Three

More intimate
than any imagining:
I am not
present;
what Presence
Is,
I am.
No Guru, No Method, No Teacher

"No masters, only you
the master is you -
wonderful, no?"
- Ikkyu

"If you do not follow somebody, you feel very lonely.
Be lonely then."
- J. Krishnamurti

It has become obvious that none of this
is what it once seemed.
We are all dream characters in a dream.

Source, Spirit, God, Goddess, gods...
or: 'my true self,' 'my higher self...'
or: devas, angels, spirit guides, forces good or evil...
or: guru, sat-guru, master, teacher...
these are all concepts, human ideas, constructs;
and, as such, dream characters here with us in the dream.

There is no separate ‘God,’ just as there is no separate ‘us.’
All these are projections. What there is, is This.
All That Is.
This is not just another name for God.
Not a being named ‘God’ or ‘Source’ or anything else, outside of, other than, What Is.
In all of reality, there are not two. There is only All That Is. This.

You, who you really are when you say “I am” and I, who I really am when I say “I am” are the same “I am” All That Is.
‘you,’ ‘me,’ ‘we,’ apparent individuals, are dream characters in the dream which ‘I,’ All That Is, dreams.

There is no we, no me, no you.
Even the dream is within All That Is.
That is who You really are, not the you you think you are.

In what I began to read after the jungle, and among the people I came across, much importance is made of this thing called awakening or enlightenment. Although I have used the word ‘awaken’ to express the moment of the shift in perception that occurred in the jungle, at times it seems
that this is a misnomer; that the word in this context makes very little sense.

There is a sense in which there is no 'awakening,' no enlightenment, because there is no 'one' to awaken. Who would this be? Who is awakened?

'Me,' david? Of course not: david is a dream character, an idea, a fiction; not the dreamer, and therefore obviously cannot awaken. There is no 'david' to do anything, including awaken.

Or is it 'Who I Really Am' that has 'awakened;' Presence, Awareness, All That Is?

But of course Awareness has never been asleep, has no need to awaken to anything; Awareness is always already All There Is.

Clearly then, there is no one to awaken. 'Awakening' is only an analogy, a concept, a pointer. The seeker community tends to take it literally, but like most analogies it only takes you so far.

What has happened is more like this: in the dream, in the case of the dream character 'david,' All That Is stops pretending that 'It' is asleep. What has always been awake lets the misunderstanding that there is some one to be asleep and some one to awaken, fall away.

That is all. And the dream continues, as before. The misunderstanding has fallen away, but the misunderstanding was not real anyway, so what has happened? Nothing. The dream character 'david' now knows he is only a dream, not
'real;' knows it is all a dream. But even this dream character's 'knowing' is part of the dream, part of the unfolding of the script of the dream for that dream character, and nothing has happened. The dream character goes on being the dream character.

'Nothing happens' precisely because what appears to be happening is not, and what is happening is what appears as 'no thing.'

Meanwhile, some of the dream characters I was brought into contact with in those months after returning from the jungle are evidently making careers out of this awakening, enlightenment gig. I gradually came to realize that I had stumbled upon an extremely bizarre phenomenon of which I had been unaware: an entire enlightenment-seeker subculture populated with all manner of teachers and teachings ranging from the profound to the utterly ludicrous. This is okay of course, in fact it's wonderful; it's part of the dream. And, on the ludicrous end of the spectrum, it makes for a lot of silliness. Dream characters who publicly profess that they have "awakened to God consciousness" and can now, for a fee, show other dream characters how they too can awaken. At best, highly dubious; at worst, blatant hucksterism. Much ranting about what 'level' of awakening they have 'attained;' about the second level of the first stage or the third stage past the fourth level where no one on the planet is, at present, but they will be soon.

Convoluted, artificial complexity and foolish arrogance. The Truth has a radiant, radical simplicity which negates the possibility of any claim to it. Experiences can be claimed. Knowledge can be claimed. Authority, lineage, transmission, can be claimed. However: once your heart and brain
are ripped open and what is left of you is found standing in Truth as Truth, any idea of claiming it will reduce you to tears or laughter.

There is nothing to claim or achieve. As the eighth century Zen master Hui Hai put it somewhat bluntly,

“If you understand the meaning of all this, it implies that you know there is nothing to be achieved. Anyone who supposes they can achieve it by getting hold of, or grasping at something is full of self-conceit – an arrogant person with perverted views.”

But of course if you’re a dream character whose role in the dream is to make a career out of awakening, simplicity won’t do. You have to have an organization, and develop a distinctive teaching; you have to gather a gaggle of followers, and very publicly (and with much drama) work on getting yourself and selected disciples through all those many levels of advanced enlightenment. Which, if there really was the understanding that there is no ‘you’ and ‘you’ aren’t ‘doing’ anything, there wouldn’t be any bothering about because there would be the knowing that these things don’t exist, they’re just constructs in the dream. But then of course you also wouldn’t be able to gain prestige or importance and make lots of money giving seminars, convincing people they need their primary personality matrixes modified.

Money is necessary for living in the modern world, and there’s an honorable tradition of gifting money or its equivalent to support teachers, monks, ashrams, monasteries. But there’s a clear line here because on a basic level money and spiritual teaching don’t mix. There is an attempt to justify charging a fee for hearing the teaching by appealing to the ‘energetic exchange’ theory, which says that any time
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you get something of value you should pay for it. It doesn’t take much reflection to see that’s bullshit: anything you have of true value, you didn’t pay for.

The theory of fair exchange makes sense for things within the dream. But once there is talking about What Is, about seeing no individuals and no separation, about the realization of what you always already are, then the whole concept of one person charging another person money for this is quite blatantly meaningless. Truth is gift, and it is only passing through ‘us;’ it cannot be bought and sold.

This game of money for spirituality is a whitewash job. It’s widely practiced and widely accepted, but it’s the spiritual community’s dirty little secret; nobody’s really comfortable with it, because everybody knows in their hearts that charging money for access to spiritual teaching, even indirectly, is inauthentic and basically inconsistent with the Teaching itself.

Even when it is said that the money is to run the ashram, to finance the organization, to fund the travel schedule, to spread this ‘vitaly important message’ to as many people as possible; even then this kind of sales pitch is still an appeal to ego, to every ego’s desire to be part of something big and important.

Euphemistically calling it a ‘donation’ when it is set up in such a way that guilt and social pressure make it difficult to refuse, is dishonest. Once you have an ashram, once you have a church, you have to pass the basket and give sermons soliciting contributions. But any time you bring money into the temple, you run the risk of some firebrand carpenter from the countryside coming along and turning over the tables.
The morning the old Zen or Advaita masters realized the Self, they went back to chopping wood, carrying water. If someone wanted to talk with them, they talked, then went back to work. Where is it written that teachers can’t work to support themselves, that they have to live off their followers? Who says there has to be an organization? Who says teachers have to rack up huge expenses traveling all over the world giving lectures and seminars and satsang? What ego, what sense of individual self is behind this idea that the message of one teacher is so vital, so precious, that it needs to be heard, full time, by the whole world? The old Chinese Ch’an masters were named after whichever mountain they lived on, and if you wanted to hear the Teaching you went and found one of them. This tended to weed out the weekend warriors and limit the field to those who were ready to give up their lives to hear this.

Be still. Who’s engaging in all this activity, taking on this importance, believing the hype that what is happening has some special significance? Who thinks it’s important that great numbers of dream characters wake up, and that it’s your job to do it? What’s with this Advaita televangelism crusade crap?

Behind the New Age pleasantries, this messianic idea of being the anointed one, saving the world, is insidious. Stop. The Teaching is universal, and there are many teachers, and they are always already where they need to be. In the Understanding it is known that the world doesn’t need any special message from any special teacher. That’s all being taken care of. The dream in Consciousness is unfolding perfectly, and personality cults around popular and well-funded spiritual teachers are part of that unfolding; but not in the way they, or their devotees, might think.
There’s an amazing amount of this going on, here in the dream. The blind leading the blind. Watching this nonsense, realizing they take it seriously, I can’t help laughing because of course the question arises: Who? Who Cares? Who thinks it’s important, who is organizing? It’s all concepts and doesn’t exist! The only one who cares, who is keeping track, who gives importance to a role, is the thinking mind, the ego, the apparent individual who still thinks he or she is there to be awakened or to carry a message; and the incongruity between this and the subject matter is so huge that it just makes for terrific entertainment.

It is yet another amazing grace that the first teachers of Advaita that I encountered turned out to be false teachers; characters who believe they are awakened but who have been misled, and remain trapped in ego. And trapped also in the money and spiritual prestige game. An odd experience, and rather confusing at the time, because on the one hand they obviously knew a lot more than I did, having studied the teaching deeply for a long time; but on the other hand they didn’t know anything at all about what they claimed. They use Ramesh’s name, claiming him as their teacher and claiming ‘lineage’ through him, but it is instructive to hear what the Ramesh has to say about that. “No wonder you were a little confused for awhile,” he laughs. “They still think they are the ones doing it all!”

But I am very grateful for the experience coming when it did because it has led to a clear insight as to what the Understanding is not. One of the most striking aspects of the experience was to witness the extent to which people, ardent seekers, want to believe that these teachers are the real thing; and follow them, and obey what they say, and submit to their demands even when it is harmful and
exploitative and has nothing to do with the teaching. I began to realize that most people, most seekers, have no way of knowing whether a teacher is the real thing or not.

Again, everything arises in the perfect unfolding of the dream in Consciousness, and there is nothing ‘wrong’ needing to be corrected. When a desperate seeker, just coming off a harrowing experience with some bogus, ego-driven, phony guru, asks why there are these false teachers, the only possible answer is: so that exactly this can be experienced. This too is part of the overall functioning of totality.

Even so, compassion is stirred, and I've got news for the enlightenment-seekers out there. To an extent much greater than you would like to believe, these emperors and empresses have no clothes.

If a teacher wants anything from you, demands anything from you, solicits anything from you, even if it is couched in the most spiritual terms of advancing your own awakening, then it is exceedingly likely that they have not awakened, that the Understanding is not there. If they ask for money in any form, if they demand your loyalty, if they thrive on your adulation, if they suggest that having sex with them is part of the ‘transmission’ or ‘initiation,’ if they want your time or services or possessions in exchange for what you are ‘getting,’ if they insist that you live in a certain way or perform certain actions, if they want anything at all from you; I assure you that it is supremely unlikely that they are what they say they are, that they have what you are seeking, or that awakening has occurred.

How can this be said so categorically? Simple. When
there is Understanding, none of these things matter. When the Understanding is there, there is the knowing that this is not how things work. This is not how things work at all! When the Understanding is there, there will not be concern about any of these things, because the Understanding renders all these things forever irrelevant.

Despite traditions that suggest the contrary, there will not even be caring whether anyone wakes up or not, whether anyone wants to listen or not. There is no one to care, no one for whom any of these things could be important.

Money, sex, loyalty, services, possessions; these are elements in the dream. When they are necessary they will be provided. If they are provided, they can be enjoyed. When they are not provided that is okay too.

A big fund-raising to run a dramatic crusade to bring the message of personal enlightenment to the whole planet is all very exciting, but it has nothing to do with impersonal awakening to the true nature of What Is. If you need to create drama and excitement, stay asleep; in Wayne Liquorman’s words, once realization happens things get very ordinary.

There is a stunningly beautiful simplicity to it all. You can say, “Awakening is the understanding that there is no one to awaken. There is no individual here doing anything. Consciousness is all there is.” And you will have expressed the totality of the teaching. That’s really all there is to this. All of this simply Is. There is no individual, no seeker, no teacher, no purpose, no outcome. It all simply Is. All That Is is Presence. That’s it: that’s the whole shebang. Done, completed. Parasamgate. And, the dream goes on.
So, with this understanding, enjoy it. Get up, have breakfast, go to work. 'Do' what seems right to do, knowing there is no 'you' and 'you' aren't 'doing' anything.

As the Zen saying has it,

"If you understand, things are just as they are.
If you do not understand, things are just as they are."

Again, this time from Rumi:

"We rarely hear the inward music,
but we're all dancing to it nevertheless."

Like 'you' have a choice. Can you see? It all is as it is. The mechanism, the method of functioning if you will, by which the dream operates, by which functioning occurs here in Consciousness, is the same whether it is realized or not. This is why it is said that when the Understanding occurs, nothing happens. Nothing changes. Consciousness streams, functions, operates in a body/mind organism in which the Understanding has occurred in the same manner that it operates in the body/mind organisms in which there is not Understanding. Awakening or Enlightenment does not automatically suspend the normal means and method by which the dream unfolds; there is no transfiguration into a super human being of light or some such with paranormal powers, like in some of the fanciful storytelling. Who is there to be transfigured? Who is there to do anything?

Humans seem possessed of the idea that there is something we can do to get what we want, and we have been convinced that there is something we have to do, or that we should be doing.
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Listen. There is nothing you need to do. Nothing you need to make better or improve. Nothing to purify or sanctify or consecrate. Nothing to accomplish, nothing to prove. Nothing to construct. Nothing to deconstruct. Nothing to work at or to learn, nothing and no one to teach. Not even anything to understand or to 'get.' Nothing to balance or adjust or heal. Nothing to become.

Of course if it is in the dream of All That Is for a mind/body object to appear to 'do' any of these things, then that will happen: something for the dream characters to do while the dream lasts. Students of the Teaching often struggle to reconcile the idea of free will with that of determination; the idea that 'you are always already All That Is and there is nothing you can do to attain it,' with admonitions to earnestness in self-inquiry, questioning, and investigation. But there is no conflict: the teaching of 'always already' does not mean you must stop all efforts. That stopping itself would be an effort!

If you are to understand the teaching, then 'you,' as an ego, as an identified 'self,' will be motivated to perform what is necessary for that understanding to occur. If studying or meditating or working are to happen, they will happen. That itself is part of 'always already.' They are not important in themselves, but they will happen if they are to happen.

The complete Understanding is not likely to happen while sitting on your butt, avoiding the elements of the Teaching, refusing to face your misconceptions, and thinking only of everything else. But what appears as motivation and deliberation, earnestness and determination, choice and action is simply the operating of the mechanism by which the whole manifestation unfolds. The misperception is to take
it personally, as your motivation, your deliberation, your choice and action; it is completely impersonal, simply the totality unfolding as it is. It is what you always already are.

It is a matter of the underlying understanding: practices and tasks and all of living are not undertaken with a personal intent, or for the attainment of a goal, or to become a better person, or to save the world, or because 'I should.' There is only watching the body/mind, which you are not, have thoughts occur to it, be motivated, perform actions... or not. There is only complete simplicity: an openness, a consent, to letting happen what will happen, and to letting the misconceptions fall away.