"The Heart is the only Reality.  
The mind is only a transient phase.  
To remain as one's Self  
is to enter the Heart."
- Ramana Maharshi

"Compassion is but another word for  
the refusal to suffer  
for imaginary reasons."
- Nisargadatta Maharaj

IN FRONT OF ME ON THE DESK, a rather unwieldy chunk of bronze,  
the theme of which you may or may not be familiar with.  
Known as a Natraj, or Dancing Shiva. What perhaps some  
of us knew during our folk/hippie days as the 'Lord of the  
Dance.' From the primordial Stillness, Shiva dances the world  
into existence, and all the world exists as long as there is the  
dancing. The world is the dancing, nothing more.
Of course all the details of the Natraj have intricate meaning in the Hindu myth: the number of flames, the number of cobras in Shiva's headdress, the image he's standing on, what he's holding in his hands, and so forth. This is an antique one, found in the depths of Chor Bazaar in Bombay; evidently broken and repaired several times, most recently my own brazing a flame back on.

Such is this life – intricate meanings, broken and repaired several times – the living of which is as rich and deep as a Kashmiri carpet, that other artifact I drag back from visits to India. This is what Tony Parsons means when he calls emotions the colors of life. Even the anguish, or the coming apart under stress, or the fear of the unknown, or the courage of moving into it anyway (or the thrill and wonder of being moved into it anyway.) When it is seen that this too shall pass, that this is part of the dance, that whether or why this happens in this body/mind organism rather than another or none at all is of no significance, then there is just running your fingers through it and actually enjoying, or at least appreciating, the texture, the depth, the indescribable beauty.

None of it taken delivery of, none of it owned, none of it judged. Just constant, total amazement. Day to day. Nothing need be any different from what it is. You do not need to change anything. No one need be any different than they are.

The difficulty with most systems of 'working on yourself,' therapy, self-help and analysis is that they become tools with which to judge ourselves and at the same time tools with which to prop ourselves up by justifying the judging of others. Forget all that. Just be yourSelf. It All just Is.
"Listen:
out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing
there is a field.
I will meet you there." (Rumi)

The ultimate unified field, beyond all concepts of dualism. Where 'I' and 'you' flow together. 'I' is not david. 'You' is not you. Neither is. And, I meet you there. Completely, with nothing lacking. Because the I Am that you are, is the I Am that I am.

The rest is just day to day, and there is no way to do anything wrong. The only thing we can know for sure is that it is right and wonderful and essential for exactly this to be happening, now. Beautiful and Perfect.

The human conditioning, emotions, feelings, thought patterns: all part of this world that has been pulled over our eyes to hide us from the truth. The effect is that we can never see clearly; only "as in a glass, darkly." Always fuzzy thinking, always missing the obvious.

All these forms come and go; all will soon pass. The frustration, the sadness, the wanting things to be different, they too arise in the Quiet Expanse of Accepting Awareness between the thoughts. They will never stop arising; there is no stopping them, and indeed no need to try. There is just watching. Accepting what is. It is the judging that makes us miserable:

"When the mind is in bondage, the truth is hidden, and everything is murky and unclear, and the burdensome practice of judging brings annoyance and weariness." (Seng-Ts'an)
In the jungle, the great quest to find 'my' purpose, my path, and above all the way I can help, falls to the ground and disintegrates, laughing. It is taking the dream to be real which creates the emphasis on finding a purpose or meaning; with the constant asking, "why?" or "how?" everything takes on importance. This seeming importance keeps us involved.

A preliminary, intellectual understanding of the Teaching would lead one to conclude that the best way to help is to be empty, to stop trying to be helpful; and the best way to be 'caring' is to stop caring and get out of the way. But it goes deeper than that: What is, is unfolding perfectly. There is no way to not be helpful; there is no way anyone can get in the way.

Attachments and expectations around love, as caring and romantic and fulfilling and satisfying of deep needs, are often more deeply held even than attachments to physical things. And so many spiritual traditions and teachers emphasize non-attachment to others as a spiritual practice, to the point of actively disrupting and negating loving relationships. But truly, the whole emphasis on getting rid of attachments turns out to be misplaced. It's the prescriptive/descriptive fallacy again. Once there is seeing the true nature of things as they are, all things are seen to be elements in the dream and therefore untrue, not necessary, unimportant; and they simply loose their 'hook.' Any attachment to them spontaneously evaporates.

But trying to eliminate attachments in order to bring about the seeing is of course back-asswards once again.
and doesn’t work. How many people do you know have ‘attained’ enlightenment, or even happiness for that matter, by doing violence to themselves in this manner, trying to cut out what is naturally there? Like everything, it simply is: and when it is natural for it not to be there, it isn’t. You can’t make this come about, even by making yourself lonely and miserable.

Emotional attachments and relationships in general, like all behavior, remain inscrutable as long as you’re still seeing it all as independently directed individual behavior. Whole sciences have been constructed around this. During and after two divorces and numerous relationships I spent many years working on the commonality in the situations, talking to friends and soul-searching, agonizing, trying to find where I was screwing up.

With the Understanding that all so-called ‘human behavior’ is Consciousness acting through these instruments and there is no independent doer of any action, the subject becomes moot; and the judgment that there is something not okay and needing to be changed subsides. Shiva, the Lord of the Dance, dances the dance of the Heart; and All of This simply Is.

There are no mistakes. It is not possible to make a mistake. You are not the doer of any action, the experiencer of any experience. How can you be the maker of any mistake?

What happens through these mind/body things, happens. If there is learning to happen, it will happen. Sometimes there is not. Sometimes change happens, sometimes it does not. Sometimes such change follows insight, sometimes it precedes it. The perceived chain of cause and effect and the
mandate to better ourselves are seen through as parts of the dream/game.

The source of suffering and unhappiness really is all this attachment, this hanging on to our cherished ideas even though they obviously don't work and have never given anyone lasting happiness. But you see, why would anyone do that? Because you have no choice, obviously. But of course none of it is obvious until the seeing happens.

There is no thing to attain, no where to go. There is only acceptance of what is, on the deepest possible level, and even that only happens if it happens. If one is not ready to hear this, it will not be heard no matter how well articulated. When one is ready to hear it, it can be said in passing by someone on the street and it will strike home. When there is a body/mind organism in which this is ready to happen, a certain word or phrase in a certain context can be, like in the Zen story, the "sound of the pebble against the earthenware pot" which causes the cascade failure of the mind and the occurrence of Realization... which is the only possible end to suffering.

III

THE SURRENDER INTO COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE of what is, as the perfect unfolding in Consciousness, is a primary characteristic of waking up; it can be found over and over in the writings, and all of the Teaching points to it. Acceptance is very deep, is infinite: and it starts here, in your own heart. Whatever arises is accepted. If resentment arises, there is acceptance that resentment is happening in this body/mind. If there then comes a layer of judgement,
that the resentment should not be happening, then the acceptance can go deeper, to accept that the judgement is happening.

If there is another layer, of feeling bad about yourself perhaps, or an unhappiness that you are the 'kind of person' in whom resentment arises, or feeling bitter or hopeless, or whatever; then that too can be included in the infinite acceptance. If there is an urge to be more mindful or attentive to the root causes of resentment, then there is acceptance that such a motivation is arising. There is no end to the acceptance. And then it extends outward, to events and situations and other people. Deep acceptance, at all levels, of whatever arises; even if it is not liked; even the not-liking itself.

Despite appearances, there is nothing happening here. Nothing that appears to happen matters at all, is of any importance. It is all perfect as it is. How do I know? Because it is what is; how then can it be other than perfect? This becomes obvious when it is seen, is probably incomprehensible and difficult to accept until it is seen.

Meanwhile, of course, there is simply being. Things happen in your life; good things, not so good things. There is watching this happen. Again, if emotions arise, then they too are arising in Consciousness, and there is watching them arise. If thoughts or judgements arise, then there is watching these also. Always knowing, this too shall pass. No assumptions need be made, nothing needs to be labeled or held on to.

Perhaps odd and inexplicable things happen in your life because they are a step toward where ‘you’ will be needed.
to be. This is what I call a ‘reverse engineering’ of cause and effect. From the point of view of Consciousness, as it were, the idea of cause and effect working ‘backwards,’ the effect causing the happening of the cause, is just as valid as the conventional model of cause followed by its effect.

Or, perhaps the mind/body unit you think of as ‘yourself’ is being used as a teacher for someone else, and what is happening has nothing to do with ‘your’ story at all. Or perhaps not, perhaps simply the letting go, the realization that any sense of control is illusory, is itself the ‘point.’ What do we know? The dream characters do not need to know; they will play out their parts in any case. Even this dream character whose part in the dream is to wake up in the dream and realize it is a dream character. So what? Who cares? Ask yourself, who is it that feels like it cares, feels like it wants to know?

IV

This sense of caring and importance runs very deep in the conditioning and is not easily seen through or set aside. Even seekers who are familiar with the concept that ‘none of this matters’ will be brought up short by this idea that even ‘awakening’ is part of the script for the dream character in which it occurs, and is of no significance. “Do you really mean to say that the total Understanding is only part of the dream?” Indeed yes, even the occurrence of this realization is an event in the dream, part of the unfolding of the dream, and nothing has happened.

How can anything that happens in the case of any dream character be of any significance? Stop! There's
nothing going on here; it's a dream! To the extent that the Understanding is happening in a dream character (a body/mind organism), it is an event in the dream, and so what? The idea that awakening or enlightenment matters is a seeker fiction. Matters to whom? Who is it that cares?

It has been said that if you want to know when you're getting close to the Understanding being total, to awakening, it's when the importance of awakening happening, in the body/mind you call yourself, fades. Of this awakening consists: the awareness that anything happening to this body/mind, whether it be awakening or death, or misery or luxury, is all happening in the dream to a "child of a barren woman," to use Maharaj's phrase; to a mythological creature, an idea, a fiction, some'one' who can't exist. None of it matters in the slightest. It looks important from the dream, but I confidently assure you it is not.

Now, sometimes, the phrase "The Understanding" is used obliquely to mean "That Which Is Understood". Now in that case, That Which Is Understood is precisely what is not of the dream, and pierces the dream at the no-time no-place instant of awakening. But the occurrence of the total Understanding in the case of any specific body/mind organism is, by definition, an occurrence which appears to happen, in the dream, to a dream character; and is as such a part of the unfolding of the dream.

Caring and a sense of importance attached to the whole issue of awakening finds its highest traditional expression in the bodhisattva vow. The bodhisattva concept is just so quintessentially and beautifully Buddhist; sacrificing your own enlightenment until all have 'attained.' The height of altruism, self sacrifice, and high mindedness, taking the
“greater love than this, no man hath” theme to the next level. Beautiful; can there be anything greater in human aspiration? Just absolutely sweet and gorgeous, and I hate to be one to break this, but it’s malarkey. Completely dream-bound thinking. Wonderful, tear-jerking, romantic drama, and completely irrelevant once the awakening occurs. The whole idea only arises in the dream, when there is taking ‘individuals’ seriously. If indeed the individual is the child of a barren woman (doesn’t exist and never did) then who is there to sacrifice, and who is there to sacrifice for? And of course it’s the same with the Christian concept of Jesus ‘dying for our sins.’ It’s all dramatic nonsense, what I tend to call ‘silliness’ or in Maharaj’s term, ‘great entertainment.’

This is a difficult point for many. The apparent indifference of the Understanding to these high-drama ‘important’ and ‘spiritual’ things in human life can be seen by normal and well-meaning folk as cold-hearted. It’s not; it’s so the opposite, so completely compassionate, but I don’t know of any sage who has been able to explain this adequately and bridge this gap. And it is a gap: from the human perspective, the bodhisattva represents the very highest virtue: from the Understanding, it’s irrelevant though somewhat endearing silliness.

Of course it’s all venerable ancient tradition, along with karma (whose karma?) and rebirth (no ‘one’ is born, let alone reborn). But tradition often doesn’t hold up in the simplicity of the Brilliance. East or West, thousands of years of tradition have a tendency to corrupt and fabricate. There is a well-meant tendency to teach comforting but dream-bound concepts to give folk some immediate relief. The distinction between these and the Understanding is sometimes subtle and oft lost.
In seminary, I studied enough Catholic theology and New Testament redaction to know that centuries of well-intended parsing of what the original visionary might have meant rarely comes close to the actual Understanding. It certainly seems, for example, that Jesus of Nazareth may very well have lived and taught and died without any of his sannyasins (at least not the ones who left the official written record) really getting what he was trying to express. What they passed on as Christianity has just about nothing at all to do with the Understanding which appears to have almost certainly occurred in Jesus' case.

"Disciples as numerous as grains of sand in the River Ganga, yet not one has come to enlightenment; they err in seeking it as a path taught by others." (Tung-shan)

East or West, generations of well-meaning monks can pretty well garble the message. I am no scholar of these things, of Advaita, Vedanta, Buddhism, or Sanskrit; and there is neither the ability nor the interest to argue the fine points which are so significant to scholars. It would appear that the job description here (at least at the moment) is to describe, within the context of the conditioning of this body/mind character, what the Understanding is, here. This may or may not necessarily correspond to what the scholars have worked out over the centuries.

In a way that is hard to enunciate, the Understanding, the Seeing, when it occurs, is extraordinarily simple, and in a very subtle way many things are immediately transparently clear. Which from the human, intellectual, or moral perspective can easily sound like unacceptable presumption; but to that objection there can only be a shrugging of shoulders here. It is what it is, and if it is
not acceptable, that’s cool too; after all, there really is no compelling reason for it to be accepted. As soon as there is fiddling around with concepts and modes of expression, the david thing, along with everybody else, is likely to be quite ‘wrong.’ But what is Understood is very simple. It is What Is. And there can only be pointing toward it from various angles, which pointing in this case, because of the conditioning, will very likely not be in classical form.

And in this completely simple Understanding there is a recognition, not by the mind, of those cases where this same Understanding – in its utter simplicity devoid of complication or embellishment or the interjection of what someone thinks should be right – has occurred. There may seem more affinity with some of these, but the recognition is the same, so that it is quite clear who understands and who does not; who truly saw and who was trying hard; who was faking it and who is clueless. And who is or was pure transparency in the awareness of nonexistence.

Whether alive today or come and gone, it makes little difference. There are those that say the only good Indian guru is a live Indian guru, that citing Maharaj or the Maharshi or the Zen Patriarchs is simply an appeal to characters dead long enough to be no longer controversial. And then there are others, the dead guru societies of seekers and even teachers, huddling forever around the site of a well gone dry and never recognizing the ever-present Perfect Outpouring standing quietly next to them, streaming within them.

Both miss the mark. Within the parameters of the dream, seekers and teachers do the best they can. But in the Understanding there is no birth or death, no coming
or going, and the occasions and forms where there was seeing are all and always I, clearly present, *per omnia saecula saeculorum*.

look within.
look within!
unimaginable, perfect beauty
in the still, silent heart.
the one perfect blazing radiant Jewel
All that is
what you Are! true Self –
look and see in the Brilliance.
nothing to do to know this:
do not think, and this is known.
when the mind is still
when the mind is not other than the heart
still, silent, radiant heart –
look within
don’t miss this!
don’t live a life not seeing, not knowing
this ultimate blinding beauty
look and be
do not think – look within – you will know
who you Are.