A PARABLE: WAKE UP!

"Mind and Maya are one.
Maya fuses with the mind.
The three worlds are plunged into delusions.
To whom can I explain this?"
- Kabir

I

As this book was being prepared for printing, some unusual news found its way to this small corner of the universe. The winter had been spent deeply immersed in caring for both of my aging parents, and sequestered at the computer working out a final manuscript, so I was a little out of the loop; and besides, even in this digital age of internet and email, the snow-covered hills of Vermont are not exactly at the center of the world of Advaita. So some months had passed before an old-fashioned telephone call brought news to this rural outpost.

What follows is a parable. Listen well.
Some months after my last visit with Ramesh, it seems that there was a somewhat similar situation, in which many seekers were exposed to their own Beloved Teacher's strange behavior and departure from the teaching of pure non-duality. At an international seminar held on India's west coast, this Beloved Teacher apparently exhibited erratic behavior and inconsistent teaching not unlike what I had observed in my teacher, months earlier.

According to most accounts, the 150 or so ardent spiritual seekers and long-time devotees in attendance were surprised at the uncharacteristically defensive and argumentative way in which the Teacher treated questions, often answering with mundane non-sequiturs and irrelevancies; his comments impugning the moral standing of his own guru as well as other masters; his clear departure from the pure non-dual teachings of the perennial wisdom; and assertions that only his teaching was correct and all others that had come before were false.

By all accounts the gathering erupted in confusion, recriminations, accusations, and general chaos. In the midst of this, something even stranger emerged. Allegations of sexual misconduct were made against the Beloved Teacher; allegations which he first denied outright, then admitted to and briefly apologized for, only to immediately dismiss as irrelevant and unimportant. Needless to say, devoted followers of the guru, “widely regarded as the world's greatest living sage,” were devastated.

Life is messy, isn’t it? Who the hell’s dream is this anyway? Things never quite work out the way they are ‘supposed’ to. You can just hear the disillusioned hopes and dreams and projections crumbling all around you. Flameouts
and meltdowns by famous and dearly loved gurus are not uncommon, of course. Occupational hazard, it would appear. The stresses set up, the expectations and projections on both sides, are immense, and inherently unstable.

Let me be clear: I do not know all the details of what happened. I do not know who else was involved or why, or what the explanations were. Frankly, I’m not interested. There is no interest in condemning the Teacher or excusing him; nor in condemning or excusing his accusers. From this perspective, there is no reason to defend him or to join the chorus of voices disparaging him. There is nothing at stake here, nothing happening. The drama of the dream unfolds. Who is it that cares what the dream characters are ‘doing?’

There is so much pain and confusion around such an ‘event’ that investigation is made difficult. The tendency in these circumstances is to project and exteriorize even more than usual, and this only exacerbates the pain and confusion. Moments such as these are moments of krisis, in the original meaning of the Greek word: a moment of decision, a turning point.

There is an opportunity here, if one can but see it through the storm. There is an opportunity to see all that arises here, the disappointment, the anguish, the recriminations, the blaming, the demands for explanations or for amends, as the outward projections they are; and an invitation to turn and look within, where can be found both the root causes and their dissolution.

On the part of the Beloved Teacher’s handlers and promoters, of course, anger is understandable: if you have committed yourself in good faith to marketing something,
only to find out that what you are promoting is not as repres-
ented, it would be natural enough to be pissed off and feel
betrayed or double-crossed. It's bad for business, damn it.

Somewhat more disheartening (though not surprising) is
the speed with which ravingly loyal devotees made for the
exit, hurling condemnations behind them. Illustrates the
truism that here in duality, love and hate have much in
common and are never far apart.

Otherwise rational but now terribly wounded devotees
(former devotees) almost instantly began deconstructing
their Beloved Teacher. 'All this calls into question whether he
was ever enlightened, ever had the ultimate Understanding.'
Really? Well, if he was never enlightened, what were you
doing sitting listening to him all those years, getting all
those deep spiritual insights? 'We were mistaken.' Well, if
you were mistaken then, could you be mistaken now? How
would you know? Do you have even the slightest idea what
it is that you are talking about? The ego is so alarmed at
having been caught with its own pants down (so to speak),
having sworn devotion and gone all gooey-eyed toward
the great guru who was supposed to make you one of the
chosen few but who turns out to be a dirty old man (oops!)
that it's backpedaling as fast as it can and making even
less sense than usual. Re-writing history is the oldest form
of spin control.

A sad shaking of the head; 'I could never call him bhagwan
now.' What, are you nuts? You are bhagwan; the UPS driver
is bhagwan; Bill Clinton and George Bush are bhagwan;
the marauding raccoons pillaging my garden are bhagwan.
Madonna, Britney Spears, and J.Lo's grandmother are
bhagwan, for god's sake. Orange soda, cheese twists, and
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Oreos are all bhagwan. How does one old geezer get an exemption?

Very well. If one were to conjure up a comment on the relative stature of this particular Beloved Teacher, I know of no one among the leading luminaries of Advaita (other than, understandably, those who were his own disciples) who would have maintained, even before this event, that he was ever of the uncompromising caliber of, for example, a Ramana Maharshi or a Nisargadatta Maharaj. The Beloved Teacher himself would not maintain any such thing, and never did. He is a classic adherent to the jnani tradition, an intelligent and adroit and relentless mind, who says that he considers himself lucky never to have had big spiritual or mystical experiences.

In the Maharshi there was not only such a mind, but a heart that had been completely exploded, incinerated, in the Love beyond love that is All. And when what is Understood by the mind is also known by heart, when the mind and the heart are no longer two, this inseeing in the heartmind is deeper even than Understanding. Look at their photographs; this is evident even there. The Beloved Teacher’s eyes are piercing, penetrating. Insistent. This is captivating, challenging, inspiring. Ramana’s eyes are infinity, Void, the total death of self in Love. This is unspeakable.

But awakened? Who can say? Who could say before this event, and who can say now? Before, there is a rush to acclaim him “undoubtedly the world’s leading Teacher alive today...” Who on earth is qualified to make such a judgement? After, there is a rush to call him phony. Look within: if you thought him awakened before, and have your doubts now, you must have the integrity to realize that apparently
events can prove you wrong, and you are in no position now, nor were you then, to be the judge. How deeply the Understanding of no-self permeates in the case of any body/mind is, to use the Beloved Teacher's own terminology, between that one and God.

What is the need to label anyone teacher? What is the need to label anyone fraud? Where is the expectation? Where is the disappointment? If you come to disagree with or dislike a guru, there can be staying or there can be leaving. Go somewhere else. Or not. What happens is what is in the flow of Consciousness to happen. The flow of Consciousness will take care of the guru, as it will take care of you. What is to blame?

Please see that this is not about that. Like everything in the manifestation, it is not as it appears.

II

WELL-MEANING FRIENDS SPEAK of this 'terrible scandal' and ask, what are we to do now?

Well, let's take it from the top. This has been said here many times, but here we are in the trenches; so, once more into the breach. All there is, is Presence, Awareness. This pure Presence, pure Awareness, All That Is, appears as all this world of people and things and ideas. There are no separate persons or entities of any kind, any where. All separation and distinction into separate individual persons or entities is part of the overall shared illusion under which that which thinks of itself as the human race labors. To whom can I explain this?
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You’re making this all up! Literally. It’s all projection of mind in Consciousness. Telling stories. The whole house of cards being constantly propped up and reinforced by telling itself stories of separation. Like this one. Can you see? Stop! Go back! Wake up!

Once this is understood, inseen, apperceived, every problem or issue which has ever been known or ever will be known goes away. Because all problems and issues are based on distinctions, on a belief in separation.

Granted, the Beloved Teacher does not talk the way Maharaj talked; always, uncompromisingly, from the single point of the Absolute. The Beloved Teacher often, and increasingly of late, says things that certainly sound very dualistic. Can it be maintained that, in the tradition of the ‘crazy wisdom’ of gurus, all of these are said intentionally, to steer seekers away from the trap of big dramatic thinking and back into their own hearts until they are ready to see it for themselves? Or is there perhaps some ‘slippage’ in the Beloved Teacher body/mind? Is this ‘slippage’ purely a matter of ego and lack of understanding, or is there a biological, physiological component, involving his advanced age? As long as it is viewed from the point of view of the dream characters who take themselves – and any teacher, Beloved or otherwise – as individuals, one way or another there will seem to be a problem.

But you see, so what? Here’s the point. All of this is Presence, all this is happening in that Presence, that Consciousness, through apparent body/mind organisms: and once there is not identification as one of these organisms, as this body/mind, then what happens in any one of these organisms is simply not significant. When you are disturbed by the Beloved Teacher, you are not seeing that
you are the Beloved Teacher; or more accurately: what you are, the Beloved Teacher is.

It is inevitable that the whole variety and array of possible events and behaviors and thoughts and lives will happen: even though, as is also inevitable, there will be parts of this variety that you do not ‘like.’ It is only ignorance, often quite self-righteous ignorance, which judges the infinite variety and finds some ‘appropriate’ and some not.

It is all the perfect unfolding of totality in Consciousness. The so-called sage knows this, and knows that the body and mind which others would call ‘him’ or ‘her’ is included in this understanding.

This is nowhere near politically correct, but can you see that directing anger and venom and outrage at some ‘one’ who you erroneously see as separate from yourself, and set up as someone special on a pedestal, and who you then hold to a particular set of arbitrarily constructed rules which prevail in a particular culture at a particular time, only to then have them dis-illusion you... is absurd?

Scenario one. When the complete disidentification as a separate self – as an individual entity – occurs, all there is is awareness, no one aware. There may be witnessing a different approach to the teaching, for whatever ‘reasons,’ taking shape in the mind. There may be witnessing ‘inappropriate’ actions happening. There may or may not be witnessing some thought that these things may at some time have repercussions. There might be witnessing the general furor and reaction in the ‘other’ apparent body/minds when these things become known. Perhaps there is witnessing an attempt to minimize the chaos by trying to explain
the insight that none of this is, that none of this matters; or perhaps there is simply witnessing this impersonal witnessing itself being interpreted as 'denial,' 'insensitivity,' or 'cover-up.' None of it matters: it is all the perfect unfolding. This stuff happens all the time; why should it matter more if it is happening in 'this' body/mind rather than in another?

Scenario two. What would bring a respected spiritual teacher to repudiate the spiritual teaching for which he was respected? To contradict in his own name the received teaching of which he was custodian? If, perhaps, such a teacher's own awakening had consisted of an experience and an awareness somewhat less than the total annihilation of self. If, hypothetically, the total disidentification as a separate entity, which all the masters including his own guru spoke of, did not actually occur in his case. And if, nevertheless, his teacher had clearly said things to him that he had at least interpreted as saying that awakening had occurred. As life progressed, the ongoing experience of existing as a separate self would continue – despite the awakening having been said to have occurred. Would this not set up a certain amount of stress in the body/mind system? On the one hand there is the received teaching of the perennial wisdom that this awakening consists of the annihilation of any sense of a separate self. And at first there is passing this teaching on. But at the same time, there is a continued experience of actually living as a separate self. In good faith and with the best intentions, would not the received explanation of what awakening is, need to undergo interpretation and modification?

Scenario three. What would it be like, even for a sage, to have an unstable student hear you say, "you are not this body:
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you are the All,” and have them finally lose their moorings and tip over the edge into psychotic megalomania? Would it, perhaps, lead you to tone down the teaching, to say and do things to actively steer these high-strung seekers away from this crazy-making stuff, trusting in Consciousness that those who will, will find it nonetheless?

Scenario four. In any case, what part would advancing age and its effects on mind and body have in all of this?

Or, scenario five. Maybe the guy’s a schmuck, a complete fraud from start to finish.

Think about it. Would you know? How would you know? Is it important to know? Who is it that thinks it’s important to know?

Ah, now, finally, we’re getting somewhere. Our old friend, that sense of being a separate self, the so-called ego, that propped-up hallucination, needs to continue to prop itself up.

It’s all done with mirrors. You gotta realize, if there are issues about an ego out there, there are issues about an ego in here. Regardless of whether or not you are ‘right’ about the ego out there.

What do you say we let Beloved Teachers everywhere worry about Beloved Teachers? What is going on in the body/mind organism of this one? Is there remorse, regret? Is there arrogance, anger? Is there peace, bemusement? How can you know? What is happening is happening, what will happen will happen. If it is in the unfolding of totality for him to self-destruct, that will happen. If he is to emerge
from this unscathed as a great teacher, that will happen. If he is to somehow muddle along more or less as before, events will bring that about. It's all taken care of.

“Secret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the divine justice. It is impossible to tilt the beam... Settles forevermore the ponderous equator to its line, and man and mote, and star and sun, must range to it, or be pulverized by the recoil.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

The Beloved Teacher has not 'done' anything to anyone. If there is making some'one' into a god and then it becomes evident that Consciousness streams here through 'flawed' instruments, well, there it is. Big surprise. Welcome to your own projections. The projections by which that false sense of self can continue to believe in itself.

III

THE ISSUE OF SEXUAL MISBEHAVIOR is highly charged. Many may feel that this is most important, but from this perspective that assumption must be investigated.

I was recently reading that Mahatma Gandhi in his latter years was known to regularly sleep with his barely pubescent early-teenage nieces. Wow. The culture we live in would have some labels for that, no? Remember Nisargadatta Maharaj's answer to the question of whether the sage will always exhibit exemplary behavior? What are you talking about? Exemplary according to whom, according to what standard? (And can such sayings be used to justify irresponsible behavior? Sure, the devil can cite scripture for his purpose, and even "God is love" can be so misused; does that make it less true?)
Cultural moral norms vary widely according to time and place. This is hard for most to accept: we've all been trained (brow-beaten, really) to absolutize the current norms as 'natural,' 'God-given,' or 'self-evident,' when in fact they are totally relative. There may be room for tolerance on some kinds of behavior, but not on that... whatever that happens to be for you. This is not even open for discussion, either in society at large or among spiritual seekers, and the penalties for disagreeing are the most severe a society can mete out.

Meanwhile, my friends the Shuar in the Amazon jungle have a highly sophisticated society, in many ways more enlightened than our own, which has functioned smoothly, joyfully, respectfully, healthily, for literally thousands of years; and it has done so on a set of sexual norms and mores and practices which would land any and all of them in a federal penitentiary, and have them all branded as perverts and listed on the internet as sex offenders, if the good people of the United States of America had anything to say about it. What are you talking about? According to whom?

At the risk of bringing down the great wrath of the politically and psychologically and spiritually correct crowd, let me say this to the women who were involved (who have stated that their involvement was willing and not in any way coerced by the Beloved Teacher) and to all those who may identify in some way with them; and also to those who were or are involved with the Beloved Teacher in a guru-devotee relationship and who are disturbed by these events. I do not know who you are, and this is not meant to offend; it is meant in thoughtfulness and compassion.

When the request, or the suggestion, was first made, why didn't you hightail it back to Sedona (or Chelsea, or
Munich...)? Or, simply walk out, go somewhere else, find another guru? Wouldn’t it be fairly clear at that point, from your perspective as an identified body/mind ‘person,’ that something was amiss? If you don’t feel it is appropriate now, how could it have been appropriate then? Stop! Investigate into this. If all this is so exploitative and manipulative and sordid, what are you doing in the middle of it?

Instead of looking outwards, look within. That need for specialness is strong, is it not?

Yes of course, the guru-disciple relationship is an unequal one, and the guru carries great responsibility. Let the guru own his part. You get to look at your part. Even if your part is one tenth his part, if you focus on his part and avoid looking intently at your own you will be forever crippled, the more so because you will always find many who will agree with you and support you in your woundedness. You can use that support to be right, to be forever a victim of a Beloved Teacher gone bad, and in so doing strengthen your identity and your sense of individual self; or, you can move toward discarding all of it and realizing who You Are. What an amazing, once in a lifetime invitation and opportunity to awaken!

So it seems you’ve helped to publicly discredit an old man (who, if truth be told, was doing a pretty good job of that himself, even without your help) and shame yourselves. What are you going to do now?

May I make a suggestion? And I offer this both to those whose main concern is with the inappropriate sexual behavior of a teacher in such a position, and to those who are more disturbed by the corruption of the Teaching. And of course you can consider this as optional. It’s not up to you anyway.
Go back. Back up. Whatever place you have come to in this, whether you blame someone else or blame yourself, whether you feel vindicated or feel used, disappointed or betrayed; back up. All of this is only facade. *It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.* You think this is real, as real as it gets; you, this life, these events. In truth all this, all that you feel is real and important, is only story, is only conditioned belief in the mind. Back up, to what is prior to this.

Go back. In this day and age, somebody tells you there is an enlightened master in India, and you can buy an air ticket and in a few hours be sitting on the carpet in front of him. The American Dream Machine has led you to believe you can short-cut a thousand lifetimes and just show up as close as you can to what you've heard is the top.

By Indian guru standards, this Beloved Teacher is very westernized and very gentle and does not talk in radical terms at all. This makes him very Beloved, but tends to disguise the simple fact that most who have shown up at his house were in way over their heads. I really don't want to hurt anyone's feelings here, but basically you've been to some seminars (maybe twenty years of seminars) with some lower-tier New Age wingdings in Santa Barbara, or on the London or Amsterdam *satsang* scene, done some meditation retreats, visited some ashrams and had some initiations, and now you figure you're ready for the big time. But it's *all dreamstuff.*

Ramana Maharshi quite likely would have simply ignored you and your questions, as he did many. Nisargadatta Maharaj would have unceremoniously thrown you out on your ear. The Beloved Teacher smiles and talks about
feeling comfortable and peaceful in everyday living, and you feel great, and you go have *chaï* with the other seekers and talk about it, and it's all very rewarding and you feel you're really getting somewhere.

It doesn't make any difference: it is all projection, and none of this drama would have happened were you not completely and literally full of yourself.

Suddenly everybody has theories about whether Beloved Teacher is in over his head. That's Beloved Teacher's problem. Let him worry about that. Everybody is arguing that gurus should follow the behavioral norms of the culture they are in, even if for them it's all relative and unimportant. That's not your problem! Let the gurus worry about their problems. Find out what your problem is and work with that.

Everyone who is concerned about these events has been given a gratuitous whack upside the head and you're wasting it speculating about the Beloved Teacher! The Beloved Teacher is completely irrelevant! Your problem is that you're taking the dream that *you* are projecting as real, as something outside. Stop. Go back.

This will not be fun, will not be thrilling, will not feel good or stroke your identity as an advanced spiritual seeker, the way going to India and sitting with a Beloved Teacher did. Do the work you need to do, find the help you need to find. What form this will take is not up to you. Nothing is. It will happen. If there is openness, if there is consent. If there is surrender.

Instead of looking outwards, look within. Whatever is not present in deep sleep does not exist. Gurus and teachings
and various behaviors are not there in deep sleep. Nor are satsangs and seminars and books like this. What are you doing? Invite silence, stillness. Don’t waste your time doing anything other than being silent, being still within. Anything which is your ‘self’ is illusion, not true, does not matter. And it is this that you project outward, onto the blank screen without. Anything which is ‘out there’ is illusion, not true, does not matter. Let yourself be emptied of these. Let there be emptiness. Let yourself be ripped open, hollowed out, gutted.

Be aware that what form this will take is not up to you, and that it may take ‘time.’ It may take a lifetime, may take more than a lifetime. It doesn’t matter. Let yourself be brought to a place where it doesn’t matter. In stillness, find yourself asking the dangerous question, the question that the ego does not want you to think of, the question that will end your life. Let yourself be brought to a place where it is no longer necessary to find some ‘one’ to blame, either yourself or another. Where that need for specialness no longer destroys you. Where it is no longer necessary, or possible, to turn away from yourSelf and look outside of yourSelf to label what is ‘wrong’ or ‘right.’ Where it is not possible to look outside yourSelf to see What Is.

Looking outside continues the dream. Only looking within, relentlessly deep within, past and prior to the superfluous levels – intellect and reason and emotion and feeling and psyche and subconscious – to What You Are; only this can lead to the awakening which itself has nothing to do with either without or within.

Wake up!

This book and much more is available free at www.PerfectBrilliantStillness.org