it is manifested in your being to a high degree. The witness is an intermediary link, a temporary fixation, but it is impossible to look at it as well, because it rises when a person is already to a sufficient degree disidentified with the mind, and as soon as the mind begins to fulfill the function of channeler of attention, the witness successfully escapes. And then, upon return to the effort of disidentification, once again begins to be felt. And only very conditionally can it be called the higher “I” in relationship to the lower “I” of the mind.

If we are to speak about the higher “I” seriously, then it must be admitted that this concept is from the outset conditional. It was introduced so as to somehow indicate what is eternal and unchangeable in the human being, and which is inherent in a person only in part. And here the problem is that Consciousness does not need self-identification, such as, for example, is needed by the human personality. “I” emerges as a consequence of the necessity of separating oneself from others – for appropriate communication with them, for self-awareness and self-definition. This division appears as a consequence of a person’s maturity, as one of his important stages.

Everything can be denied – as the proverb says, a bad business is a stupid business. But to go against the mind completely – as a certain source of duality and the division of things – is completely unreasonable. The mind is needed for survival in the world, and if you do not want to use it, then go out of the world – either as a total recluse, or to the next world. But even as a hermit, you will have to use your mind, or someone must feed you and give you something to drink and maintain you at their own expense.

Thus, the lower “I” is necessary for life in the world, and the higher “I” was invented by ancient wise men as a means of indicating what is eternal in us. If this certain higher “I” had a center, then likely it could be realized, seen or felt. Maharshi (and others before him) taught that if you are able to bring the mind to a calm state, to a state of silence, then Selfhood can be felt. But if we verify this claim, then it becomes clear that aside from the peace which Bhagavan so loved to point, the sense of *presence* in oneself appears. Thus Consciousness is sensed, manifesting in our internal space, but this presence also does not have a center, and furthermore, it has no “I” in it at all. But even this presence at first is difficult to sense, because it develops to the extent of the growth of awareness, to the extent of the increasingly full manifestation of Consciousness in a person’s being. And at first, truly, aside from a certain peace in the background of the mind, which has slowed its movement, nothing more can be felt. Although, in order to be able to calm the mind, without suppressing its activity, and simply leading attention from it, by virtue of which is gradually calms itself – one must already have a high level of awareness.

But even acquiring the entire fullness of Consciousness, with the disidentification from the mind and everything else accompanying it, does not guarantee the acquisition of non-duality in its original sense – the experience that your Consciousness and God are the same.

In the histories of the Advaitists about themselves, an element of insight is always present, a certain enlightenment, after which they essentially do understand everything about non-duality. I would say that the sudden flash of awareness or something like it is a part of their religion. Such a thing happened, as we know, with Maharshi at the age of 16, and such things – in different variations – the majority of modern teachers of Advaita tell about themselves. Insight or something like it has become an inseparable part of the mythology of the Advaita, and without a tale about it, you cannot be a teacher in it. They usually cannot explain the nature of this insight and everything comes down to the fact that it came suddenly, bringing with it a clear vision of non-duality. Well, or something like it.

On the basis of the suddenness of these insights, the Advaitists deny the presence of the spiritual Path and its necessity. It seems to them that the break in perception and its change are not conditioned in any way and from their stories that is exactly what follows. Really, what sort of Way is it here? Not understanding the natures of their insights, nevertheless, they understand non-duality and for some reason begin to teach it, denying the possible



paths to achievement, and hoping for insight for no reason. Moreover, the main trick which today's teachers strive to perform in their presentations is the artificial creation of insight in the person who asks them a question. It is said at one time this worked with Maharshi. Something strange, but about the same thing, we observe in the video with Papaji. And in general, the majority of modern teachers of Advaita would like to become the source of the miracle of awakening of the person who turned to them. After all, then all their teaching would acquire at least some sort of meaning.

When the teacher of Advaita is asked a question, the entire answer always amounts to the fact that the question itself has no meaning, because it is just a thought in the mind, and therefore one must come to awareness of the essence, to awareness of the person who asks it. The responder simply tries to return a person to the state of being in the here and now, turning the attention of the questioner toward himself. It is this turn, as it is believed, that may indeed lead to insight. But with insight there is still one problem – the source of it for the Advaitists is not known, although they instinctively suppose that internal transformation may come from the “opening” by a person of his internal nature. That is, if it is correctly interpreted, by repeating all the time, “But who is sensing this? But who is asking that question” and so on, such a turn may occur that will immediately change a person's perception. But to speak seriously, all of this game of answering a question with a question may, perhaps, lead the questioner to awareness of a certain stupidity and the pointlessness of his questions, but the effect of the given “awakening” does not last long at all. The mind, even if stalled by the turning of the attention to itself, will still once again start accelerating, and the questions will return. And even if a person manages to obtain a certain key to turning to himself inside, even so, this is not the insight which participants in such meetings would like.

Any mentally-balanced person can attain a short-term stay in the “here and now.” He will not come out of the dreams of his identifications for long, but even so, he can come out of them. Therefore, it is not very difficult to turn a person toward returning for a few minutes to the state of presence in himself. But to bring him to insight is far more complicated – if possible at all.

The majority of those who have tried to figure out the questions of enlightenment never had any special clarity about the reasons for which it occurs. And that is understandable – after all, enlightenment came to us from Buddhism, and there is no God there – only emptiness and Nirvana.

Therefore, the phenomenon itself of enlightenment is connected to meditation, cleansing the mind from desires and the growth of awareness. And all of that as a result led a person to such a wonderful state as enlightenment. There exist the most diverse descriptions of enlightenment, which sometimes are so silly that you don’t even know how to regard them. Like the fantasies of their authors, perhaps. The majority of them come down to Consciousness at a certain moment seeming to explode inside a person, and he becomes enlightened. It is hard to say whether the energy of Consciousness is directed toward itself, which then leads to an explosion, or a person’s full disidentification occurs with all of its “lower” bodies, and from this, the light of Consciousness becomes liberated and explodes, changing the structure of its bearer, but approximately such explanations are given to us in movements where God and His influence are not taken into account at all.

He who practices awareness fairly successfully in time understands that the energy of Consciousness influences all a person’s energies, but never leads them to any sort of transformation. The awareness of anger does not change anger. The awareness of desire does not change its content and essence. Awareness leads to cleansing of a person’s internal space and to a refinement of his

perception, and that is all. Of course one can hope that the quantity of manifested energy of Consciousness may change the quality of his action, but even this, in the end, is not confirmed. A person does not have the necessary energy inside which could bring about his spiritual transformation, and that is known to all mystics – from the most ancient times. We cannot summon it ourselves, because our energies – including the energy of Consciousness – are not intended for that. The impulse leading a person to *qualitative change* may be received only from without, and not from within. You can like this or not like it, you can argue with it until you are hoarse, but that is exactly how matters stand.

The Sufis call the impulse of higher energy, irreversibly changing a person, the Grace of God. That is indeed grace, because it is impossible to earn it, although you can prepare yourself for its descent. Those who served God, who interact with Him, following His Will, in time acquire the opportunity to clearly sense the entry of an impulse into their internal space. There are impulses of Will or Knowledge, and there is the impulse of Grace, which gives a person a real, and not an invented transformation. Those who receive the impulse of Grace once or twice in their lives cannot understand at all what has happened to them. Since mystics who serve God receive many such impulses, for them, the difficulties of discernment in time cease to exist, and they always know exactly what is happening now with them. Moreover, they can trace the action of the impulse of Grace within themselves and see its results, from which their understanding becomes even deeper.

When experience is interpreted incorrectly, when there is no understanding of what has happened, you do not have to count on an adequate transmission and exposition of experience. And when there isn't the necessary understanding, then only by great desire and childish naivete can you hope that a practice useful for seekers will come from this. If you do not understand the reason

for what happened to you, then you do not understand, in the end, what it is *that happened*, and whether something happened at all.

This summarizes the problem of the majority of today's so-called enlightened ones and the teachers of Advaita as well. Of course they do not call themselves the enlightened, and even speak against the concept of enlightenment, but that does not change the essence of the problem. Insight in Advaita must be the reception of the impulse of Grace, and nothing else, because simply having looked nowhere (at Selfhood or the higher "I") you will not come to an experience of non-duality.

Transformation does not come like happiness or an attack of irrepressible laughter. Transformation is a rather painful process, and it is no accident that mystics compare it to death and a second birth. We find a description of transformation in the biography of Maharshi, and judging from everything, he, too, passed through it a minimum of two times, but it is not a fact that everything is known to us. There was something more than simply awareness in his presence, but his words also reflected a misunderstanding of what had happened, since the first transformation happened to him early, and without evident reasons. Then he studied at Arunachala, but I don't think that a sacred mountain – even if it is a kind of incarnation of Shiva – can serve in the same way as mystics serve God and interact with him.

The majority of the descriptions of transformations of contemporary teachers of Advaita seem far simpler and are reminiscent of a certain turn at the level of the mind, which later was declared a true achievement. In the majority of them, that energy of the Beyond which was manifested in Maharshi is impossible to see, although now all of them to a man propagandize obscurity, considering it a sign of achievement of true non-duality. They do not comprehend that the simplicity of the being of a mystic and the obscurity of the ordinary man are entirely different things.

I have written a fair amount about the impulse of Grace in

other books; here I will say that theoretically, it can be received by anyone at all, and here the Will of God and the necessity of Creation decide everything. There is one other necessity, acting as a law. Even if a person does not search for interaction with God, and simply practices awareness, then this practice itself will lead him to such a cleansing of the internal space that the impulse of Grace cannot help but descend upon him. When your internal space has become empty, higher energy fills that emptiness, releasing a process of spiritual transformation. This is exactly how the enlightened ones appear – those who are really enlightened. For there always exists the temptation of passing off for enlightenment a certain change in the mind which is striving for it. And if insight becomes a requirement in order to begin to present himself to others in the role of a person who has reached the state of non-duality, then sooner or later it will occur – even if there will be no Grace manifested.

**M**ystics know what is not known to all the rest. Mystics, in particular, know that Grace is not at all obliged to bring to a person the experience of identification of his Consciousness with the Consciousness of God. This is recognized even without what must be experienced in Advaita. I, for example, am not sure that the phrase “You are That” must necessarily be interpreted in the sense of non-duality and identification. If you take into account that the teaching of the Advaita was invented by a philosopher who tried to separate the truthful from the illusory, and the existing from the non-existing, then these doubts are well-founded. If the identify of the individual soul and Brahman is not introduced, then a person becomes a part of the world, which is entirely illusory, and then there isn’t any point in philosophizing; there isn’t any point in any actions, and no sense at all. Everything is an illusion, we are part of it, and we are finished with that. In Indian philosophy, there were such claims, have no doubt. But creating a new philosophy does not yet mean knowing the Truth.

That individual Consciousness has the same nature as the Consciousness of the Creator is known by mystics upon attainment of a certain level of development of perception and aware-

ness. As soon as Consciousness begins to manifest itself fairly strongly in the being of a mystic, then his nature begins to open up to him. And the fact that this unchangeable and eternal light, never disappearing, is the gift of God to every person is discovered rather quickly.

The energy of Consciousness is never spent, it does not wane and does not disappear. It's another matter that with great exhaustion, we lose the ability to guide it, and then it does not work to concentrate attention or divide it in order to become aware of oneself. This is not the problems of Consciousness, but the manifestation of the tiredness of our bodies which it supports. The light of Consciousness is always within us, but it may be manifested to a greater or lesser degree – depending on the level of our awareness.

But since in the individual Consciousness, there is no center anyway, its maximum manifestation is sensed as the fullness of *presence*, with attention, which fills all the bodies simultaneously – to various degrees, and everything that occurs inside and outside a person immediately ends up in the field of attention, and essentially in the field of Consciousness. Approximately the same thing may be said about the Presence of God in our world. It is poured out everywhere, represented everywhere with identical force and does not wane from interaction with it. Only for that reasons do mystics – and in general all people – have the possibility of direct interaction with God, which is in fact carried out through contact with His Presence. The presence of God, however, is not God Himself, just as individual Consciousness is not at all yet a person, although the most important component of him. And what is more – the energy of the Divine Presence differs in its quality from the energy of an individual Consciousness of a person; therefore to speak of their identity, alas, cannot be done. Here you cannot fit “you are that” even if you will very much want it. Or must lie for simplicity.

More than 20 years ago, I had an experience in which I saw the

entire world surrounding me filled with Consciousness. This was an enchanting spectacle – to see Consciousness in everything, even in the smallest pebble, even in the finest grain of sand. Now I know that back then I saw energy filling the world, but then I could understand what was opened up to me only in the framework of the experience and notions I had. The interpretation of experience is a rather difficult matter, and therefore you cannot elevate an experience like that to an absolute, building entire systems on it, as if explaining the construction of the world. Any transcendental experience may be incorrectly interpreted at the outset, exactly because your level of being does not enable you to see the whole picture, and seeing a small piece of it, it is practically impossible to come to a true understanding. Thus much false knowledge appears, or if you like, distorted interpretations of the Truth. When enjoying certain glimpses, which seem to you something that convey higher Truth, don't dwell on them. Strive toward direct experience of the Truth, and then your understanding will be more or less objective. But even here, it can always happen that the new facet of the Truth that has opened up to you will change your perceptions of previous experience, and that is normal. Those who elevate some of their experiences of the beyond into a certain final truth are always mistaken, extrapolating the whole picture from several pieces of the mosaic. And they can only extrapolate from those notions that they have; this is how descriptions of Reality of a Christian, Buddhist or Hindu bent in fact arise, in which Truth is trimmed from the outset, and then is even tailored to the "correct" notions.



Glimpses of the experience of the Divine Presence can be obtained at the very earliest stages of the Way, and even outside it. It is not at all necessary to be made completely aware in order to sense the power of the Presence. But it is almost impossible, however, to know the nature of the individual Consciousness of a person when it is very incompletely manifested. Too many curtains still remain in a person's mind, and they introduce distortions into his vision. Only when the Consciousness has fully manifested itself, may a person learn its nature and discover its features. Without the impulse of Grace, however, all of this is good, but does not lead to unity with God. Even Consciousness fully manifested in a person's being by itself cannot bring him closer to what the Advaitists seek. A person may know exactly that his individual Consciousness has the same nature as the Consciousness of God, but even so, there will not be an *experience* of this.

That is, all the non-duality, if such knowledge can be related to it, still remains on the level of the mind. Only the impulse of Grace, through which the Lord enables a person to obtain another perception and being will bring, in the end, the experience of

something greater. It must be understood that individual Consciousness is given to a person exactly to ensure his existence in this world, and does not contain any more functions, no matter how much someone wishes it. Moreover, even the Consciousness of God is only one of His attributes – and in its significance, this attribute does not stand out in any way from the others; it is not the main one and not the secondary one; it is equal to all the others.

The full manifestation of individual Consciousness in a person's being does not lead to the automatic unification of it with the Consciousness of God, because this simply cannot be according to the laws of the existence of the world and the people in it. In order for that to occur, and for a person to come to the experience of disappearance into God, serious changes must occur, and new doors must be opened. A number of energy centers located in a person's ethereal body serve this exactly, and it is exactly through them that we receive the impulses of the Grace of God. In order to overcome one's limits, a person must be transformed; otherwise, it remains only for him to die, but it is not a fact that even this will help in the sense of obtaining non-duality.

In transformation, the quality of human energies change, and then the opportunity appears for what the Sufis call disappearance into God. But again, this is not entirely that process which the Advaitists describe. Disappearance into God means disappearance of the boundaries between a separate human being and the Infinity into which he in fact disappears, remaining even so in his physical body. The division between the internal and external space is lost, but the ability to distinguish objects is not lost.

Some modern teachers of Advaita say that non-duality is awareness that we are all one. Forgive me, that is possible only at the level of the mind. And to speak of the fact that we are all one Consciousness is also from the same place. This world is full of different objects and there is no point in seeking non-duality in

this world. It is divided, there is a lot of things in it, and each person is unique, and therefore it is stupid to mechanically transfer the idea of non-duality on to the perception of people and the world. It is an abnormal approach, very far from reality.

Individual Consciousness completely manifests itself in all a person's bodies after the maximum possible expansion of the channel of attention, through which it is connected with them. This occurs to the extent of performing the practices of awareness and the general growth of awareness. The high degree of mindfulness "summons" to itself the impulse of the Grace of God, but it can also descend even on an unprepared person. He who seeks and is aware of himself creates a necessity, and how and from what another, Divine necessity, is not given to us to know.

The impulse of Grace cannot immediately bring a person to disappearance in God – that is not realistic. An impulse of such force will simply kill the person it descended upon, that is all. All mystics who have received the impulse of Grace without preliminary preparation had a period of adaptation, a period of changes and even repeat reception of new impulses. It is impossible, having begun practically from zero, to change oneself in one moment so as to go on one of the highest levels in the possible development of a person. On the Sufi Way, serving God leads to disappearance, and even on other Ways, you cannot get by without serving in one form or another. The Advaitists deny the very concept of the Way, and therefore it is left for them only to rely on a miracle of special Grace. Or rely on the mind, trained in such a way so as to deny everything, except the great truth of non-duality.

In disappearance into God, a person changes so that he merges with Infinity, internally disappearing in something inexpressible. But the process of transformation does not end there. All living creatures without exception are given one attribute of God – Consciousness. He who has reached disappearance into God and

has passed through it begins to receive additional attributes, and this stage of the Sufi Way is called the stage of being in God. By analogy with how Consciousness fills the whole being of an enlightened person with itself, so, too, does God begin to fill the being of a mystic with Himself – with the help of manifestation in him of His attributes. Since each mystic receives different attributes – of which there are an endless number – then the manifestations of their being in God are not identical, either, but all are unique in the fullest measure.

Identification with the “I,” the created ego, ends at the moment of full awareness of the mind. The sensation of the fulness of presence, which emerges from the manifestation of individual Consciousness, ends along with disappearance into God. Then there is neither the one nor the other, but there is something, undoubtedly, nevertheless. And that something is multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, mobile and changeable...and so on. But I am not sure that it has a relationship to Advaita.

Why the teaching of Advaita has become so popular now is quite possible to understand. On the one hand, everyone is tormented by the mind, and on the other, by an excess of all kinds of spiritual and esoteric knowledge. The teachers of Advaita propose a simple way out – everything into the garbage! Throw out all knowledge, throw out the mind with its thoughts and go within, to your true nature, to your “I.” Simple words, simple decisions. Simplification becomes the guarantee of success, and the antiquity of the teaching and Ramana Maharshi are the guarantee of its truthfulness. In the end, in our age of the sophisticated lie, it is not so bad to have the opportunity to receive simple truths. Furthermore, as I have already written above – categorical claims seem to presuppose the presence in themselves of truth, and negation of all authorities attracts adolescents and individuals disappointed in life.

Advaita was born as a philosophy and no matter what people attempted to do with it later, the influence of the ideas inherent in it from the outset remain fairly strong. On the other hand, if you take away these ideas, then nothing is left of Advaita. If the main ideas of Advaita are followed, then immediately upon acquiring

the experience of non-duality of the higher “I” with Brahman, a person must obtain liberation in the direct sense – by leaving the physical body, and along with it leaving this illusory world; by immersing into the only true reality. Now, of course, this is not even recalled, since liberation is implied to mean ridding oneself of the rule of the mind and its thoughts. Well, and the experience of the state of non-duality, of course, ensuing from shutting off the mind.

There exists the mystery of why this or that person comes to the search for higher meaning, God or his own realization. You can discuss karma and reincarnations as much as you like, but the mystery does not become less for that. Even if in a past life you were already a seeker, at some time, after all, there was a life with which everything began. And then either you were born a seeker or – how did you come to it? All stories about the development of the soul do not have any point, because if something can develop, then it is not eternal, and will also die, without waiting for your next reincarnation. Why do some embark on the Sufi Way, and some seek the total absence of the Way in Advaita? All of this, of course, can be attributed to personal inclinations, but there isn't a clear answer to the question. It happens that way, and that is all. The same may be said about the teaching of Advaita – with all of its vagueness and denial of obvious things – it exists, and that's it. And if Advaita still attracts people, that means it is necessary. At least for those who have tired of the search and are ready to listen to simple truths, repeated from time to time. And since that is the case, then I, too, will say: “Lord, everything according to Your Will!” and I will finish now this extensive text.