“There is a Presence that is unnameable which thought cannot touch. It is not your possession; it is what you are.”

- Adyashanti

“What we call ‘I’ is just a swinging door which moves when we inhale and when we exhale. It just moves; that is all... there is nothing: no ‘I’, no world, no mind or body; just a swinging door.”

- Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

Wherever you go in Bombay, there are the desperately poor and dirty, the beggars who reach up from the places on the street or in the gutter where they live and sleep, pulling on your pant leg, or the more able-bodied following you, asking, pleading for help, for a few rupees. Many hang out at the street intersections, and when traffic stops at a red light they approach your taxi, bare feet, torn
clothing, dirty hands extended in through the windows, pleading eyes.

One day, returning from the morning talk at Ramesh’s apartment, one such beggar more pathetic than most approached the open back window as the taxi came to a stop in traffic. I looked out to see an Indian man hardly four and a half feet tall; his eyes were on a level with mine where I sat in the tiny ancient Padmini. He had no arms, but from one shoulder grew a hand, which rested on the door of the car, palm upward, as his face pressed inward toward mine. His head and shoulders and face were deformed as well, hunched and misshapen. He showed the scars and filth and abuse of a life on the streets, and his mouth moved with a barely audible litany of pleading and supplication, well practiced from a lifetime, until his eyes caught mine and then he stopped, everything stopped, and there we stayed, our faces hardly two feet apart, eyes staring into each other’s.

There are such moments in which “nothing happens,” in which it is suddenly clear that what appears to be happening is not; and what is happening can only appear as no thing. The roles stopped; his begging routine stopped completely, and there was no move to give him a coin. Both forms went completely empty and still, and the boundaries evaporated.

It is difficult to describe the sense that is experienced in these moments. Whatever feeling might have been starting to arise stopped, and there was no pity, no anguish, no aversion, no awkwardness or discomfort, hardly even compassion. As I looked at him it was clear I was staring at myself, and clear that I was staring at God. The twisted
physical form of this beggar seemed so transparent, stretched so shimmeringly thin in the heat of the tropical city, and the Brilliance streaming through him and around him so visible, that it was impossible not to see him and the street scene behind him as dream forms and the light of the Brilliance as the obvious underlying reality unable to be hidden. In that moment there was a sense of intense neutral quietness: as our eyes stared into each other there was nothing to do, nothing to say, nothing to feel, nothing to think.

As the taxi pulled away, I turned to my friend sitting next to me, perhaps to express something of what happened or to ask what she had seen, but there were still no coherent thoughts and no words, and when we turned back to look there was no sign of the small misshapen human form anywhere.

A couple of days later at the morning talks I was asked, essentially, “What would happen to the Understanding if David were not so well off?” My thoughts immediately went to the armless beggar and the many others I have encountered living, sleeping, wandering in the streets of Bombay, and to the sense of intense stillness that occurs in those moments. I had not put it into thought or words; I had fumbled with it once or twice, as in the taxi that time when I had turned to my friend, but it had not articulated. Now came the realization that that question, that problem, only arises if there is identification as one of the body/mind organisms.

If there is identification as a body/mind, then the whole thought process arises: “Oh my god, ‘I’m so lucky, ‘I’m so well off, ‘I’m so comfortable, and this poor guy is in a
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bad way. 'I' feel bad, 'I' feel terrible, 'I' have to do something about this.” Or conversely, if the situation is reversed: “'I' have it hard, 'I' don't have what 'I' want or need, these other people have more than 'I' do, 'I' need to do something... or better yet, one or all of 'them' need to do something to help 'me.'” It's all driven by the 'I' sense of individual self and comparison with other apparent individual selves.

But when there is not identification as one of those apparent individuals, then simply all this is happening. In one body/mind is arising happiness. In another body/mind is happening poverty. In this one, anger; in this one, wealth and hatred; in another, disease and peace; in another, perfect health and complete boredom! Infinite combinations of attributes and experiencing in these billions of body/minds. One of these body/minds is this one. But it really doesn't matter.

Intellectually or emotionally, this can seem a difficult, tricky subject. “It really doesn't matter,” sounds about as politically incorrect as anything can. It seems an easy thing to say, sitting here in comfort. Would the same thought be occurring in this body/mind if it was one living on the streets of Bombay? And the only answer is that whatever thought occurs is the thought that arises in Consciousness in each body/mind in each moment. It simply cannot be approached either intellectually or emotionally; both of these are responses of the individual, and these boundaries do not exist except as illusory and temporary props. In the Understanding, the boundaries simply dissolve. Awakening has occurred in beggars and in kings. Many beggars and many kings remain unenlightened in the dream. It really doesn't matter.
This time on the way back to the hotel, the taxi driver wanted to practice his English. I wasn’t paying much attention, reading something I had been given, until at one point he had been quiet awhile and I looked up to see him watching me in the rear view mirror. Looking at me intently, he said distinctly, “I not taxi. I driv-ing,” with the emphasis on the participle “...ing.” An enunciation of pure non-duality worthy of a master, like something right out of Wei Wu Wei. Not the apparent entity that you think you see, but the functioning, the happening. Yes my friend, you are indeed.

“When your individuality is dissolved, you will not see individuals anywhere, it is just a functioning in Consciousness.

“If it clicks with you, it is very easy to understand. If it does not, it is most difficult. It is very profound and very simple, if understood right.

“What I am saying is not the general run of common spiritual knowledge.” (Nisargadatta Maharaj)