“Pure knowledge is not imparted by another: it comes unasked.
It is the one that is listening: it is your own true nature.”
- Nisargadatta Maharaj

“I show the truth to living beings - and then they are no longer living beings.”
- Tung-shan

People from all over the world come to the morning talks in this living room in Bombay, some of whom have been searching for years and have been with Zen masters, gurus, teachers of all kinds. They have heard of this teacher of 'pure Advaita,' and have come with perhaps some expectation, or at least a hope, of finally hearing what they need to hear, the real thing, the teaching which will unveil the Ultimate Understanding, the Final Truth, Self Realization, Total Awakening.
What they get is a little guy sitting in the corner going on *ad nauseam* about this idea of whether or not you are the 'doer' of what you think are your actions. Most of the people who show up don't stay long. After a few sessions they leave, to go home or go on to another teacher who will talk about 'more important' things. This idea of 'doership' is too mundane, too simple; seems so secondary, so irrelevant.

Of course, make no mistake, from the point of view of the total Understanding this teaching about whether you are the doer is in fact redundant; the question does not even arise. With the Understanding comes the natural and spontaneous apperception that there is no one here, no individual to either be the doer or not be the doer. So the question is moot. What you think of as yourself; the whole package of body, mind, personality, ego, sense of individuality, personal history; none of that even exists as such, as anything other than an idea, a story, a concept in Consciousness. The discussion of whether or not 'you' can be a doer or not is, as Wei Wu Wei writes, like discussing whether the bird in the empty cage is captive. The cage is empty! There is nobody home!

At the morning talks recently there has been a musician who plays traditional Indian flute for the group after the talks. The flute does not know music: it does not know 'G' from 'B flat;' it does not know tempo or emphasis, and cannot make music come out of itself: it's just a hollow bamboo stick with holes in it! It is the musician who has the knowledge and the skill and the intention and the dexterity, and whose breath blows through the instrument and whose fingers manipulate the openings so that beautiful music flows out. When the music is ended, no one congratulates the wooden stick on the music it made:
it is the musician who is applauded and thanked for this beautiful gift of music.

It is precisely so with what we think of as our 'selves.' We are instruments, hollow sticks, through which the Breath, the Spirit, the Energy which is Presence, All That Is, Consciousness, flows. Just as it is not the flute making the note, but the Musician making the note through the instrument, so it is the breath which is Presence which animates this mind and body and comes out through this mouth to make it seem that this mouth is speaking words.

The basic misunderstanding, the basic ignorance, is this unwitting usurpation of the role of Musician by the instrument. This inversion of the truth is spontaneously realized when the Understanding occurs. It becomes obvious that there is no individual, that there is 'nobody home,' no entity here to be the doer or not. Because awakening is simply the Understanding that there is no one here to awaken.

But: this Realization happens spontaneously when the Understanding occurs. From the point of view of the seeker, you can't get there from here. Because there is no 'you,' there is no question of 'getting,' and there is no 'there' to get. The intellectual comprehension that there can be no individual entities will not in any way help the average seeker because in his or her own daily life a deep belief in a personal self and personal 'doership' will remain. And with it the accompanying misery of pride and arrogance, shame and guilt, fear, hatred and malice, all of which arise from the belief that there is someone there to be doing anything.

All attempts to extricate oneself from the dilemma only strengthen the sense of individual self of the one apparently
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making the attempts. There is no way out of the predicament, the paradox, because the one who thinks he or she is in the paradoxical predicament is itself an hallucination, a mind-generated fantasy, the bird in the empty cage. For the rest of your life you can continue as you have done; you can go to talks and seminars and retreats given by the most enlightened masters, and hear wonderful things about Enlightenment and Total Realization and Sat Chit Ananda, and have immense spiritual experiences of great beauty, but when you open your eyes you will be back at the same questions, with the same longings, because there will still be ‘you.’

And so: Consciousness is stirring the pot with this insidious little teaching about ‘doership’ coming through this unassuming little Indian man sitting in a flat in Bombay. Yes, on the surface it perhaps seems insignificant compared to other things you may have heard. It may even seem hard to concentrate on it, when surely there must be more to “It” than this, surely there must be more to look for. And there is: this is not itself the center. But it is a way in to the center. And if you can let it in, performing the investigation that is suggested, and staying with it, and if there is an openness that allows this to take hold, then a truly amazing thing may indeed happen.

Because this teaching that appears to be relatively insignificant can be, small as it is, the little key which if allowed into the lock and allowed to turn, will swing open the vast gates. ‘I am not the doer of any action:’ the significance of this is not that it is any great or total realization in itself. The significance lies in where it will lead. If you really get this, really get that there is no one to get it, it will be like a line of computer code, which when introduced into the
computer will re-write the whole operating system. Will cause a cascade failure of all the systems that you think of as ‘yourself.’ Will set in motion the surrender and apprehension which otherwise can in no way be achieved by a ‘you,’ and which is the Complete Understanding of awakening: the knowing that there is no one here to understand or awaken or know. There is only the Peace that passes understanding, the breath of Presence blowing through this hollow stick.

And the music thus made, which appears as the everyday thoughts and words and actions of ‘you’ and ‘others’ is nothing other than Presence playing through these instruments, and truly is the ultimate gift, beyond beauty.