

Govindha

THE TIMELESS
BEAUTY OF ASIA

A Way of Seeing

This book is dedicated to my Soulmate and wife Pui, incarnated in
Thailand.

ONE

The mind of a man
And the mind in a stone.
But the Mind of minds
Sits bright and alone.

The life of a tree,
The life in a clod,
To the Life of all life
That men call God.

The heart of a beast
And a seraph's heart, —

But the Heart of all hearts

Throbs ever apart.

A body beloved

And a body slain.

Yet both were the bodies

Of One in their pain.

(Sri Aurobindo, Collected Poems, Collected works of Sri Aurobindo 2:
635-6)

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“The movement of love is not limited to human beings and it is perhaps less distorted in other worlds than in the human. Look at the flowers and trees. When the sun sets and all becomes silent, sit down for a moment and put yourself into communion with Nature: you will feel rising from the earth, from below the roots of the trees and mounting upward and coursing through their fibres up to the highest outstretching branches, the aspiration of an intense love and longing, — a longing for something that brings light and gives happiness, for the light that is gone and they wish to have back again. There is a yearning so pure and intense that if you can feel the movement in the trees, your own being too will go up in an ardent prayer for the peace and light and love that are unmanifested here.” (Collected Works of Mother 3: 72)

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Preface

Let me first state that I'm not a professional photographer, on the contrary, the pictures you will see are made with my first camera, nothing special, and it was not my intention to make a book. The now available book emanated from some coincidences which all at once express a profound change in my life.

I started to live in India where my spirit is feeling at home for the most time of my life. But after a while I realized an imperative of changing without knowing in which direction. My inner dissatisfaction went sky-high and I decided overnight to leave India.

To name this dissatisfaction I have to use the term "Westernization" what in unison means alienation. On closer examination I found two cores of this wide-ranging phenomenon, causing my inconvenience, the first is an increasing and everywhere visible greed, and the second a simultaneously growing gulf between the Indian spirit and its reality. At this time, I didn't see that the "Westernization" is the biggest global problem and our common challenge. We all are infected with this madly greed and hence rather more than less hit by the gulf between spirituality and reality. India held a mirror up to me, and I had to realize that the gap between my spiritual claims and my life praxis must be closed.

However, I escaped from India and took the next possible flight; it was going to Bangkok. And here in Thailand, at a first glance, I found so inexpressible joy that I feel a strong longing to express it despite knowing that there are no words to do it. To establish this gift of joy is presently my daily challenge, an up and down, and so, also as self-assurance, I composed

a reading and picture-book. It wants to show the beauty of life especially the beauty of the nature and some temples of Asia. There are two methods by which the depth of beauty shall be revealed to the observer, by pictures and by text in the form of aphorism, meditations and quotes. Consequently, the pictures and the written words are directed to the Beauty of Being, whereas the perception depends on the alertness of the beholder and reader.

Currently, the way of “direct seeing” seems to be buried for us - at least it looks like sleeping. Immediate and nearly simultaneous with the sensory perception our interpretations are ascending and these mental constructs, this “mentalized perception” replaced our “direct seeing” into an indirect view. But if there is a situation when the most, we are perceiving is new and fresh a small break can arise and into this gap joy enters, the Joy of Being. The name of this gap is silence or “stop thinking”.

Our modern life is habitually guided by “the mind” and we do not only use our mental abilities we are convinced “we are the thinker”. This is surely a very occidental way of Self-being, a way we learned either by the tradition of a Western education or as a consequence of the globalization.

In the West it was René Descartes who wrote “cogito ergo sum” (I think therefore I am). All following academic philosophy was and is a result of this big misunderstanding, by which one of the human skills, thinking, became first dominant and finally “the human itself”. This phenomenon must be called alienation because without any doubts we are more than the “small thinker” although we seem to be locked in this doubtful and sometimes terrible identification.

But also in the East, the home of all kinds of spirituality, we find a deep confusion in the midst of the spiritual domain. It concerns the Buddhist word “mindfulness”, a term rooted in Sanskrit (smṛti) and Pali (sati). It does not point to a mental ability; it is a spiritual capacity. To avoid the misunderstanding, one’s mind should be full of something the better translation for “sati” is awareness. Awareness is not a quality of the mind; it

is a quality of Consciousness. The reality of our mental world is a virtual world of duality, of differences under the conditions of time and space, of action and reaction, of causes and consequences. Hinduism indicates it as “Maya”, whereas the stuff of silence, Consciousness, is the “space” we are in Oneness or the “time” of an eternal Presence.

Learning to behold the pictures with our regained awareness, the Door of Joy may open up for all of us.

Thailand, 2021

Govindha



Introduction

In all religions we find the same esoteric core which can be expressed as “love” or “compassion” and being in love is nothing else than being in Oneness. Love is a side effect of awakening, therefore, we can say: All the differences the thinking creates amplify - mostly unconscious - our yearning for love, for wholeness, for finding “home”. Even if people possess in the outside life and world all they need to feel comfortable, there are more than a few who carry in themselves deep inside feelings of unpleasantness and dissatisfaction. Why? Concentrating on the outside life we forgot our true home, Consciousness, we lost ourselves in thinking and now we are misinterpreting the thinker-ego as our identity and true self.

At the Taos Pueblo, C.G. Jung spoke to a Hopi elder named Antonio Mirabal who explained that whites were always uneasy and restless. Mirabal said he would not understand the whites, they would say to think with their heads. Indicating his heart, he claimed that the red men are thinking with their heart. This moment Jung became conscious of this significant truth.

But to realize this knowing by heart we should overcome all romantic ideas about love because love is not a feeling, not a concept and not a doing, nothing to want or to make, no romanticism or sentimentality; it is our embracing gesture to all that is. Its base is acceptance. When our heart is open we can embrace all and response with the adequate action. This attitude cannot be overtaken from the mind because the mind is the “separator” and “resister” and not a tool which could simply or unbiased

accept or embrace what it perceives. Its main task is the difference or the judgement, therefore, to listen to the heart implies to silence the mind.

Acceptance does not mean to suffer under unpleasant or dangerous circumstances nor to become a helpless victim, on the contrary, it means to see how the world or a situation is and to accept what is. The change will come because all is in change, other ways, if we withstand, we stop the power of change. The general helper in the most desperate situations is the power of acceptance which opens the door for changing.

The knowledge of the heart is coming from beyond the rational world, sometimes experienceable as a kind of “silent voice” or “inner voice” also as intuition in “thoughtform” or as “immediate knowledge” but we should never change it with the voice of the social conscience or the multiple voices of wanting. The latter are the sum of our internalized value education and a pure social and universal factor. The voice of the heart is the truth of our real being beyond the outer form. We find the greatest danger for the inexperienced beginner in the widespread confusion about the voice of the heart and the desire-body. An example: Normally addicted people are dominated by their craving and greed for the addictive substance or behaviour. Is this helpful? No way! To change the problem needs not only the yearning and the will of the addicted, a complicated psychological process starts to build a new pattern of behaviour. Our whole education and socialization are rooted in an excessive emphasis of thinking which obstructs the access to the emotional being, makes the ego impermeable for the light and creates countless confusions. We can see this consternation especially when we fall in love and “think” the loved one must be ours and it would be our heart who wants it. The voice of the heart is gentle and let the things go, there is no attachment in the heart, nothing “to want or to have” only loving presence, so to say “to be” with an all-encompassing gesture of releasing. In other words: The nature of our true heart, hidden deep behind the emotional body, wants to be the servant of the Divine while

all what is called “the gut or instincts and the emotions” are the expression of the egosense.

Our heart is especially the sphere of giving and unconditioned love whereas our mind is the “business-soul”, a dealer and bargainer. The “busy or thinking mind” is a dualistic instrument, it “loves” only under conditions, all has its plus and minus and like a book-keeper it organizes what is called “love” or a “healthy relationship”. The consequence of its dualistic restrictions is the inability to love or to be all-embracing. What thinking calls “love” is the result of the old habits of judging. All his giving is accompanied by expectations of receiving. It wants to have benefit or at least to be in balance. It needs a sincere self-examination with deep introspection and insight to take away the mask of our self-image. The thinker or the ego hates nothing more than to be shattered.

The path into our heart is full of traps, anyway, it is more than worthwhile to meet the challenge and dig for the treasure of its fruits. The moment we find a real understanding of what I called the “releasing embrace” we know our true heart, “Anahata”, the fourth chakra. Then we lost the wrong identification with the mind, and we wake up from the nightmare of duality and separation created by thinking. Love takes place when we are fulfilling the step from the thinking mind to the silent mind, from separation into Oneness or - with the parable of Jesus - when the lost son (unconsciousness) comes back home (consciousness) what is not a step back or forward but upward.

Again: All knowledge of thinking is created by drawing distinctions. The botanist, for instance, makes a distinction between firs and pines. This is how all scientific knowledge is and will be found, it is created or produced by making distinctions. But does this “knower” really know the fir or the pine? Walking in the nature and being impressed from their beauty is a quite different way of gathering “knowledge”. We do not find names and terms but the Joy of Being. Words are never enough to express this kind of

being touched or in contact. And often enough experiences like this are leading us to the overwhelming impression of being a part and in the last meaning of being one with the life and all that is.

When thinking stops there is no nothing, first it seems to be nothing but going on we discover that this nothing is like a gap in which the life is entering as presence, as a state in which we find all we need. With the stop of thinking awareness arises. Awareness enables us to watch the thoughts, we can so to say split the mind in two parts. While the one is in silence and only observing, the other remains busy with operations of thinking. As soon we are enabled to identify with the silence, we are the same time able to disidentify from thinking. Then we realize that we are not our thoughts and emotions, we become their witness. We lose our “identity” as “the thinker, the ego” but we gain awareness and this awareness, this inner attention leads to the experience of true Consciousness.

Awareness is a state of receptivity in which our perception is free from the mental deformations. We receive the world without attachment, without judgment and without resistance. We participate although we are not the owners, we do not grasp; we see the things as they are. When the mind stops, we are beyond the ego-identity, beyond craving, therefore there is no suffering, only the Joy of Being. Inside we are in silence, in a “timeless time” and in marvelling delight. We are intuitively realizing the difference between thinking and awareness; we “see” that thinking is a power of the brain, transitory and mortal, and we “feel” that awareness is a child of Consciousness or the eternal. The moment we are aware of the present moment, of the “Now”, we experience ourselves as parts of Consciousness similar like a drop of water is a part of the ocean, howsoever “small, unimportant, petty and dispensable” but still the same stuff, full of Ananda, full of the divine beatitude.

According to Hinduism Being, Consciousness and Bliss or Beatitude is one: Sat-chitananda. Therefore, the way to Joy will lead us the same time to

Being and Consciousness. One of the ways to access the experience of the Joy of Being is the discovery of the beauty of life which can be found every moment by a shift of our inner attention, by a small step out of the identification with the mind and an easy observation of what is going on here and now.

What do we actually perceive? How is the impression of the “objects” of our senses now, at this moment? By noticing the present moment, the mind stops by itself because the presence and the mind cannot coexist. The mind is concerned with interpretations in the terms of the past and the future but the present moment can only be detected from awareness. What we may experience as “thinking” in the presence is no longer the “I’m thinking”; it is rather a kind of “seeing thoughts”. What counts is to be fully aware of the presence, of what is now. Then the process of thinking which only eclipses what we perceive with its old-used associations stops for a moment, and we discover a non-divided view in which the “object” and the observer becoming one, the beholder is absorbed from the object, the “subject” is the “object” and for this moment we are back in the Oneness. Episodes like this are really treasures, it seems as if we would lose temporarily “ourselves”, and indeed the “ego” is suspended, we are beyond the happiness-unhappiness-continuum and in Ananda, we are Ananda.

The pictures here are neither professional nor “perfect” but together with the aphorism they may become an “aha – I see”-effect, a door-closer for the thinker and a dooropener for the Joy of Being. Ananda is nothing we could strive for; it neither needs effort nor intention, but a kind of inner readiness. Sure, we can strive for happiness, but Ananda happens beyond our will in accordance to our readiness to keep quiet. Therefore, behold the pictures and don’t look for Ananda!

When we are aware of the present moment the time stops together with thinking because time is a mental construct. Our forefathers lived with the cycle of the seasons and the nature. Our definition of time shows a linearity

which our ancestors did not focus because their paradigm of time was the constant return. Our paradigm of time is progressing without knowing where to, our time is running, is passing through our fingers like melting ice in our hands. Yes, there may be something like an “objective” time. We are born, we undergo the ageing process, and we will die. But there is no reason to put the package of our life in a linear concept. As soon as we are aware of the present moment the time stops, we are in a timeless state in which even the clocktime is secondary.

Thinking can be an excellent tool and instrument as far as needed. Living in Bangkok makes it inevitable to use the mind to manage the traffic; visiting a desert it is very advisable to explore the directions with mind and compass. But while observing a flower or admiring a rainbow I hope to be fully present and deeply absorbed from their beauty. We may need the thinker (who is the ego) for our daily routine, but we should be grateful for every moment we can be without the ego and, instead of, being deeply one with the universe.

This experience of Oneness revealed to me a fundamentally different way of living, which I could not understand for a long time although it was taught to me by one of my venerable teachers, Medhananda, who said to me: “Let universe, nature and scenery as unchanged as possible. The secret cause of this lies in the perfect contentedness with the universe and oneself – as it is.” This wisdom meets with the teachings of the old Chinese sage Laozi and with the insights of the Native American People.

Sitting at the feet of the Buddha in many beautiful temples it was given to me to enter for moments the now, the eternal presence. In addition, I got the grace of deep Joy in contact with the nature and their beauty.

The following pictures and aphorism shall open your heart for the secret of Being which is - known or not - a forever returning wonder of beauty and joy.

The best way to see the pictures is by getting totally absorbed in them. For this purpose, I abstained from naming or terming the pictures which would give you a kind of category. If you recognize a place, forget it for a while. The written words may be liable to be misunderstood. This depends on the nature of the mental instrument “language” which always creates both, in one reader agreement and in the other disagreement. In the best way they may be a pointer to awareness and by this a guide to a deeper understanding. I hesitated a long time to replenish the power of the pictures with some additional words. But I hope to have found words of wisdom to support the awakening of awareness.

May the day come where we can break with the hegemony of thinking!

A Way of Seeing



The shell is an ancient symbol. There is a multitude of shells in nature. They show where we come from, from the water, the waters of unconsciousness. For some people mussels are culinary delicacies. Two

species attracts our attention in a special way. Some seashells let us hear a sound and others contain pearls.

In general, the pearl symbolizes the evolution of our inner awareness, the world of wisdom and beauty, and it reminds us to bring forth what dwells and matures in the depth like an embryo in the mother's womb. The pearl of our being is the soul or in the words of Sri Aurobindo, the “psychic being”, the Divine spark hidden deep in our heart. Awakening means to enter the kingdom of our heart and to follow the Devine. The awakened are the pearls of mankind.

Following the Hindu mythology, a demon named Shankha-Asura defeated the Devas and the Vedas set into the ocean. Therefore, the Devas pleased Vishnu, the preserver and maintainer of the universe, to help. He incarnated as Matsya (fish) Avatar, known as the first Avatar, and killed the Shankha-Asura. Vishnu blew the conch-shaped bone - made from the ear and head of the demon. The 'OM'-sound emanated from it and from this sound emerged the Vedas. All knowledge treasured in the Vedas is so to speak an elaboration of OM. The conch shell Vishnu held in his upper left hand got the name Shanka after the killed demon Shankha-Asura. Blown by Vishnu the conch shell is named Panchajanya, what means to have control over the five classes of beings. It represents the Dharma and symbolizes the triumph of the Devine over the lower forces.



For Vaishnavism Buddha is the ninth Avatar of Vishnu. Its Buddhist symbol is the right-turning white conch shell. It represents the beautiful, melodious, interpenetrating and pervasive sound of the Buddha-Dharma which awakens us from the dream of ignorance. It is seen as one of the Eight Auspicious Signs, Ashtamangala. The eight auspicious of Mahayana Buddhism are:

1. The Lotus flower, representing purity and enlightenment
2. The endless knot, seen as harmony and infinity
3. The golden fish pair, standing for matrimonial happiness and good fortune
4. The victory banner as sign of victory over ignorance
5. The wheel of Dharma, representing knowledge
6. The treasure vase as a sign of spiritual and material wealth
7. The parasol, symbolising protection and spiritual power
8. The conch shell, representing the wisdom of Buddha

There are two parables of Jesus where he uses the symbol of the pearl to teach his listeners:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45-46)

The pearl of great value is our true inner being. We may need a long time to seek it, but finding this treasure, we have to give up all other things, everything “we have” in order “to be”. “To be” means to dwell in the kingdom of God, the Consciousness of Oneness.

When we through the help of our growing awareness open the door, we do no longer run for any outer purpose of life, our aspiration is full awakening.

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” (Matthew 7: 1-6)



Since we use the mind we are splitting, separating, differentiating and this means judging. Jesus teaches at this point first non-judgment. Before we become able to teach others, we should take care for our own spiritual evolution. Second, as spiritual teachers we have to use the true power of

judgment which is known as the spiritual “sword of distinction” between the divine power (tree of life) and the asura- or ego-forces (tree of knowledge). The latter may test us like Mara trying to lead Buddha into temptation. But in all these cases we have to stand on the side of the spiritual light.

The third advice of Jesus is not to speak about the pearl of Oneness to those who don't have the spiritual maturity to understand it. They would attack you because in their eyes it sounds like blasphemy. Just the so-called Christian Churches persecute the mystics, the agents and true witnesses of the Oneness and attack them wherever and whenever possible. In the widest sense we can now interpret the words of Jesus as the advice never to follow false teachings, the priests of duality and agents of original sin and hell. It would be like throwing the pearl of our soul before animals. Instead, we have to dedicate our heart to the Supreme.



The wheel of Dharma, “Dhammacakka” in Pali, is also called the wheel of life. The meaning differs depending on the number of spokes. 31 spokes symbolize the 31 realms of existence - 11 dominions of desire, 16 spheres of form and 4 areas of formlessness. In total, it represents the perfection of Buddha’s teachings.

Vishnu held in his upper right hand, which represents the spiritualized mind, a wheel, in Sanskrit called “Chakra”. It is a sharp-spinning discus-like weapon with the name “Sudarshana”, “su” for superior and “darshan” for vision. Its meaning is the destruction of one’s ego in the awakening and realization of the inner soul, the Divine spark. Thus, it stands for our true nature which burns away the ignorance and illusion and opens the door to a

higher spiritual insight and vision supporting us in realizing God in the material world.



How do we judge a temple? Do we use some ideas of intellectual aesthetic? The true spiritual seeker observes by the help of an open heart, and he looks to grasp the aura of enlightenment. Those temples are rare compared with the number of temples in the world. The sincere seeker cannot be blinded by the outer appearances because sincerity unmasks all mental constructions as artificial and cold places.

The term “Temple” comes from the Latin “templum”, itself derived from the root “tem” what means “to cut, divide”. It refers to the mind’s work of distinguishing the sacred from the profane, thus the sacred ground was separated from the ordinary one. But the spiritual meaning of Temple is quite different, we have to note that the spiritual sphere has no mind-created separations.



The temple symbolizes the outside, the body, the material world, the cover we have to permeate to find the inside, the sanctuary, the Divine and at the same moment ourselves. Therefore, a true temple simultaneously represents out- and inside, and we have to characterize it as a space of Oneness.

At the moment we enter a temple we usually prepare ourselves, we recollect our roaming and wandering thoughts, we try to concentrate and bring together what was separated. Or we focus the present moment to become fully aware of the here and now. Thus, the temple is the place where we go inside to find the truth or to hear the wisdom of silence:

“I stood upon a high mountain and saw a tall man, and another of short stature, and heard something like the sound of thunder and went nearer in order to hear. Then he spoke to me and said: “I am thou and thou art I, and wherever thou art, there am I, and I am sown in all things; and whence thou wilt, thou gatherest me, but when thou gatherest me, then gatherest thou thyself.” (The Gospel of Eve)



“Your daily life is your temple and your religion.” (Khalil Gibran)