FREE FALL

“There is no such thing as an entity. Now you know you are awake because you are here and you have that knowledge. There is nothing else other than this knowledge, no entity.”
- Nisargadatta Maharaj

One arrives for the first time in India and is assaulted, overwhelmed, swept away by sensory input. Smells, textures, sights, sounds, tastes: the mind/body organism responds in amazement. There has been the nothing that happened in the jungle; the Brilliance, the seeing, the no one home. There has been the learning and absorption of some Advaita ideas as a way to parse and express this nothing. Then, incomprehensibly, the mind/body thing finds itself hurtling across the planet to meet a teacher in Bombay. This is entirely puzzling: there is no reason for this. The mind is all but blank. There is no expectation; there can be none; there is no possible purpose, no possible
outcome. In fact, the david thing has no idea what the fuck is going on, and is astonished to find itself, exhausted and jet-lagged, in the tropical heat of a Bombay night, zigzagging through the crowded streets in a tiny ancient taxi piloted by a nearly naked Hindu driver who speaks no English, a pink plastic figure of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, swinging wildly from the mirror; and headed, hopefully, toward downtown Bombav and a hotel room.

That first night in India, there is a dream.

I am very high up, in an airplane perhaps, looking down at the ground below. The ground is covered with large flat squares, down there on the ground. Reminiscent somewhat of flying over England or Ireland with the patchwork of square fields, but much simpler; just flat squares of very muted colors, most of them simply gray. Someone next to me says, "Those squares look flat, two dimensional, but actually they are big three-dimensional cubes; they have a height that we can't perceive from here."

I look at her; she seems sincere enough, but there is something strange about the way she is insisting on this, like she is repeating something she has heard but doesn't really know it for herself. And I say, "I know what you mean; because of perspective, from a distance things can seem flat. But that isn't the case here. In this case, those squares actually are just flat. If they had height, they would look different: you'd be able to tell."

Somehow I know this to be true, that the person next to me is subtly misperceiving, or adding embellishment that isn't there; but as I say it, I realize that this will just be a discussion, an argument. Even though I know it with
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certainty, there is no way to prove it one way or the other unless someone were to go down there, get closer, and see for sure. One would have to jump, and fall all the way down there, and of course that would be impossible, foolish, out of the question, because falling from this height would mean certain death. As I think this, I realize that I am already falling through the sky.

No sense of intent or decision or will to jump, or act of jumping. Just that it had happened.

There's not a lot of complication here. Dreams arise as part of the natural functioning of the mind/body just as anything else arises. In the sleeping dream, feelings and sensations arise just as they do in the waking dream. The mind/body does not know the difference between a sleeping dream and the waking dream and it does not like the idea of jumping out of an airplane.

First, there is a moment of horror. There is thinking, my god, what has happened, I'm falling toward the earth, in a few moments I'm going to hit and go splat and this whole life will be over. Panic. Dread. Then, a moment of denial and frantic activity: wait, maybe there's something I've missed: maybe there's a parachute strapped to my back; maybe there's a body of water I can land in and somehow, miraculously, survive this.

Then, still falling, the acceptance. So. This is how it is going to be. The moment has come. This body will in fact go splat and die. Since there's no way out, that's okay. Not such a bad way to go: I probably won't even feel it, the lights will just go out. And meanwhile, there is this last amazing experience: falling this great distance, with no impedance, no protection:
total free fall. Astonishingly beautiful. Complete letting go.

All of this in little more than an instant: the mind/body thing reacts to an unplanned jump out of an airplane in its predictable way according to its programming; it has its moment of fear, its moment of denial, its moment of acceptance. Then, unsupported, it goes quiet. In this dream too, as in the waking dream, the mind/body is a dream character. The dreamer is dreaming, and the dream continues.

The air rushing around me as I drop; and, detached and quite neutral, I see the squares on the ground, speeding toward me and quite close now. It’s perfectly amusing because it doesn’t matter in the least, but I can’t help noticing that what was intuited, sitting back there in the plane, was true; even from this close, they are just flat squares, not cubes, with no height or depth.

Then, in the very instant of hitting the ground, there is a change. At the moment I reach the level of the ground where the squares are, they transform. They had indeed been flat and mostly gray; only now, as if suddenly given life, instantly they morph into wondrous, unearthly, three dimensional objects with subtle, gentle shapes and shading. And they are not just big cubes, as my companion in the plane had insisted so confidently; they are quite simple, nothing elaborate or grandiose, but nevertheless they are unimaginably, indescribably beautiful.

And with this, right at what would be the moment of impact, when I would have lost consciousness, the dream simply ends. There is no shock, no jolt. There is deep dreamless sleep. Later, the next morning when I wake up, the dream and its natural, abrupt ending is clear in memory.
And there is a realization: well yes, of course:
The only way to know is to jump.
Jumping means certain death.
Jumping has already happened.

And this ‘happening’ has no more significance or value than brushing one’s teeth. There is no meaningful way to talk about it, there is no way to construct a sentence because there is no object and no doer and nothing done and no time frame. It just Is. It would be nonsense and impossible to talk about this as if there were anything personal or significant or special about it.

In the dream, everything is flat and gray, and an observer from that distance can only say things are flat, or try to pretend that they are not. Or, perhaps, like my companion in the plane, to repeat what has been heard, that some have said that things are not as they seem; but even then there can only be an approximation. It is only with jumping, and being annihilated, that the true depth and beauty and wonder of What Is can be seen and experienced and known.

For a moment there is a sense, an awareness that the jumper has indeed died, and in the instant of that death has understood what otherwise cannot be; but that too is a joke because there never was a jumper. No one jumped. In the waking dream as in the sleeping dream, jumping happened. The dancing happens. The dreaming happens. And the astonishing, breathtaking beauty is that All of This; dancing, dreaming, jumping, simply Is.