

Meetings (3rd Sunday)
Next –18 February 2001

81 Greville Street
(02) 9419 7394
amann@bigpond.net.au

Issue 70 – January 2001

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Editor's note

Thank you for your contributions to this month's issue which are unusually plentiful. This means the type size has to be unusually small for the postal version which I have to squeeze into a 45c envelope. So apologies if magnifying glasses are needed. The aim of the Nowletter project is to generate material from the readership rather than to rely exclusively on experts in the field. So, I again appeal to the silent majority of the readership to put pen to paper from time to time.

A reminder that the February meeting at Greville Street will involve an introductory talk by John David who will then stay on for a normal Dialogue session. He is a friend we have known for three years. He offers Satsang on a regular weekly basis in Sydney and many of us have attended his meetings. He spent several years with Papaji in Lucknow who said, amongst other things:

"Only the Truth is and you are That! You are unchanging awareness in which all activity takes place. To deny this is to suffer, to know this is Freedom."

Since writing the above, John David has rung from Byron Bay to say that his plans have changed and he might not return to Sydney until after Easter. If so, we will have him on a future occasion and carry on as normal for February.

A reminder that the date on your address label is the subscription renewal date and an explanation of why there are so few mistakes in the Nowletter. Every month Margot takes my error-riddled drafts and proof reads them before printing. Thank you Margot.

Subscriptions: Postal \$12 per annum, Email – Free

The Nowletter appears between 10 and 12 times every year and is a vehicle for news and views about awakening to what is really going on. Contributions from readers are considered the most valuable content so please think about letting me have your thoughts, experiences, discoveries and any responses to what you read here.

The World as Illusion – Background

In the November Newsletter I referred to my difficulty with the notion that the world is illusory and asked if anyone could help me with a quotation by Ramana which someone had mentioned as explaining the 'World as Illusion' point of view. John David kindly supplied the evidence which reads as follows:

One of the attendants asked: Sri Bhagavan (Ramana) has said: 'Reality and myth are both the same. How is it so?'

Ramana Maharshi: The *tantriks* and others of the kind condemn Sri Sankara's philosophy as *maya vada* without understanding him aright. What does he say? He says: (1) Brahman is real; (2) the universe is a myth; (3) Brahman is the universe. He does not stop at the second statement but continues to supplement it with the third. What does it signify? The Universe is conceived to be apart from Brahman and that perception is wrong. The antagonists point to his illustration of *rajju sarpa* (rope-snake). This is unconditioned super-imposition. After the truth of the rope is known, the illusion of snake is removed once for all. *page 277 Talks with Ramana Maharshi*

This question has also been running on the email conference from which I extracted the following commentary by Eric Best and which I reprint here with his permission.

Alan Mann

The World as Illusion – Commentary

Just a few thoughts inspired by some of the recent posts:

Sri Ramana Maharshi said "The World is illusory. Brahman alone is Real. Brahman is the World". This makes good sense if unpacked dialectically.

"The World is illusory."

People usually move to some kind of spirituality out of a sense of the limitations of the finite world. By 'the world', I mean not just that external to our bodies, but also our own selves as subject to objectification [being known]; in other words, anything that can be witnessed. Thus an individual may seek a spiritual path out of a sense of their own inadequacies, or they may perhaps be motivated from a sense of the failure of possessions or success ['the world'] to give lasting satisfaction.

"Brahman alone is Real."

So the aspirant seeks something transcendental. Commonly, spiritual traditions will locate the Divine as the ground and power of objective being: God is found, sacramentally, in the good, the true and the beautiful. So many people will sense the presence of God in a sunset or an act of kindness.

The mystical traditions, on the other hand, tend to point people back to themselves, the seekers, as the most direct path to spiritual realisation: rather than God as the ground of objective being, they point to God as the ground of our subjectivity. Douglas Harding's pointing exercises are elegant examples of this approach. By directing the seer's awareness back on itself, the Seer [or Witness] is disclosed to be divine- infinite, holy, free from imperfection while the world can be just 'world'finite, secular and the place of suffering.

However, a holy Self within a secular World [or a secular World within a holy Self] proves to be unsatisfactory. Because this approach can allow for a flight from the world [or self] with all its ambiguities and compromises into the untarnished Witness [of these events], it can strangle love [as *agape*]. If the aspirant seeks to escape the ambiguities of its witnessed reality rather than *love* its world, not only will it stunt ethical action [as Ken Wilber would say, it cuts the Buddha adrift from the Sangha], it will fail to deliver the goods in terms of overcoming dualism - our fundamental sense of disconnection and loss of passion or spirit.

"Brahman is the world."

The divine does not exist in either the world [object] or seer [subject]. Rather, as Hegel and others have noted the Spirit is the transcendental union of seer and seen. God is in the seeing. For this to occur, the world must be somehow re-enchanted. While there is some flight from the world [that which is witnessed] into a transcendental subject [the witness], enlightenment can never be realised. Not only must your 'I' be $\text{G}\alpha\text{d}$ must your 'me' .

It has been my experience that many spiritual guides advocate that by continuing to witness consciously [two way seeing], we will eventually dis-identify with the world being witnessed to such an extent that it will no longer hold fear for us and thus it may be received back as Spirit.

However my concern is that for many people, conscious witnessing alone may not be sufficient to help overcome their flight from the world/themselves and reach the point of realising that "emptiness is form, form is emptiness". Many people, along with 'two way seeing', need additional help to learn to love their world/self in its finitude, ie stripped of

all projections that embrace it as the provider of ultimate satisfaction [which it never could do]. So witnessing practises will need to be supplemented by other psychological or spiritual practises that teach psychological transparency and acceptance of that which is witnessed, 'warts and all'. Only when the world/self-as-object can be accepted for what it is -the endless play of God- that the headless I can be seen not as a place of retreat but the stage of the Spirit' s play.

Any further ideas about how Maharshi' s tricky dialectic can be negotiated will be most eagerly received!

[PS If the reader feels discomfort with some of my theological language, please try to engage with the intent while ignoring the God-speak.]

Eric Best

The 'Way', etc.

(This excerpt from the "Zen Teachings of Huang Po was a recent contribution by either Bill Phillips or Gary Harmon to the NoHead email conference. Thanks to either or both and especially to Huang Po. Ed.)

Q: What is the Way and how must it be followed?

A: What sort of THING do you suppose the Way to be, that you should wish to FOLLOW it?

Q: What instructions have the Masters everywhere given: for dhyana-practice and the study of the Dharma?

A: Words used to attract the dull of wit are not to be relied on.

Q: If those teachings were meant for the dull-witted, I have yet to hear what Dharma has been taught to those of really high capacity.

A: If they are really men of high capacity, where could they find people to follow? If they seek from within themselves, they will find nothing tangible; how much less can they find a Dharma worthy of their attention elsewhere! Do not look to what is called the Dharma by preachers, for what sort of Dharma could that be?

Q: If that is so, should we not seek for anything at all?

A: By conceding this, you would save yourself a lot of mental effort.

Q: But in this way everything would be eliminated. There cannot just be nothing.

A: Who called it nothing? Who was this fellow? But you wanted to SEEK for something.

Q: Since there is no need to seek, why do you also say that not everything is eliminated?

A: Not to seek is to rest tranquil. Who told you to eliminate anything? Look at the void in front of your eyes. How can you produce it or eliminate it?

Q: If I could reach this Dharma, would it be like the void?

A: Morning and night I have explained to you that the Void is both One and Manifold. I said this as a temporary expedient, but you are building up concepts from it.

Q: Do you mean that we should not form concepts as human beings normally do?

A: I have not prevented you; but concepts are related to the senses; and, when feeling takes place, wisdom is shut out.

Q: Then should we avoid any feeling in relation to the Dharma?

A: Where no feeling arises, who can say that you are right?

Q: Why do you speak as though I was mistaken in all the questions I have asked Your Reverence?

A: You are a man who doesn' t understand what is said to him. What is all this about being mistaken?

Freedom to be Nothing (Ongoing Dialogue) – Gary Hipworth

Alan to Gary

I have one remaining question as a result of our recent exchanges published as “Nature Bats Last” – Now letter 65, “The Santa Claus Effect” – No. 67 and “Freedom to be Nothing” – No. 68. It is an issue I have discussed in Krishnamurti circles without getting to the bottom of and there are echoes of it here.

Krishnamurti said on many occasions "Life is relationship". Yet, as I understand his teaching, he was all about the ending of relationship in the way you seem to be describing here:

How do I relate to a dreamer? I am nothing. I have no goals, no future, no past, no psychological existence. There is only now, but a very different now to the one that my conditioned mind used to frequent all the time. I don't relate to the dreamer at all!

That is what I understand K to be pointing to. And what matters of course is what Gary is pointing to now not what K might have been pointing to then but I raise it in the Krishnamurti context as he made a big issue of it and I wondered if you are saying the same or something different.

Then, later in your article, you make comments which indicate continuing relationships:

However, there is another side to this experiencing of being nothing. When I awoke from my dreaming self, I took stock of my new situation. I still had to earn a living in the world. I was in some relationships that were dishonest. Other relationships continue on, but with some significant changes. This feedback made me reflect on my motive for writing the book and writing these articles - again there is a two-way mutual influence going on in these relationships....

So, when K is making the statement "Life is relationship" is he really saying, do you think, life as we live it is relationship? I have no difficulty with this because as I said in my question to you: it seems to me that you have no choice but to continue in relationship as if it is a matter of the coming together and parting of separate selves and objects. Although the self is now revealed as a virtual self, a coordinating process for the flow of sensory impressions, memory, thoughts, feelings, etc., action continues as if the self is real.

This, as far as I'm concerned is not a contradiction but evidence of two aspects, or levels of the way it all works and one of the reasons which led to my analysis in the December Nowletter but you might see it quite differently, hence the probing.

End of question

Gary to Alan

Alan - in reply to your recent query - this is my instant insight and now that I have seen the latest newsletter, I will also write something on your article about the two levels of perception - but first things first!

What did K mean? Yes, you are right - I cannot know what K meant.

My understanding is that the quality of our relationships depends upon how we perceive each other. If we perceive each other through images that are based on the past and the idea that we are separate entities, then we judge and treat that person according to our memory of that person (ie someone who has a fixed objective identity that is always the same) and what we can get from them - there is always a personal motive involved in our relationships that is based on self-centred pleasure.

If we perceive each other as unknown endlessly changing ' virtual subjective selves' with a common source, then we treat each other as we see each other on a moment to moment basis as we are coming from ' emptiness' i.e., we are full of bliss and love and freedom and the seeking of personal pleasure as a motive is absent because it has been made redundant!

It is not all peaches and cream. Sometimes, I slip back into ego objective mode when I temporarily forget my innate subjective emptiness & this is usually when I am ' earning a living' (what an absurd idea) and I am concentrating on a particular goal. There is no perfection in life.

However, there is now a very deep inner ' knowing' of my true nature and I catch myself being an asshole before too much damage is done to others ie, I wake up to myself. This is the sense that I think K meant that relationships provide one with a mirror to see one's real ego self at work. and others' egoselves. So, I don't think K meant ' life as we live it' is relationship. I think he meant that life as we live it sours our relationships because of the image/memory business and that it is possible to have an entirely different kind of relationship with others that is not based on disingenuous personal motive and is therefore free, loving and truly cooperative. He wanted to end relationships that were based on images and the past and personal motive and hence were very limited. Then something new might be possible. But I might be wrong!

Relationships continue - but what about their quality and depth?

End of reply

Alan to Gary

I have mixed feelings about this. I find myself largely in agreement but at the same time I think you are doing what I'm accusing K of doing – failing to make clear what you are speaking from when you make particular statements.

Is it a matter of ending relationships which are based on images and thereby limited or is it that all relationships are limited and that it is really about ending relationship altogether?

To explain what I'm getting at I'll put it another way. When the ego is seen for what it is, what am I? I am the world; whatever constitutes the content of awareness at any moment is what I am. There is no place in this for what I have to do with others (relationship) because separation is ended.

I am saying that K cannot claim, in the same breath, that the observer is the observed and that life is relationship. This is a direct contradiction and only makes sense if the distinction between the first person statement (the observer is the observed) and the third person statement (life is relationship) is made clear.

I am using the word relationship in the sense of 'what one thing has to do with another thing'. In an earlier version of this exchange, which I had with Maria Bakas last year, she said she thought K was using the word relationship in the sense of interconnectedness. That is, he was saying everything is interconnected. I suppose that could be true but I don't feel it to be a very satisfactory explanation because if that was his aim it seems to be merely stating the obvious.
End of question

(As an aside for the purposes of explaining the point - I have picked out two of your observations from the above.

I see this statement as what I'm calling First Person perspective:

How do I relate to a dreamer? I am nothing. I have no goals, no future, no past, no psychological existence. There is only now, but a very different now to the one that my conditioned mind used to frequent all the time. I don't relate to the dreamer at all!

And this one as Third person perspective

It is not all peaches and cream. Sometimes, I slip back into ego objective mode when I temporarily forget my innate subjective emptiness & this is usually when I am 'earning a living' (what an absurd idea) and I am concentrating on a particular goal. There is no perfection in life.

Is that clear?)

Gary to Alan

I say again that relationships are limited if they are based on images – find out for yourself what happens if this truth is seen as a fact. However, it is just not possible for a living creature to end all relationships without becoming a corpse!

When you say that once the ego is seen for what it is, whatever constitutes the content of awareness at any moment is what I am; I am the world and therefore separation has ended – I would say, when I am nothing, I am nothing – I am not the content of awareness at any moment. However, I cannot express in words or objectify what this nothing is. I don't know what I am – I am certainly not the world or anything else that can be objectified.

K made many statements that would appear to be contradictory. The problem with this whole business of self-enquiry is that we are using a theoretical/ intellectual tool to try to understand the unknowable whereas paradox and instantaneous insight are needed.

Is K making a direct contradiction when he says that the observer is the observed and that life is relationship? Not if our true nature is unknowable ie, no amount of logic or theorising can pin it down. I want to correct something that I said in the earlier discussion about relationships:

How do I relate to a dreamer? I am nothing. I have no goals, no future, no past, no psychological existence. There is only now, but a very different now to the one that my conditioned mind used to frequent all the time. I don't relate to the dreamer at all!

I meant to say also that I could choose at any moment to relate to a dreamer – but there is an insight that stops me from entering their self-caused world of suffering – it takes a tremendous amount of concentrated energy and it will cause me to suffer unnecessarily. This is not an intelligent thing to do. If this sounds very harsh – it is if one is totally identified with one’s self-concept. However, the opposite is not possible. A person who is totally identified with his or her self-image cannot have a relationship with someone who is not interested in the self. The energy and commitment that is needed to sustain a relationship based on images will not be forthcoming by the one coming from ‘inner freedom’. I believe that K also made similar statements ie that it was possible for someone who is ‘egoless’ to have a relationship with someone who was a searcher but not the other way around.

Is everything connected? You bet! The only way that I ‘know’ that I am not an idea is because humans evolved a different way of learning from other animals in order to survive. We have a brain that is aware of its own ideas – and when I understood the nature of ideas – that they are mental constructs, not the thing itself – I understood that ‘I’ could not be an idea, other than as a mental construct. In short, the unknown cannot know itself, but it can see a false shadow of itself when it creates false images. The ego is a necessary ‘evil’ for understanding our unknown depths and they go together, forever and ever. The difference is that before awakening to our true nature we identify totally with the ego whereas after awakening the ‘evil’ reactions wake us up, on a moment-to-moment basis.

Our unknown nature cannot be put into words without limiting it, and it has no limits! When some people claim that our true nature is formless or changeless, or not the body or this or that, I think they do us a disservice and only confuse people with more ideas about the unlimited. **Ideas are always limited** – whether they are psychological or of a practical nature. When we understand this one basic fact about knowledge and then apply that understanding to our psychological world, we have the key to understanding what we are not. There is nothing else to ‘know’.

Gary Hipworth

Fact or Fallacy – Follow-up – Ann Faraday

Dear Alan,

In answer to your plea for greater reader participation, I settled down with the latest issue of the NOWletter determined to contribute something. I particularly wanted to say Hi! to Lyn (Willmott) who kindly wrote to me some years ago after hearing my No Self interview with Caroline Jones. I’d also like to tell Lyn that she’s doing fine in her spiritual explorations despite that ‘rancorous ego’ which, incidentally, John and I have called ‘Fred’ in our almost -completed book The 9.15 to Nirvana. Whenever you feel him interfering, Lyn, just say ‘Oh, shut up Fred!’ It works wonders – and I guess it’s the name that does it.

I haven’t seen the Gangaji video, so I don’t know where she goes with her “truth telling.” But I thought her introductory statement was the best conundrum I’ve heard in a long time:

“What I am asking you to tell me is what it is you want for its own sake and if, somehow, you still imagine you don’t have that let me know what it is you imagine keeps you from having that. And let’s examine that and see if it is real or part of the webbing, part of the fabric of your imagination.”

Roughly decoded, it seems to read something like - ‘How can you know what’s keeping you from what you feel is missing, if you don’t KNOW what’s missing?’ Brilliant.

And now to your fallacies, Alan, which I’m tempted to call “fantasies” because I sense a lot of shadow -boxing from the armchair. I gave up trying to figure them out at no. 4, and went for a walk hoping to clear my head. It didn’t work and I burned my dinner (you sure owe me one!) So if I come over a bit cranky, you’ll understand. First I decoded them into statements rather than fallacies for clarity, imposing my own language in order to get the gist of your argument.

So:

First Perspective becomes “enlightenment” with a small ‘e.’ (A small ‘e’ to indicate the many varieties of enlightenment experience)

Second Perspective becomes ‘ego’ meaning the sense of separate selfhood with no direct experience of ‘enlightenment’ - though it sure talks a lot about it.

So here goes:

- 1) Enlightenment doesn’t depend on “Grace,” but involves only a shift in perception.
- 2) Enlightenment “glimpses” are just as real as a radical permanent change in identity.
- 3) Spiritual practices are not counter- productive.

- 4) Enlightenment does and doesn't eliminate or transcend ego.
- 5) Enlightenment can be a cool matter-of-fact affair.
- 6) Enlightenment is always NOW not sometime in the future.
- 7) All attempts by ego to acquire enlightenment are futile.
- 8) There is no one way to enlightenment.

Let's not quibble at this point whether or not you agree with my translation, or whether or not the propositions are true or false (that one could go on forever and none of us would get any dinner). As a psychologist, what interests me is your hidden message or agenda. I mean, why are you so interested in fallacies? You even call the fallacies 'dangerous.' Really?

My guess goes something like this - and it's only a guess:

"I, Alan, want more than anything in the world to be enlightened. When I read of other peoples' enlightenments, I get a bit depressed because most seem to be of huge, mind-blowing proportions, with equally dramatic, life-changing consequences, unlike my own 'smaller' experiences which I have tended to ignore as 'nothing much.' But I'm beginning to wonder whether they are actually quieter versions of the 'Big One,' and that I might be enlightened after all - especially as Gangaji and others insist that all I need is confirmation of the fact. I wonder what's getting in the way of my realizing this? Perhaps it's just my mind making lots of false assumptions about enlightenment - yes, that's it. I'll make a list.... and if other people agree with me, that'll be a good kick in the Absolute for all those jumped-up, self-proclaimed Enlightened Masters who really know no more than I do."

The ball's in your court, Alan. I now declare the "Dialogue" open. Let the Games begin!

And a happy New Year to you all.

Ann Faraday

Alan replies:

Dear Ann,

Your condensation of my attempt to summarise the fallacies (I needed one paragraph per fallacy) makes a joke of my boast about brevity and I accept your list as an acceptable version of what I am trying to say although for item 4 in your list I would rather say that ego is seen for what it is. Second, as far as the dangerousness of the fallacies is concerned, perhaps that is overstatement. What I meant is that if I get hooked into the beliefs that they are associated with I spend a lot of time going nowhere. To take an example from your article on page 10, "*Nothing matters because it's all the Self anyway, etc., etc.*"

Now to your analysis of the condition that gave rise to my outburst.

"I, Alan, want more than anything in the world to be enlightened..."

I have pondered this at length in case I am somehow repressing such a desire but I have to say the answer is 'No' - I definitely don't want enlightenment more than anything else and there are a few reasons why not. But before laying them out I don't have to remind you that one of the catch-cries of the quest is the insistence that unless you want enlightenment (or God) more than anything else you'll never get it.

The traditional Indian tale comes to mind, the one about the guru holding the aspirant's head under water and near drowning her and explaining that until she wants God as much as air she'd better forget about enlightenment. And, a more recent example, is the Andrew Cohen principles which include: "*Being still is a metaphor for wanting to be free more than anything else*".

I have indicated what I think is meant by the word 'enlightenment' but I don't know what this Big 'E' Enlightenment they (Big 'E' gurus) are talking about is. So, to adopt their recommendation that I want it more than anything else, I must generate a concept that is going to be more important than anything else. So, for me that is not big 'E' but big 'C'.

What I want more than anything else is my next breath and then - priority number two - I want to be happy. Happiness doesn't seem to depend on enlightenment. I remember John querying my claim that I did not want enlightenment on a previous occasion and he asked me why not. When I said Alan was having too much fun he laughed and said he hadn't heard that excuse before.

You suggest: *But I'm (Alan) beginning to wonder whether they are actually quieter versions of the "Big One", and that I might be enlightened after all - especially as Gangaji and others insist that all I need is confirmation of the fact. I wonder what's getting in the way of my realizing this?*

What I said in my fallacy notes was that I thought freedom was about seeing through the identification with my self-image. Gladney christened this as 'low-level' enlightenment and we've often joked about it. This freedom is always available and I only have to turn, to look or stop overlooking it, to see it is so. But I don't see it as something to acquire. It seems to me that it's the way things are, the way it's all set up. If you are suggesting that I am to claim it as what is mine or could be mine or something I can get rather than what I am then it is my turn to be mystified. An enlightened Alan (Fred) is, for me, a contradiction in terms.

So are we not, once again, demonstrating category myopia or have I missed something? Again a note from your article – Ramesh Balsekar - *When asked if he himself was Enlightened, his reply was: "For your purposes, yes."* Why qualify the reply unless, from Balsekar's perspective, (first person perspective) the question didn't make the sense intended by the questioner?

And my last reason for not wanting enlightenment more than anything else is that it is just not good enough. What I mean by this is illustrated by another quote from your article on page 10.

As for most teachers, he (Andrew Cohen) was reluctantly forced to accept that only those who were pure-in-heart before Realization would be pure in-conduct afterwards. As the Western scholar Agehananda Bharati was so fond of pointing out, "If you're a stinker before Enlightenment, you'll be an Enlightened stinker afterwards!"

So, what sort of an aspiration is it after all – I'm to become an enlightened duffer instead of just a duffer? Andrew gave up too easily. And where is the line drawn? Can we contemplate an enlightened serial killer?

To your final point:

(Alan Thinks) I'll make a list.... and if other people agree with me, that'll be a good kick in the Absolute for all those jumped-up, self-proclaimed Enlightened Masters who really know no more than I do.

Yes, there's enough truth in that for me to let it go by without protest. (I should explain though that the kick is aimed at the Fabulously Absolute and not the ordinary Absolute) But most of those who replied did not agree with me and some thought what I considered to be a very clear exposition of my views totally incomprehensible and/or completely off the track, which makes me wonder if enlightenment itself is the wrong track. Perhaps we should be seeking purity of heart instead.

Sorry about the dinner Ann and thank you for taking on this dialogue.

Alan Mann

Warwick Wakefield meets Satyananda

(Warwick has gone walkabout again and is now in the UK, meeting various eminent teachers. This is an extract from his discussions with Satyananda. Ed.)

I have just been listening to my first dialogue, on tape, with Satyananda. My recollection of it was that it lasted for about ten minutes, but in fact it takes up almost the entire side, forty-five minutes, of a ninety minute tape.

So I'll see if I can strip it down to the essentials.

The question I asked was this. "My mind seems to be always wanting to do something, achieve something. Any profound stillness I've known has always just happened, seemingly by itself. But this stillness seems to be, when it happens, my natural state. So why is it so difficult to reach? Are we helpless, just waiting for it to happen?"

Satyananda. Your question is, "Does it mean that one is helpless?" No, it doesn't mean (that). Your mind is helpless, not you. To have a clear differentiation between you and your mind is the achievement of liberation. And that achievement is only a mental expression because it was always there, it is here now. And it will be your natural state. You understand? So it is only your mind, which is helpless to come to the very source of the presence of being. Because it functions in another time - and this presence is authentically in the now. So your mind is helpless.

Warwick That's sort of like saying, "If you want to cross the river, start from the other side. Because if I could make a distinction between me and my mind then it's already all over.

Satyananda. Exactly! So do it! That's my invitation, that's what I'm here for. For you to discover that you're not a thought, that you're spirit, you're being.

Warwick. But you think I've never considered this?

That was the pattern of the discussion that followed; Satyananda insisting that I should just do it, now, and me insisting that I had bashed my head against that brick wall for years, without dislodging so much as one brick.

The dialogue concluded like this:

Satyananda. You' re speaking, the microphone in your hand.

Warwick. Yes.

Satyananda. Your eyes are looking - yes?

Warwick. Yes.

Satyananda. OK, but without you they don' t see anything, yes? Your eyes without you is nothing working there. You are that which gives meaning to the senses. Before the understanding, before the concept - what is you? What is really the essence of you, what is the truth? Tell me, that' s what I want to know. Before you' re a man, you see? Before you have this age or that age. Or the story change or whatever. Before all that, you see? Before your understanding, Before your cultural background. Before your profession - everything, what is it? Present here and now, what is?

Warwick. I don' t know.

Satyananda. You don' t know....

Warwick. Right now. Right now.

Satyananda. But what is...

Warwick. I can give you all kinds of fancy words but that wouldn' t Satyanandaisfy me.

Satyananda. Don' t give me any words...

Warwick. I don' t want to Satyanandaisfy you I' m not here for your benefit...

Satyananda. Exactly!

Warwick. I' m not here for your benefit, I' m here for my benefit.

Satyananda. That' s what I mean.

Warwick. I want to find something that will Satyanandaisfy me, not that will Satyanandaisfy you.

Satyananda. Beautiful, please Satyanandaisfy me.

Warwick. No. I' m not interested in Satyanandaisfying you, I' m interested in Satyanandaisfying me.

Satyananda. Exactly, so that' s the problem, can you see that?

Warwick. No, it' s not the problem, I' m not here for your benefit, I' m here for my benefit.

Satyananda. I know, I know, but please listen. Listen for a moment.

(Here Satyananda' s voice and his face were incredibly loving and gentle) I' m not needing anything from you. (Pause)

Neither you do from me. - See, we are already - what we' re looking for- So there is someone who has an intention - you understand?

Warwick. There is someone who has an intention?

Satyananda. In your mind you' re saying, "I' m looking for my own benefit, yes? My Satyanandaisfaction?"

Warwick. Yes.

Satyananda. OK, that' s where we have ttook now. What will give you Satyanandaisfaction? The Satyanandaisfaction you' re looking for what will be? What is it?

Warwick. An end to the trouble which causes the seeking? An end to the disturbance which causes the seeking.

Satyananda. Exactly! So do it right now, that' s why I' m saying, "Stop searching." That' s why I' m inviting you just to stop for a moment.

Warwick. But Satyananda, you can say the words so easily, "Stop searching"...

Satyananda. Just do it...

Warwick. it' s like saying, "Stop brethning"

Satyananda. Exactly!

Warwick. You can' t!

Satyananda. Do it first! You can; I' m speaking from my own experience. You speak from your experience I' m speaking from mine. (Pause) So do it! - For a moment. I mean, you' ve been searching for many years, I' m asking you just to don' t search for one second. Isn' t that fair? Taking from those five days one second? And tell me later, "Look Satyananda, what I found." (Pause)

Here, after contemplating whether I could really stop for a second, I saw that indeed I could, that there had been something melodramatic about the claim that I couldn' t, and I allowed myself a small inward smile and a small chuckle. And at that exact moment, in the dimly lit hall, Satyananda folded his hands in a Namaste gesture, and he said:

Satyananda. Yes, excellent! You can see what I mean now! You see? Excellent! You understand how it happens. So while you search you can' t find. That' s what happens with the mind. And this is a joke! You see? Because we see it so many times and then we forget it. And phoo! So only when you open your heart like you did. We came here. You understand? Namaste!.

That, my friends, was my first meeting with this beautiful man, this wonderful teacher. I will send you more news later

.Warwick Wakefield

Mellow Dramas in Paradise – Ann Faraday

(This is the greater part of a review which Ann wrote for Consciousness magazine in 1996. It is relevant to our recent discussions about Gangaji and some other current Dialogue matters. It also provides a link with John David who will be at our February (or some future) Greville Street meeting and who spent time at Lucknow with Papaji. Ed.)

The central character is an 86-year-old grandfather living in Lucknow, North India. Largely unknown and unsung until the early 1990s, this “teacher of Enlightenment” and erstwhile disciple of Ramana Maharshi found himself propelled onto the international spiritual scene after the 1989 publication of Andrew Cohen’s book *My Master is Myself*. It tells the story of Andrew’s meeting with H.W.L. Poonja and their subsequent extraordinary relationship.

Poonjaji’s simple message is grounded in the ancient Hindu philosophy of Advaita (non-duality) which, in a nutshell, teaches that there is no God, no you, no me, but ONLY Impersonal Consciousness masquerading as you, me and everyone through our unique individual body-minds. This Consciousness is and always has been closer than our jugular veins, and we can never be separated from it - hence the well-known Hindu saying I AM THAT. Ignorance of our true identity gives rise to an illusory sense of separate selfhood, and liberation from this ignorance is Enlightenment.

According to Andrew, then a young American seeker, it was love at first sitting. As Poonjaji spoke of the possibility of instant Enlightenment irrespective of prior effort or merit, Andrew experienced a deep Awakening in which he realized he had always been Free and that any notion of bondage was completely illusory. He soon became Poonjaji’s star pupil, and was sent home, with the mantle of Ramana over his shoulders, to spread the teaching in the West.

The result was a steady trickle of pilgrims to Poonjaji’s modest home in Lucknow. Many were “divorcees and widows” of Rajneesh and Muktananda (as the mischievous anti-guru U.G. Krishnamurti likes to call them), others long-term Vipassana meditators hoping for a quicker fix. Some were Andrew’s own students, in particular a glamorous Texan acupuncturist named Antoinette Varner - none other than the silver-haired one who smiles at me from the covers of the two books on my desk. Apparently her meeting and subsequent relationship with the Master was as dramatic as Andrew’s. In a small, dilapidated shelter on the banks of the Ganges, she too experienced a deep Awakening after being assured that she was already Enlightened and simply needed confirmation. Poonjaji later named her Ganga after the goddess of the river, sending her home to teach, saying “The Ganga must also flow in the West”.

Andrew’s second book, *Autobiography of an Awakening*, tells the story of betrayal by his beloved Master. Not only was Poonjaji regularly appointing new teachers, giving them Indian names and pronouncing them “finished” - he was also criticizing Andrew behind his back for “corrupting the Dharma.” The crux of his disapproval seemed to be Andrew’s expectation that any true Enlightenment experience should, at the very least, result in non-exploitative and honest behaviour, since the “do-er” is no longer the illusory ego but Consciousness It-Self. Not so, said Poonjaji, explaining to students that liberation from Ignorance means freedom from all human restrictions, including ethical social codes imposed by Religion. But when Andrew approached him directly, he denied any misunderstanding and reassured his beloved Son of his continuing support.

Andrew spells out his concerns in his latest book, *An Unconditional Relationship to Life*, and explores the whole issue further in his aptly-named journal *What is Enlightenment?* with contributions from many other spiritual leaders. Time and again in his teaching work, he came up against people misusing Advaita for their own egotistical ends, either as an excuse for apathy (“Nothing matters because it’s all the Self anyway”) or for downright bad behaviour (“It’s not real; it’s just my illusory personality.”) Communication and discussion dried up, with difficulties quickly “Advaited” away with quips like “Who is asking the question?” or “Who is unhappy?” Andrew calls this “The Advaita shuffle” and sees it as a strategy for avoiding the uncomfortable dualistic facts of practical human life.

Most seekers, he concludes, tend to get lost in the Absolute view, and seem to need a teaching that not only emphasizes the inherent unity of all life, but also encourages them to explore the mind’s infinite capacity for creating new false notions of self. As for most teachers, he was reluctantly forced to accept that only those who were pure-in-heart before Realization would be pure in-conduct afterwards. As the Western scholar Agehananda Bharati was so fond of pointing out, “If you’re a stinker before Enlightenment, you’ll be an Enlightened stinker afterwards!”

So what are we to make of Poonjaji? (Who is asking the question?) Many of our friends who visited him in Lucknow describe him as a kindly old grandpa who enjoys talking about himself. One assured us that he is “the full quid” - spiritually, of course! None returned “Enlightened.” His two volumes of tape-recorded Satsang (sittings with a guru), entitled *Wake Up and Roar*, are entertaining illustrations of the way he teaches, with frequent use of the “Advaita Shuffle.” His message is quite clear - True Freedom is possible right here and now, no postponement or practice necessary! His humour comes across as always kindly. (“Master, I have been with you for four days now and I’m still not enlightened” Poonjaji, laughing: “Yes, I’m surprised, a smart boy like you.”) And the value of meditation? No

value - other than discovering that the mind, like a dog's curly tail pulled out straight, snaps right back to crookedness when you let it go! Could he be teasing Andrew, do you think?

Indeed, Gangaji (as she is respectfully known) still refers to her teacher as "Absolute Love," and continues to spread his (Lazy Man's?) version of Advaita far and wide. She is visiting Australia for the first time in October/November (1996), holding public Satsang in Byron Bay and Melbourne, and we hope to drop in to at least one of them. When I suggested to Andrew that she might be avoiding Sydney on account of his newly formed community there, he was quick to point out that the drama had mellowed considerably over the years and that animosity was now a thing of the past!

From her audio-tapes and books, Gangaji comes over as a nice lady, her teaching intended to lead you to the space of Absolute Silence below all the comings and goings of life - a space where you do not find peace, but know your-Self to be that Peace in which every-thing rises. In her two volumes entitled *You Are That! Satsang with Gangaji*, she urges us not to explore anything else - not thoughts, emotions, sensations or circumstances, which have already received too much attention - but only "That which is before, during and after all objects of awareness. THAT!" Her tapes of Satsang recorded live from boats on the Ganges, temple courtyards and gardens, along with all the natural sounds of surrounding life - birds, bells, chanting, children playing - communicate this sense of Samsara in Nirvana. What more can be said?

Quite a lot more, actually, if you peruse the long list of books on Consciousness by Ramesh Balsekar, a retired bank president and former disciple and translator of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj of Bombay. Considered by many to be the most erudite and authentic mouthpiece for Advaita teachings today, he doesn't merely parrot his teacher's words, but interprets them according to his own deep intuitive understanding "Don't worry about what Maharaj said", he tells a pernickety student, "I'll tell you what he meant!"

While his early books, written before Maharaj's death in the early 1980s, are attempts to present the teachings directly, Balsekar's later books such as *Consciousness Speaks; Conversations with Ramesh S. Balsekar* take the form of transcripts from his own more informal question-and-answer seminars. He comes over in both books and tapes as a kindly, generous and humorous person with a great gift for sensing hidden needs and agendas. When asked if he himself was Enlightened, his reply was: "For your purposes, yes." Highly recommend.

Ann Faraday



Ella Clancy

*A Stranger here.
Strange things doth meet, strange Glory see,
Strange Treasures lodg'd in this fair World
appear.
Strange all and New to me:
But that they mine should be who Nothing
was.
That Strangest is of all: yet brought to pass.*

Thomas Traherne

Meetings Sydney

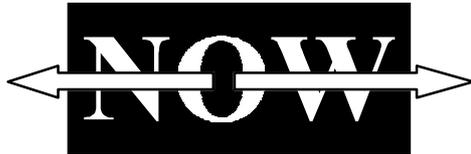
Academy of the Word Seminar Programme –
Under St Peter's, Devonshire St., Surry Hills
Second Tuesdays 6.15pm - Healing & Well-being
Fourth Tuesdays 6.15pm - State of the World
Dr Alex Reichel (02) 9310 4504

Nowra

Dialogue Group meets the first Saturday of the month from 4-6pm
The Tea Club, Berry Street, Nowra - Opposite Roxy Cinema - Call Riche 4421 5947

Rosie Stave

Maria Dolenc informs me that Rosie Stave, a close associate of Byron Katie, is leading a Workshop in Sydney on Sat 10 and Sun 11 February (\$180 or one day \$110.) Introductory talk on Friday 9 at 7pm. \$15
Ring Maria 02 9949 5017



If unable to deliver please return to:
81 Greville Street, Chatswood 2067
amann@bigpond.net.au

DIALOGUE MEETINGS SYDNEY AREA

LOCATION	DAY OF MONTH	MEETING PLACE	TIME & CONTACT	Phone Nos.
City	Third Saturday	Theosophical Society Level 2, 484 Kent St., City	2.30pm Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379
Chatswood	Third Sunday	81 Greville St. (off Fullers Rd) Chatswood	10.30 am Alan & Margot Mann	02 9419 7394
Clontarf	Fourth Sunday	49 Peronne Avenue Clontarf	11am Terry O'Brien	02 9949 8379

