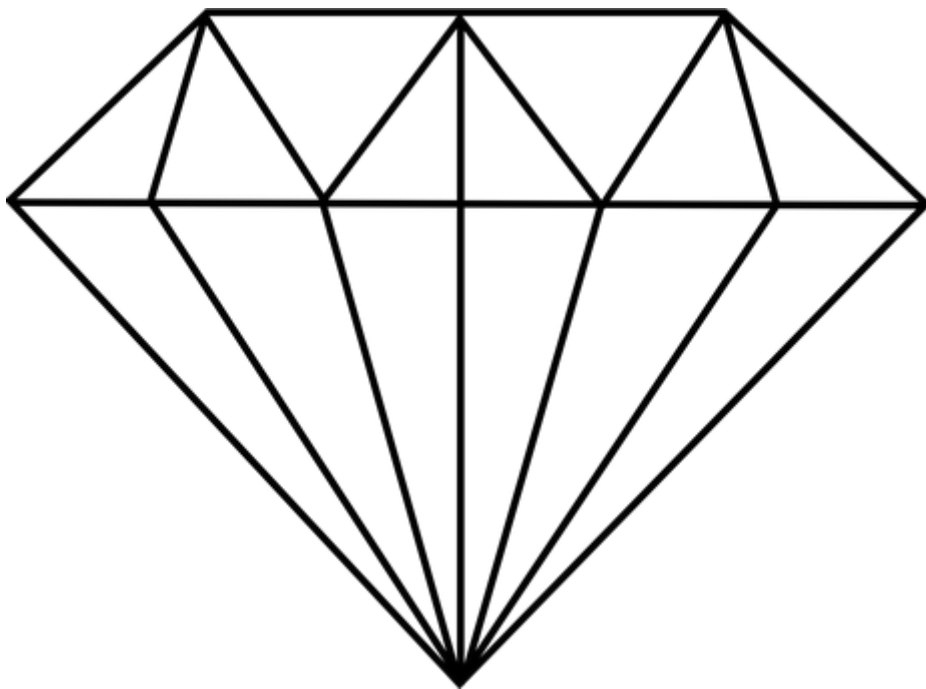


The Ultimate Quest

the diamond path of integrative consciousness



Carlo De Paoli

final edition 2

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Welcome

Welcome to this book! Probably you are here because you are a spiritual seeker or at least someone interested in self-understanding and curious about life, the cosmos and our relationship to it. As I am typing these words I am 70 years old as per November 2020 . In January 1968 Munindra, a respected Burmese monk living in Bodhgaya, initiated me into Buddhist mindfulness meditation. For those of you who are not familiar with the location of Bodhgaya it is the place where the Buddha became enlightened, it is located in the state of Bihar, India. I remained in India for nearly seven years mostly in the company of followers of the monistic philosophy of Advaita, also known as Vedanta and we will talk more about it later in the book.

From my initiation in Bodhgaya I walked for fifty years on the path of self-exploration to understand myself and life. The main aim has been to release my unnecessary psychological contractions and illusions in order to appreciate a life lived in inner harmony and peace. An inner harmony and peace that is not a state of passivity and denial but a state which is brimming with curiosity, exploration and vitality. This path also travels through the many vicissitudes of life which are a great teacher on how to deal with difficulties and pain, both physical and psychological, and they teach how to accept reality and learn from it.

On the path I studied many aspects of both conventional and natural medicine, psychotherapy and many spiritual schools and their meditation approaches. Now at 69 realising the transient nature of life I am writing this book with one purpose alone which is to share some of my experiences with others on the path in the hope that they might find some inspiration from it. **My invitation is to take from this book what resonates with you and leave behind what doesn't, we are unique individuals and universes of our own, we cannot always agree with everything the other person says.**

Some people are sticklers for grammar and syntax and they judge writings according to it. I am Italian and I am bound to make some errors. This book is free so I cannot afford to pay an editor to combe through it in search of grammatical errors. However I trust that the majority of you are more interested in substance than style and will enjoy and derive some benefit from what I am trying to communicate to you.

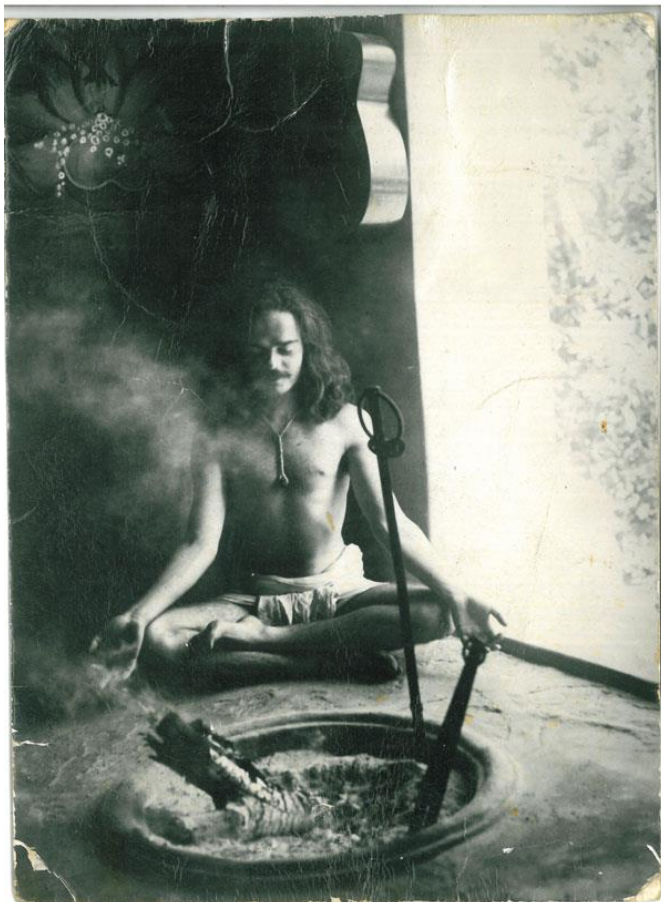
What my long search has led me to discover is that beyond beliefs and doctrines there is a reality that we all share. Its essence is simplicity in complexity, peace in the midst of turmoil, love in the midst of conflict and an emptiness brimming with life and all possibilities.

Together we will explore quantum cosmology, Indian Vedanta, Buddhism, early Christianity,

psychoanalysis and more and we will realize how the light of our true nature shines through them. What I will attempt to communicate is not just based on book reading and intellectual discourse but most importantly on life experiences, troubles and tribulations and decades of meditation practises with many spiritually advanced teachers, some even living in remote areas of the Himalayas.

Most importantly I will share with you my experience in the most simple but direct ways to release our contractions and emotional impediments. I will also take in consideration that everyone has a different background and ideology and the path of liberation needs to respect that and offer the best process that suits a particular individual. One of the main points we will be examining and exploring is that the ultimate reality could not care less for your beliefs and doctrines, that which is peaceful, harmonious and creative is with you whenever you take a step towards peace, harmony and creativity, no matter where you are coming from. I will repeat this statement in italics as it is a very important foundation of this book:

One of the main points we will be examining and exploring is that the ultimate reality could not care less for your beliefs and doctrines, that which is peaceful, harmonious and creative is with you whenever you take a step towards peace, harmony and creativity, no matter where you coming from.



The author in 1971, India

You can visit my website to download this ebook and watch hundreds of videos on spirituality, bodywork, osteopathy, Chinese medicine and more.

<https://newspiritualhumanism.wordpress.com>

my natural therapy youtube channel is:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5cc4VGhIZiUecGF04edWgQ>

my spiritual talks youtube channel is:

https://www.youtube.com/c/HealingNature/videos?view_as=subscriber

In the next chapter I will narrate the spiritual awakening of Kaju a troubled and frustrated man in the countryside of India. I will use his story to illustrate what I mean by spiritual awakening which in my view is not a particular experience or concept like 'everything is consciousness' or 'nothingness' neither is a kundalini experience or a state of absolute non-desire. Rather it is the realisation of our separation from our true self and the world. This separation thrives in a mind and heart filled with resentment, blame and frustration and the hurt that we inflict to those around us particularly the innocent and vulnerable. The realization and release of this barrier fills us with loving kindness and peace. We will examine this subject in detail later on.



Kaju's Journey

This was my second visit to Kaju as I had decided to stop by and spend a couple of days with him whenever I went to Bodhgaya. After dinner we sat on the porch, the air was warm and filled with the fragrance of the flowers that Ditti was cultivating around the hut.

‘Today I will narrate to you an experience I had shortly after the episode of awakening I had whilst ploughing the land with Nandi. There is no need for you to take it literally as it could be just a beautiful and inspiring dream. You could see it as an allegory of what happens to our lives and ourselves when we live in a state of hostility and resentment and what happens when we free ourselves from this restriction’ In anticipation I leaned against the wall to make myself comfortable and said: ‘Please tell, I am all ears’

Kaju proceeded: ‘ One night I sat in the porch just before going to bed, I laid on my back to admire the stars and I just fell asleep although I had only planned to stay there for a few minutes. I suddenly had the feeling that I was traveling through the stars and galaxies further and further away, I felt incredibly elated and free. Suddenly I reached what felt like the edge of the universe but a tremendous curiosity kept me going, I wanted to know what lay beyond the horizon so I kept going. I reached a bright and majestic gate, a portal into another dimension. I crossed it and I entered what definitely looked like another world. Everything was lighter and easier to navigate through; matter was packed in a less heavy and compact manner. People in that dimension lived longer and with less diseases. And why was that? Because they had less emotions and thoughts of hostility, anger, greed and jealousy’

Kaju continued: ‘I also reached the edge of that dimension and I moved on through another portal into a further world. In the process of ascension I realised that the more I travelled the less impacted matter became, everything felt lighter and more and more blissful, beings inhabiting those dimensions could travel faster and unimpeded and communicate with their thoughts without misunderstandings. The gradual disappearance of hatred caused their souls to experience life in a much freer and harmonious way’

‘Then the final frontier approached. All these dimensions disappeared and I was in the presence of a magnificent light, the Beloved, so powerful yet so gentle, warming, benign and comforting like a loving caress. I recognised that it was this presence that blessed me when I dropped the leather strap, realised my cruelty and wept in remorse. This light was my true essence and what I learned was that whenever we hurt another being who meant us no harm we only hurt ourselves and we condemn ourselves to reside in a painful dimension. But falling in a compact and hurtful dimension was not just a punishment but also a chance to realise our ignorance and transcend again to a kinder and more considerate plane of existence’.

Kaju's eyes had a deep, serene and joyful light in them. He continued: 'I stayed in this presence for quite sometimes. There was so much to learn, so many chapters to close. I relieved my present life and the anger and hurt that chained me to ignorance and suffering and I also saw so many other lives and the thread that lead me to more and more painful dimensions. Finally my story was over and I felt truly back home. I embraced the light with all my heart and melted myself unto it. I was back home and there was nowhere else to go, my joy was complete and nothing else could substitute this embrace as it was all fulfilling'.

'I felt myself inhaling and exhaling the deepest and longest breath of my life yet it was also a very gentle and relaxed breath and this was accompanied by a sensation like if I was lying back covered by a comforting and warm duvet on a very comfortable bed. The last and final step of my journey then occurred. **All having being seen and the most complete form of fulfilment achieved, this light of love and I in it merged back unto its source, the Absolute, absolute rest, absolute peace. Like a drop which had temporarily jumped out of the ocean now returns to its source and merges with it. No 'I' or 'you' no 'mine' or 'yours' no 'high' or 'low', just existence, just pure peace without limits, no time or space limitations, empty of divisions and concepts yet filled with love and joy. Restful and joyous silence after the most joyous and melodious harmony had been played'.**

The journey back

'After a spell I felt like I was returning to my individual self, the light of love warming my face and gladdening my heart, this time I was happy to be of the world because in the midst of pain and change I knew that I was always going to remember my nature. So the reverse process of returning to my plane of existence begun. I immersed myself again in love's presence. After a while some vibrations occurred in it, something stirred and the first plane of existence begun. The beings inhabiting it knew their essence, absolute peace and love and their bliss knew no bounds.'

'And why many of these souls fell from this paradise? Because in the joy and excitement they started to forget one important thing: They begun to forget that their essence was infinite and timeless and started accusing each other of stealing the life force from them. Accusations, resentment, a need for vengeance and a lot more destructive feelings emerged from this forgetfulness. Feeling a sense of lack greed emerged, the need for wanting more, the need to outshine each other, to be better, to be more beautiful. They believed that in order to feel happy they had to create somebody else's unhappiness, they also started to believe that to feel beautiful they had to make someone else feel ugly and so forth. Of course there is nothing wrong with wanting to better oneself but what I mean by greed is the desire to take something away from others just to feel superior, to possess in order to feel important, to want and want more to fill a void born out of ignorance of our true nature'.

Kaju continued: 'I gradually moved from dimension to dimension following the trend and transformation from a divine like state to a demonic like state with a mind living in worlds filled with suffering and ignorance'. Nobody put us on this earth with so much suffering, we put ourselves in it

The Gods that keep us in bondage

'Shanti Dev, Kaju continued with a deeper and slightly more emotionally charged voice, what came next shook me in a terribly deep manner. My journey did not stop on my return to our universe but I travelled to even more contracted and painful universes and what I saw shook me beyond anything else I had experienced before'. I noticed a tear in Kaju's face slowly running down his cheek. 'As expected in those painful dimensions I saw criminals of all sorts suffering and atoning for the pain they caused. I could see that they would need to spend countless rebirths in those hells before they could gain a chance to start the journey back home, to the light, to love and eternal repose'.

Kaju posed for a few seconds and then looked into my eyes deeply: 'What really astonished me deeply, cause I was definitely not expecting it, was the vision of so many dimension populated by so called religious people of all sorts. Let me explain this first, Shanti Dev, visualise frogs in a pond, sometimes they jump out of the water trying to reach solid land, instead often they fall back into even deeper waters. Returning to us, humans, we do the same. We live in a world filled with anger where we can feel like we are trapped in a nightmare. We then as an escape start building all kinds of stories about a creator or creators of this universe which rules over our lives. In reality this creator or creators are only a projection of our worse fears and sentiments. We paint them as full of needs and full of rage if we do not fulfil their needs. We see them as kind to their followers when they pledge total obedience but they are vengeful and cruel if humans maintain any independence of thought.

We pin all our hopes on this fearful worship and its promise of a heavenly abode free of pain and full of pleasures but in reality we are only strengthening our enslavement to this world created by our pain and delusion.

'Kaju, it seems, though, that there is a way out of this prison' Kaju answered emphatically: 'Yes, Shanti Dev, there is, and it is a beautiful path, it is gentle and kind, hidden in our hearts, it resides in silence yet it can whisper the most melodious tune, a lullaby that cradles us to sleep, to repose and is the final resting place for our soul. From this repose we emerge reinvigorated and full of light and love. You follow it by seeing what separates you from your true nature and by realizing the clouds of rage, resentment, hostility, jealousy, greed and so on that enshroud our hearts and mind. You follow it by releasing the worship of petty, angry and jealous beliefs. In my experience the process of releasing our ignorance and discovering the peace in us is not the property of any ideology, the sky does not belong to anyone and if

anyone claims to own it he is a fool. Anyhow during this visit and the next ones we will explore the path in more detail' '

Kaju then completed his narration 'I must have woken up from this journey just before sunrise, there was still a light moisture resting on plants and caressing the air with a fresh and invigorating feeling. I walked to the fields near the house and suddenly this force exploded within me, right from the belly up to my head and beyond: Raising my arms above my head I looked up towards the sky and a roaring sound exploded from my belly deep and strong like thunder' Kaju now had a large and happy smile on his face, his eyes were glittering: 'I shouted at the top of my voice: 'I am free, I am free, forever free! I will love because I am love' 'At the same time I started dancing but it wasn't me doing the dance, it was just happening and it was fantastic, I cried and laughed, the illusion and the fear were over'

'Suddenly I was awakened from this trance by Ditti's voice: Kaju, are you ok? What is happening? I replied reassuringly: 'Never felt better, don't worry dear, I am just having a little celebration, let us have a cup of tea'

Again when Kaju finished narrating his story he added: 'As I said at the beginning there is no need to take my vision as literal, it could also be seen as an allegory for how we become trapped into destructive states of mind and how we can find our way out of it.

This was my second visit to Kaju and as I visited Bodhgaya from time to time I made a resolution that I would stop on the way to visit Kaju and spend a few days with him. There was so much I wanted to talk to him about. I found Kaju a very friendly and soft person yet a little shy and definitely with no agenda to convince and convert anyone. Our relation lasted for quite a few years and I noticed that with the help of Prya he was able to become literate to a very good level. He gradually incorporated some aspects of various religions and philosophies into his talks only with the aim to make his words and concepts more clear.

What do I mean by that?

Before we launch in the next chapters I like to make clear what I mean by certain words and expressions because concepts like love, meditation, enlightenment can mean many different things to different people.

Love, unconditional love, spiritual love

Most people when they use the term love they can only relate it to various forms of attachment, desire, possession and romanticism. I love a certain thing because it makes me feel good therefore it is gratifying. The moment that thing does not fulfil my desire I lose interest in it or I even end up hating it. I love my girlfriend but if she falls in love with another man I end up hating her. I am not saying that we should not have this form of love however I am just pointing out how transient it can be.

I love another adherent of my religion because we share the same faith but the day he or she changes his or her belief system I become infuriated and I disown this friend sometimes even desiring to cause harm to the very person that some minutes ago I professed to love.

Then there is a higher form of love and is the love of family like the mother towards her children, this also includes brother and sister, husband and wife and so forth. I strongly believe that we should honour this form of love, like looking after our family and being dependable and trustworthy. This is a beautiful form of love yet it has a small limitation in the sense that it is still conditioned by the evolutionary need for self-preservation i.e. I look after my own, I love my own, my family, my nation because they nurture and protect me. Also the happiness that this love gives can turn into suffering if someone we love dies, falls ill or desires to leave us. Therefore I can say that although this form of love is noble and worth respecting it also has some limitations.

Now we are going to look into unconditional love and before I tell you what I mean by that I want to tell you what I do not mean. I do not mean that unconditional love is just giving and giving without ever expecting anything as this could leave you vulnerable to people who like to exploit others. If someone steals from my home and takes very important items for my survival I will report him to the police if he refuses to return them. If someone slaps me I might turn the other cheek once but if he slaps me again I will probably slap him back. If I do a favour to someone again and again but if when I ask him to do me a small favour he refuses then I will definitely think twice before assisting him again. It is noble and rewarding to help others but do not forget to look after yourself too.

So what do I mean by unconditional? You might be sitting quietly or having a walk, not desiring anything in particular. Suddenly a sense of peace and tender loving descend on you almost taking over your whole being. This descent is not conditioned by anything in particular. I do not suddenly feel blessed with a complete sense of fulfilment and love

because I have seen a pretty face or because I have received a material present or have been praised by someone. It is a gift and it is 'unconditional' because it is not tied to a particular event so it is not conditioned by anything external.

Unconditional love and peace can be the sudden arising of a fulfilling state of heart and mind due to a steady cultivation of loving kindness and the gradual release of our hate and resentment. The seeds grow during the winter but we do not see it; for months the earth seems barren but suddenly when the spring arrives we marvel at the beautiful flowers and abundance of grains.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his field. Although it is the smallest of all seeds, yet it grows into the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."...

Unconditional love and peace might suddenly arrive with a welcome jolt, then it can depart however a subtle presence always remains and, with time, if nurtured it can again and again visit us and soothes us gradually becoming almost constant. I do not particularly desire to be in one particular state all the time, I love the variety of life and I celebrate my moments of sadness and excitement in their many forms but I know that the love is always there, sometimes just snoozing and resting but always ready to wake up and be my side.

I need to clarify that I am not talking about the receiving of unconditional love as an aggressive descent of an holy ghost where people fall on the floor shaking and screaming and then wake up from this experience and start cursing the 'non believers' with eternal hell. I am describing a gentle and mostly silent experience born out of mindfulness of thought and action and a kind gaze upon the world. We will speak about this in more detail later in the book.

Enlightenment, Liberation

If we are interested in spirituality and philosophy we read and hear these words a lot and we might embark on a journey to become enlightened. Besides the traditional paths that advocate reaching a particular state of awareness and detachment we can hear and meet many people who declare and assert that they have attained the ultimate state of being. Some assert that to become enlightened is to realise that everything is consciousness, others teach enlightenment as a particular form of Kundalini awakening that allow us to reach the highest chakra and so forth. There are countless narrations of this event.

Thousands of people flock to these lectures and teachers sometimes spending large sums of money. Their desire is to reach a permanent state of mind which is unchangeable and forever blissful. Many can also become frustrated and feel dejected if their desire is not fulfilled.

Why do you want something someone else has? How do you know that this is the ultimate goal of your life? Is it because they told you so and they look ever so happy and radiant? Maybe they are right, there is an ultimate state of being and I am too ignorant to realise it however I like to share with you my experience and conclusions.

In my travels I have met and even lived close to many 'enlightened teachers', in some instances I have also travelled with them and preached their spiritual approach. However ,although reluctantly, I had to gradually acknowledge the presence of a discomforting reality. Over a period of time I noticed striking flaws in their personality particularly in the emotional area and this realization was very difficult to accept for me. I found them quite insensitive to other people's emotions and needs alongside an attitude of superiority due to the incapacity to acknowledge that sometimes they could be wrong and needed to apologize and correct their behaviour.

After many years, particularly after psychological studies and reflection, the realization dawned on me that the identification with being an enlightened being creates an ego that can be far worse than our normal daily ego. The belief that these teachers and Gurus have completely eliminated their ego and hence their vision of reality was based on an objective and pure perception can create a 'super ego' that we can also call a 'spiritual ego'. The adulation and obedience of their disciples can also contribute to this state of affairs. This stance is reinforced by the fact that they live in a state of bliss and have many visions of light. The reality is that we can experience constant bliss and be filled with light yet we are still trapped in an egotistic frame of mind and incapable of recognising it.

Freedom from enlightenment and psychic experiences

This insight led me to a very different path. As long as we live in this body and dimension even after many experiences of liberation and enlightenment we need the humility to acknowledge that we are always capable to err and stray therefore liberation is not an event of no return. Even if we realize that everything is consciousness and we feel that our individuality has vanished we can still fall prey to a much subtler form of ego and identification. **This identification with 'being enlightened' is far more difficult to perceive and release therefore I realised that liberation or enlightenment is not an event but a constant journey.**

The desire to be in a particular constant state filled with bliss vanished and as a consequence I felt much freer not seeking an idea of permanence instead I accepted my limits and humanity. It is ok one minute to be filled with a clear perception and wisdom and the next moment to realise how petty and stupid I can be. **To realise my stupidity is my greatest liberation, the capacity to release my stubbornness and say sorry my greatest joy. The letting go of the need to be always right and the dropping of the Guru persona my greatest bliss.** And of course this path is not always easy as we human beings sometimes need many jolts to acknowledge our behaviour. Keep the river flowing!

This fluid state and mindfulness of our inner barriers and contractions might not give you a transcendental experience but it can give you in my view something better. Amongst the pain and changes of life you can experience a simplicity, joy and peace that at times might come and go but you can trust that at various intensities it will always be with you.

Always be willing to learn from anybody, you can also share your thoughts and experiences but do not sit on a throne or stand on a high pedestal as there is no need to adopt a Guru like stance as it might be gratifying but will enslave you in the long run.

‘The first will be the last and the last will be the first’ Matthew 20

I once read a saying of Buddha in one of the sutras which I really liked, unfortunately now I cannot find the name of the original however I can give you the zest of it:

‘Do not seek experiences or powers, instead work diligently to rid your mind of greed, hatred and delusion’

Something unique could still happen

However if you work diligently to release your unnecessary mental contractions, spiritual arrogance, thirst for psychic experiences, greed, hatred and delusions most probably with time you will begin to touch a sense of equanimity which is the acceptance of the present moment with inner peace. This peace one day can bloom like a flower blossoming in the dew and you will begin to perceive your true self, its presence pouring from your heart. You will be blessed with the perception that you are something more than your tight and angry ego and that all your emotions and thoughts are just ripples in an immeasurable lake of pure being and like a child answering the call of his loving mother you have a home to always go back too.

With time you will realize that this peace and open heart is your true nature, it is a simple but radical realization with no ego claiming to have achieved something transcendental, and this realization will show you that you are not the painful past that has always conditioned your perception of life and dictated your reactions and views. At the same time you will not condemn or deny the hurt child in you but you will bring it back home with the loving embrace of a caring mother. **There is nothing wrong with having a persona and a ‘I am’ sense, being unique is a great sensation, what is important is to understand that they originate from pure awareness and love and that this love is our home.**

The chapter on Buddhism can provide a very good path to release our slavery to an angry and hostile mind. When I use words like release from an angry mind I don’t mean that you will never experience irritation and the capacity to say NO when it is required. It means that you will not base your persona on feeling of hostility and frustration.

THE FACETS OF THE DIAMOND

Bringing it all back home

We will now take a journey together and examine the various facets of the diamond. We will explore Near Death Experiences, Quantum physics, Mindful meditation and Buddhism, Vedanta, Psychoanalysis and more. We will examine how each of these disciplines can give its contribution to an all-encompassing spirituality in tune with the challenges humanity and the planet face in modern times.

Each of these fields gives its own contribution however the diamond which encompasses them all at the same time transcends them all leading us to a new sense of unity beyond all forms of division and sects. Even when you grasp the meaning and essence of this sense of unity you can still follow your own favourite path according to your nature and predisposition. Atheists can also find a path to a sense of unity and universality without the need for a tyrannical God image. We are made by the tiniest sub-particles, the quarks which originated at the time of the Big Bang, in other words the story of the universe is within us and the quarks are vibrations within a quantum energy field which unites all of us. Let us meditate on that!

Dear reader we are all so unique and different yet united by our humanity. What makes this world so fascinating is our diversity and unicity therefore I could never expect you to agree with everything I say therefore I reiterate my invitation to take what can be of use to you drop without any conflict what is not of use to you. More than ideologies what unites us should be tolerance and empathy.

Near Death Experiences

‘The content of NDE and the effects on patients seem similar worldwide, across all cultures and times. Patients’ transformational processes after an NDE are very similar and encompass life-changing insight, heightened intuition, and disappearance of fear of death. Assimilation and acceptance of these changes is thought to take at least several years’
Lancet 2001; 358: 2039–45 reporting the research of Dr Pin Van Lommel on NDEs.

Near death experiences (NDE’s) is a subject that has fascinated me for years and it is a very important facet of our diamond path.

Before we continue I have to clarify an issue in a very emphatic manner. Throughout my life beginning from a very young age I have been very committed and dedicated to spiritual enquiry and the search for our spiritual nature. I have also experienced many strange and unique phenomenon like telepathy, healing and so forth. At the same time I have studied scientific subjects like medicine, cosmology and astrobiology and the beauty of science is that you can wonder at the amazing beauty and dance of life yet your feet are grounded in facts and research. For this reason I am allergic to the atrocious psycho bubble which is so prevalent today.

Years ago I attended a seance with a medium who ‘could communicate with the souls of the departed’ and I requested to speak to my mother. After a couple of minutes he started speaking with a feminine voice telling me how much she loved me and cared for me and that she was always looking after me. My mum, like me, was Italian so I started speaking in Italian to her, alas the medium was British so this did not work as it seems she had forgotten her Italian. Then I asked her if she knew my full name, my place and date of birth something that my mother should have known really well and of course the medium could not provide the information.

If someone does not know that the brain in the stage between wakefulness and sleep can create amazing dream like visions and sensations he or she will claim that they were out of their body therefore astral traveling. I do not deny that this is possible but as I said I am not just a mystic I am also scientifically minded therefore I would ask the one makes the claim of astral travelling if he can travel to the next room and read what I have written on a piece of paper I left on the table. None ever, so far, as passed this test therefore I concluded that they were full of it!

Most unfortunately Near Death Experiences in some instances have been appropriated by the worse new age psycho bubble peddlers. If you do a search on the internet about NDE’s some of the sites that come on top are totally unscientific and full of ghost stories and flying horses which are totally unconnected to the serious and dedicated research performed by many doctors and scientists. So what am I talking about here?

About thirty years ago I read a book by Dr Raymond Moody a doctor who investigated NDE's for decades. The name of the book is 'Life after Life'. In it Dr Moody narrates how he came across hundreds of patients who to all effects had died yet a few minutes later came back to life. Many of these people narrated some fascinating experiences and these visions had many similarities across all of them.

Before we examine these experiences let us have a look how the medical community reacted to these after death experiences accounts. They brought a legitimate objection that those people were not fully dead and that their brains were in overdrive because of the deeply distressing situation they were undergoing.

On the other side the worse charlatans joined the bandwagon. Thousands of people started to claim that they had died and come back alive again and they used this claim to peddle all kinds of belief systems. A few of them might have had a real experience but what they had experienced were just some brain waves, false visions or simply a nightmare because their stomach was too full.

So when is an NDE genuine?

So beyond the psychic bubble and the firing of disorderly neurons by an hyper excited brain is there a testable and genuine NDE? Most probably yes and to appreciate this assertion we need to first know how we define death in medical terms.

'Death is defined by the cessation of all vital functions in the body including the heartbeat, breathing and brain functions' Monitors cannot detect any form of functions in the brain, heart and circulation and in the breathing mechanism. When a person has been declared death in this way and then later on comes back alive and narrates a particular set of visions and experiences then we can confidently say that we are looking at an NDE. Of course I am open to the possibility that one day we will discover that although all functions and activities have ceased in the main systems of the body there is still some residual activity that at present we are not detecting.

What I find interesting and I would even say fascinating is that no matter in which part of the world or in which culture people have NDE occurrences there are common traits and similarities, in other words it is a universal experience. Off course people from different cultures have small difference in the content of their visions but the message and feeling are the same throughout.

I very strongly recommend you to watch a video on youtube called 'Famous Cardiac Surgeon's Stories of Near Death Experiences in Surgery'. In this clip a renowned cardiac surgeon narrates a very touching story of one of his patients who died under surgery. The patient had ceased presenting any signs of life so the medical team adjourned to a part of the room quite distant from the diseased where even if he was still alive he could not hear them or see them. After some considerable time to their amazement they heard the familiar

sound of the monitoring machines and the regular beeps showed that the person was alive again! What was amazing is that he narrated that he had left his body and he was hovering over them and could see what they were doing and saying. Now this is an easy one to find out whether he was bluffing or telling the truth. To their amazement he told them correctly all their actions and words. This impresses me!

This is not a solitary and totally unusual experience, far from it. Numerous studies and anecdotes throughout the world report exactly the same events.

Besides these out of body experiences, which have proven their veracity by people being able to describe exactly what was in areas that they could not have seen, what is extremely important are the visions of light and love and the message received. 'Go back to the world, release your egotist obsession and lead a life which incarnates this loving light'

Confessing one's sins and moving into the light

Amongst people who had positive NDE's out of body experiences are quite common like I already mentioned an example, then some people report a beautiful journey into the universe floating with a beautiful sensation of lightness and freedom and seeing rotating galaxies and more but to me the most poignant, and reported by a majority of people is going through a tunnel with a being of light waiting at the end of it. They report that this encounter is like emerging into a different world full of love, compassion and light and this being of light, telepathically and without words, helps them to go through many of the situations when they hurt an innocent person who maybe just needed a little help and understanding. This presence has no condemnation but is only helping them to release the pain and hurt so that they can feel cleansed and liberated, again those undergoing this experience they report a feeling of bliss and forgiveness but sincerity is a must. After that they are told either by this presence or some deceased diseased relatives whom they have met on this journey that their time to leave the body has not arrived yet and they need to go back which they but most of them do so reluctantly.

I am only giving you a small sample of this event but if you are interested in the subject then the books of Raymond Moody are a good place to start.

Both hard core atheists and hardcore religious people hate NDEs. Atheists they fear that accepting out of body experiences leaves the door open for the belief in a creator outside the universe that will torcher you for ever and ever and ever not for having hurt others but simply for not having worshipped him. I fully appreciate their fear because when it comes to believing in this kind of cruel persona I am probably the biggest atheist alive. Therefore I always try to reassure them that NDEs do not lead you to the acceptance of this cruel being, far from it. Matter of fact it is quite the opposite. **This transforming and healing love has no interest whatsoever and again I stress 'whatsoever' in what anyone believes in.** If you

have lived a life with a sense of empathy and kindness in your heart and your actions have manifested this quality you will be uplifted unto the arms of the Divine.

Religious people who follow beliefs based on threats and fear also hate NDE's with a vengeance because it threatens their power and the hold they have on people. Their favorite threat is: 'If you do not submit to my belief you will burn in hell for ever' They even go as far as saying that NDEs are from the devil.

Dear friends do not fear those people and their threats. The rage in their hearts can be seen in their eyes, their contorted expressions expose their hatred and people like this cannot be from the light. They do not need to wait for judgement day to go to hell. They are already in it! They are already in it not because someone has put them there, they are already in hell because by choosing hatred and condemnation they have put themselves in it and now they are desperate for you to join them.

Very important research

Many books, articles and documentaries go in great depth into the phenomenon of Near Death Experiences and in particular a large number of the books are written by serious and trustworthy medical professionals. The possibility that NDEs are genuine has been further reinforced by various medical surveys some spanning a few years and conducted by known doctors and researchers in numerous hospitals and in various parts of the world. The most comprehensive research has been conducted recently by the Southampton University College in the UK. Before we examine its results I like to illustrate a previous one conducted in Holland in 2001.

This survey was conducted by Pim Van Lommel a Dutch doctor. With the help of various associates he interviewed 344 patients who had reported a NDE, the results of these interviews were very interesting but most importantly they had a profound impact on Dr Van Lommel who concluded that medication and the stress of the experience alone could not explain these out of body experiences and the uplifting and loving message that they contained. If you are interested in the report just do a search on the internet 'Pim Van Lommel lancet article'.

Most of you already know that the people who had survived clinical death and had this transcendental experience report in many cases to go through a tunnel to see at the end of it a radiant, healing and all loving light who accepts them and nurtures them irrespectively of their faith and beliefs system. Some can also narrate frightening experiences like being stuck in a dark and hostile place. Again these negative experiences do not particularly happen to atheists, often religious people with a fundamentalist and judgmental outlook are the ones who suffer the most. *Therefore I can confidently advice you to lead as far as possible a kind and considerate life, follow the love in your heart, do not hurt unnecessarily anyone, endeavor to release destructive emotions and thoughts from your being, avoid*

fanatical and cruel beliefs and you will be ok. You will be ok here in the present and you will be ok in a future world and dimension.

Before I continue I like to remind you that what separates genuine NDEs from psycho bubble is the fact that many of those undergoing a genuine out of body experience were able to describe exactly objects or actions performed in another area of which they had no previous knowledge.

Pay attention to the next three lines!

I have read reports that if you are having an NDE and you find yourself in a tight spot just evoke a sincere and deep feeling of love in your heart, this will pull you out of that painful place and take you to a better one.

Now let me pass on the information from this report about the effects of a Positive NDE on those who underwent it.

1) Capacity to show one's feelings 2) Empathy and understanding of others 3) Less judgmental 4) More involvement with family 5) Understanding the purpose of life 6) A sense of the inner meaning of life 7) No more fear of death 8) Understanding of one's self 9) Appreciation of the ordinary things of life 10) A sense of inner peace unaffected by worldly events 11) Realizing one's mistakes and a genuine need to atone. 12) A shift from religious orthodoxy towards universalism and non-parochial spirituality.

I could write not one book but many on this subject but I aim to give you the zest of this wide subject and point you in the right direction. The website at <http://www.nderf.org> has a large collection of research data. If you are interested in conducting more research type on your browser 'medical research in near death experiences' and my advice is to avoid psycho-bubble websites. Keep your research to serious medical research and data.

I fully agree with Dr Van Lommel that plain medical and physiological changes cannot account for such a radical and transforming experience. From this Dutch experiment and countless other investigations I can conclude that it is likely that a part of us can survive physical death. Also from my studies in physics I can see that, contrary to previous opinions, not even a black hole can destroy certain forms of information and physical death is far less a cataclysmic event than a black hole.

I like to share with you some highlights of the conclusion of this fascinating report:

The medical team examined various reports about NDE like experiences induced by medical drugs, hallucinogenic drugs and all kind of brain stimulations with probes. This is their conclusion:

'These recollections, however, consist of fragmented and random memories unlike the panoramic life-review that can occur in NDE. Further, transformational processes with

changing life-insight and disappearance of fear of death are rarely reported after induced experiences. Thus, induced experiences are not identical to NDE.'

Why so many atheists go to heaven?

It sounds strange, isn't it? Here we have religious fundamentalists going around with raging self-righteousness hurling their condemnation to the 'non-believers' and announcing to them how they are going to burn in hell yet when the moment of judgement arrives they are the ones on trouble!

During my research in NDEs I read numerous papers on the subject including reports of NDEs in various belief groups and to my surprise I found out that often atheists have the more uplifting and touching experiences. How is that possible?

As we have already seen this light welcoming travelers at the end of the tunnel is unconditional in its love, it welcomes all, no matter their affiliation and religious faith. If we have a lot of hate in our hearts we will be unable to get close to it, if we have unconditional and non-judgemental love we will take to it like a fish to water.

The problem with many religious people is that they perform good actions and spread love with an ulterior motive: to go to a place of delights and unlimited pleasure called heaven. Some even believe that this heaven will be populated by women available at all times for their unmitigated pleasure. Love and charity shared and performed with this frame of mind do not even come remotely close to this out of body tender love.

On the other hand atheists as they do not particularly believe in an afterlife they help all forms of creatures and promote the welfare of the earth without an ulterior motive, without the hope for sexual servants or rivers of wine. In this sense we can confidently say that atheists have a better chance of cultivating unconditional love.

Of course I am not saying that all atheists have a happy NDE, all I am saying is that many do in spite of a belief that so many religious people condemn.

The Southampton University Hospital Experiment

In 2008 in the medical university of Southampton (UK) and in collaboration with various other medical centers across the world an experiment on NDE and out of body experiences was launched and over a period of four years nearly 3,000 patients took part in it. This research was based on a sound scientific and medical approach that included even putting various objects and drawings in high places where nobody could see them, this was done to test if people who reported out of body experiences were hallucinating or had undergone a true experience. Dr Parnia who was in charge of the research has used the word CA (cardiac arrest) survivors more frequently than the word NDE or out of body experience.

At the time some of my friends who are hard core atheists were gloating and laughing at me knowing that I can be open to the idea of a genuine NDE. They did so because they were convinced that this research was going to totally expose and negate out of body experiences once and for all.

For some years I kept looking for any information about the research with not much success till one day I just got a snippet of news conveying that people undergoing NDEs in their hospitals had met all the requirements for a clinical death IE Cessation of cardiac, cerebral and respiratory activity. The first hurdle had been overcome.

Then not long ago the results were announced although to date I am still looking for a detail resume' of the investigation. However even in the terse statements that I have found the conclusions are quite clear.

'CA survivors commonly experience a broad range of cognitive themes, with 2% exhibiting full awareness. This supports other recent studies that have indicated consciousness may be present despite clinically undetectable consciousness.'

'A higher proportion of people may have vivid death experiences, but do not recall them due to the effects of brain injury or sedative drugs on memory circuits.'

Now pay attention because the following statement by Dr Parnia is in my view a very powerful one:

Dr Parnia concluded: "This is significant, since it has often been assumed that experiences in relation to death are likely hallucinations or illusions, occurring either before the heart stops or after the heart has been successfully restarted, but not an experience corresponding with 'real' events when the heart isn't beating. In this case, consciousness and awareness appeared to occur during a three-minute period when there was no heartbeat. This is paradoxical, since the brain typically ceases functioning within 20-30 seconds of the heart stopping and doesn't resume again until the heart has been restarted. Furthermore, the detailed recollections of visual awareness in this case were consistent with verified events.'

Now let me repeat this bit:

'Furthermore, the detailed recollections of visual awareness in this case were consistent with verified events. '

The above statement was also confirmed in other parts of the report and what is actually saying is that when patients described out of body experiences where they could see objects or hear conversations in other rooms they were correct. If you ask me let me tell you that this is quite mind blowing!

Just maybe

Dr Parnia observed that some people who experienced NDEs had cardiac cessation for even three minutes and other studies show an even longer cessation and I want to stress again that only after 30 seconds of a cardiac arrest the brain ceases any form of activity. The study also described that as many as 39% percent of cardiac arrest survivors recollected an out of body experience but only 2 or 3 percent could describe it in detail and this is most likely due to heavy sedation before a cardiac arrest.

Maybe we could venture to say, remaining sceptical to the very end, that in spite of the termination of all bodily functions those people were not fully death and were hallucinating. Nevertheless the experience is still invaluable and its message deep reaching and transformative. There is only one energy and it is unconditionally loving. We are in tune with it when we feel and act with a sincere, caring and loving heart. Our religion and belief is of no consequence and it actually can cause us to judge and hurt the innocent as most religions have done through the centuries by killing critics, torturing dissenters and lots more.

Recently a fundamentalist religious person said to me: 'Near death experiences are from the devil'. Of course she had no clue about the studies and literature about this subject, her religious mentor had said so and this was enough for her.

I replied: 'How strange that people who are under the devil become so loving and caring and they dedicate the rest of their lives helping charities and doing everything possible to alleviate the suffering of others. How strange that they now feel deeply at peace and contented and have released most of their resentment and grudges. Yet people like you who shout and scream how much you are in the truth and everybody else is wrong have very little peace. Oh yes they might say that they have peace yet they are always angry, judgemental and intolerant'

The Quantum Field and the Unity of Life

I will introduce you to this chapter by first of all informing you that I do not have a degree in cosmology however I have read about it for many years and for the last four years I have studied it at an academic level, one year in class and three years online following an open university like curriculum. This is not a chapter for academics but for the general public so I will try my best to keep the language as colloquial and comprehensive as possible. Also keep in mind that I like to make parallels between science and philosophy but I am careful not to descend into misinformation and speculation.

The scientific hypothesis

Very often I hear people with not even the most basic understanding of science say: 'It is only a theory therefore it is meaningless'. What they mean is it is only a hypotheses or a prediction therefore it is meaningless but this is not the case. Most great discoveries of the past few decades like the Higgs boson and gravitational waves were all predicted many years before by sound mathematics and observations therefore scientific predictions are rooted on solid scientific research and the honesty to say: this is what I know now about this subject and what I predict the conclusion will be in future experiments and if I am proven wrong I will admit it and move on.

The quantum universe

In this chapter as in all other chapters I use, from time to time, the word 'monism' as opposed to 'monotheism' and in a future chapter I will explain this concept more clearly and in depth. For the time being just keep in mind that generally monotheism denotes the belief in a creator God who is outside the universe and a being who punishes and rewards. Monism instead postulates that there is only one energy and everything that exists is a manifestation of it, so although this presence can take a myriad of forms all these forms are not separated from it but at different levels an expression of it.

Quantum physics and cosmology is a subject that has fascinated me for many years. As a person interested in monistic philosophies I was taken by a concept that some physicists, who are also philosophers, have about the unity of life. Their idea goes something like this: even when you put particles in a black hole they do not completely disappear but a part of them will escape the black hole. When the universe will collapse or tear itself apart and all matter will be destroyed an underlying energy will always remain from which new universes can be created. This 'energy' we can call quantum energy, the minimal state of energy or quasi zero. Other terms are the 'quantum vacuum' and the 'metastable quantum vacuum', the word vacuum is used here to denote the absence of matter and even basic forces like electro-magnetism and metastable to denote the fact that it can be stirred by fluctuations like disturbances which in turn can give rise to matter.

The vacuum experiment

In quantum physics like in all other areas of physics there are different areas of study and a very important one is called Quantum Electrodynamics or QED in short. In the 1960's a group of QED researchers came out with a really bold and quite crazy idea: 'Let us take an hermetically sealed box, where nothing can come in and out of it, then let us remove all forms of matter and forces from it and then let us see what happens'. Weird idea isn't it? Not that weird really because this experiment showed a result that has revolutionized our understanding of physics and cosmology. It hasn't yet given definitive answers but it has opened so many venues of enquiry and research.

So what was the result?

This vacuum although, devoid of all forms of matter and life, can actually create matter and life! Scientists observed what we call 'virtual particles' i.e. out of nowhere various particles like photons can emerge in the vacuum and even create an electro-magnetic ripple, and then quickly disappear. Over the years astro-physicists have discovered that virtual particles are present everywhere in nature and regulate many interactions. A very important force in nature is called 'the strong force' and it is responsible for binding together quarks and quarks form protons and neutrons, so if there is no binding of quarks there would be no matter and hence no life. This force is regulated by gluons which are virtual particles, they come out of the vacuum, have an impact and quickly disappear. Therefore we can postulate that this quasi zero energy level is actively influencing our gross universe. The word 'quasi' in Latin means 'almost' and is used to denote that it is not totally empty but almost empty because it has the capacity to stir and create new particles/

The Big Bang

One thing we now know for sure is that the universe is expanding and regularly, when the expansion reaches a certain distance, the speed increases. Therefore by following these metrics backwards we can calculate not only the age of the universe but also its composition and temperature at various epochs. The more we regress the more condensed and small the universe becomes and its temperature also rises.

Calculating the expansion is not the only method to study the epochs of the universe; the light rays we observe in observatories through telescopes allow us to measure their wave length. In this way we can deduce many qualities of the stars emitting those wave lengths like their distance, their age, their journeys, their composition and much more. All this is corroborated by the images transmitted by numerous satellites. And let us not forget the experiments performed in hadron colliders like the one in Switzerland where particles are smashed into each other at such a velocity thus reproducing the early conditions of the

universe. Anyone who says that cosmology is just a supposition and speculation is only showing their ignorance and their lack of desire to expand their mind and knowledge.

So with all these observations and tools at hand we have a pretty clear idea, based on solid scientific research, about the journey of the universe. We can see that moving backwards in time the universe becomes smaller and smaller, hotter and hotter and we can accurately predict its composition, dynamics and heat in every stage of its expansion.

However a mystery remains. This retrogression leads us to speculate that what kick started this expansion was an infinitesimally small and hot point and this moment was called the 'Planck Era' or the singularity. Often most people confuse the Planck Era with the theory of the Big Bang. Normally when you study the Big Bang at an academic level you learn its transitions from the very first moment all the way to the formation of the first stars five hundred million later. We often confuse the Big Bang theory for the Planck Era and singularity.

As I said the dynamics and phases of the formation of the cosmos are quite clear to us except and I reiterate the word except the Planck Era. What exactly was that singularity? Was it really a singularity? And most importantly where did arise from? What caused it?

Religious people like to give it a quick answer. Someone called God did it. How did he do it? The answer is we do not know and we do not need to know. Case closed!

As you can appreciate scientists are very curious people and very tenacious people too. They do not like simplistic and unproven answers instead they prefer to say 'I don't know but I will do my best to find out'.

The Quantum revolution in cosmology



Of course we have not seen a universe emerging in a laboratory but the experiments in virtual particles emerging from a vacuum has given some cosmologists a lot of food for thought and in the next few years the launch of new satellites, some of them with a hundredfold stronger power of magnification than previous machines might confirm the hypothesis of a quantum universe. My bet is that they will.

So if even a black hole or the removal of all forms of matter and energy cannot impede this zero energy state or quasi energy state from creating new forms of matter we can easily deduce that even when this universe tears itself apart or freezes new universes can emerge elsewhere. In other words there is an energy that is far more subtle than other forms of energy, it cannot be destroyed and is beyond time hence it is uncreated.

This energy is formless and immaterial yet it can give rise to all forms of matter and life. Form exists within formlessness, time exists within timelessness.

This creation of virtual particles is due to fluctuations in the quantum vacuum, in other words there is a minimal movement which disturbs the equilibrium and a wave is created which in turn creates particles. According to Quantum Field Theory particles are just a vibration in a quantum field or in popular terms in an energy field.

So concluding we can speculate that a wave in the quantum vacuum created a singularity and as the wave expanded vibrations within it created particles and the emerging forces of gravity and electricity gave rise to a new universe.

What I will say next is speculative at the moment but I find it very beautiful and deeply touching. If you find it difficult to grasp don't worry as this is just a thought experiment. According to the hypothesis of the quantum multiverse there could be an infinite number of universes with different realities, laws and energetic levels but when you measure all the individual energetic levels the result is zero IE in -1 by $+1$ the result is 0. In other words in the quantum vacuum there are infinite possibilities of events occurring yet nothing ever happens. I once read a scientist describing the infinite universes as the vector field of the vacuum and the unified field which remains always complete as the scalar field.

The Indian Upanishads describe this reality with these beautiful words:

*That is the whole, this is the whole;
from the whole, the whole becomes manifest;
taking away the whole from the whole,
the whole remains.*
Peace! Peace! Peace! Isa Upanishad

In other words there is only one energy, eternal and unchanged, within it multiverses and a myriad of life forms can emerge and disappear, time can come and go, yet this energy always remains the same: timeless and infinite!

But is there consciousness?

Some religious people say to me: 'Your idea is fine and that field you describe for us is God' My answer is: 'In my view this field does not have the persona of a human being, petty, needy and vengeful like your God is so well described. However what I can say is that if conscious beings can emerge from it then at a potential level there is consciousness and yes

in this universe there are amazing symmetries and there is a beautiful dance between creation and transformation yet I can easily see that all these laws are inherent in nature. The quantum field is the mother of all possibilities and configurations and I love to meditate on it as pure existence and as silence pervaded by vitality and life abundant. What I am not interested in meditating is on a maniac that rules the mother with a cruel iron rod'

"People often say that the probability of life forming by chance is so low there must have been intelligent design or a miracle. I find that anathema," he says. "Religious people have got to move on and get away from the idea that there's a superbeing who fits it all up. What I find more congenial and much more intellectually respectable is the notion of fundamental laws of organisation that turn matter into life – a life principle built into the laws of the universe." Paul Davies, physicist and winner of Templeton prize for contributions to religious thought and inquiry

A question for Kaju

It was a pleasant autumn evening and I was sitting with Kaju next to the garden his wife Ditti had tendered so lovingly. The fragrance of the flowers, still moist with the rainy season droplets, was soothing and invigorating. This was my second visit in a year and Kaju was hospitable and friendly as the first time. His eyes and demeanour had strength but also empathy and warmth.

‘Kaju, I asked, the last time you narrated your journey into different dimensions this journey culminated into a radiating and healing light of love which then in turn folded into its final resting place, the Absolute where all sense of separation and ego centrism disappeared. I would like to ask you about the relationship between this effulgent light of love and the state of final repose and peace’

‘It is very difficult, Kaju answered, to convey the feeling of a personal experience to someone else but I will try my best. Let us call the effulgent light the Beloved and the final repose the Absolute. They are not two distinct dimensions. The Absolute is pure silence and repose, there is no separate ego in it and therefore all conflict ceases. In that state the past and future vanishes, all that remains is peace. There is a vacuum meaning that all forms of existence return to their source and there is no separation yet this apparent emptiness is filled by the most comforting and healing love. The Beloved has returned to its home, the final quest has been fulfilled. Empty and full, light and darkness and all concepts are seen as one. The beloved has not disappeared, it has just become the love and vitality of the Absolute along its silence, repose and peace.

In this world of division it is rather difficult to conceive of the Absolute therefore many people and religions they find it easier to relate to the Beloved so perhaps we could venture to say that the Beloved is the manifested Absolute.

Kaju continued: ‘In Christianity they speak of the Father and the Son, the son being the manifested part of the Father. In Indian thought they speak of the manifested female energy of Shakti and the emptiness of Shiva both being two aspects of Parham Brahman (Absolute). However, Shanti Dev, I am not very keen on terms like male and female. The sum of all the ripples in a lake is its manifested aspect, yet it is still the lake, complete and unchanged.

Christianity, in its deepest sense, is much closer to the aspect of the Absolute which we can call the Beloved or a loving father who cares for its creation and is more concerned with redeeming than punishing. Buddhism on the other hand is much closer to the silent repose aspect of the Absolute, they favour silence, meditation and deep contemplation, they are aware that liberation is in their hands and they do not beg for someone else to deliver it for them.

Some people do not move along the path of the beloved or of the silence in their journey towards self-realization instead they bow to and worship the tyrant however we should try not to judge them because we never fully know the deepest dynamics of life. Maybe even a worshipper of the tyrant, if he/she is good hearted and sincere, will make progress on the path of liberation.

I need to stress that this Absolute is the final post and is not separated into two different entities.

"Silence is the ocean in which all the rivers of all the religions discharge themselves."
— Thayumanavar

Anyhow do not be too concerned with these concepts, relax, harmonise your breath, open your heart, cultivate empathy and the rest will follow.'

'Kaju, I have one more question: Is merging with the Absolute what you can call liberation?'
'Not in my perception, Shanti Dev, liberation is not a goal, a destination, but it is a process of letting go and awareness. What I find 'liberating' is the capacity to say either to someone else or to yourself: I am sorry, I will modify my approach and attitude'. Experiencing higher states of awareness is alright particularly when we are receiving the blessings of the Beloved and then merging unto the Absolute. However these experiences can also create the ego of being enlightened and it is a very destructive form of egotism. Seeing liberation as an ongoing process where we acknowledge the simple fact that we can become egotistic and destructive at any time allows us to shake our separation and arrogance. It is much better, in my view, to be a nobody, a fallible human being then a proud and egotistical spiritual person.

Without cultivating the heavy burden of an enlighten being when you just remain aware of your limitation you leave a space in your being which will be filled with a very tender form of loving, simple but fulfilling, truly fulfilling. That is the kingdom of heaven then all kind of things will be added to it.

Mother Nature

Besides referring to the Absolute with attributes like silence, repose and beloved for atheists and agnostic there is perhaps a more suited term: 'Mother Nature' or simply 'Nature'. All gross forms we see like ourselves, trees or buildings have a much smaller root to their existence like atoms and sub-particles. Atoms and sub-particles have to their root just pure energy waves and it is very likely that the final essence of this universe or any other universe is just pure quantum energy. We all come from this field and we all go back to it. Nature in its infinite diversity is the manifestation of one force. Appreciating and enjoying the diversity and at the same time unity of the whole of nature is the path of 'Mother Nature'.

I like to quote a few verses from the book 'Meditations' by Marcus Aurelius which illustrate the beauty of Nature and our relationship to it.

We were made by nature part of a whole (unity) but we have detached ourselves from it, yet there is this beautiful possibility that it is within our power to re-unite with it. As the nature of the universal has given to every rational being all the other powers that it has, so we have received from it this power also.

But the wondrous part of nature's art is that though she has circumscribed herself, everything within her which appears to decay and to grow old and to be useless she changes into herself.

Everything harmonizes with me, which is harmonious to you, O Universe. Nothing for me is too early nor too late, which is in due time for you. Everything is fruit to me which your seasons bring, O Nature: from you are all things, in you are all things, to you all things return.

Let your intelligence also now be in harmony with the intelligence which embraces all things. For the intelligent power is no less diffused in all parts and pervades all things for him who is willing to draw it to him than the aerial power for him who is able to respire it.

The Integrated vision

Some ancient spiritual schools like the Gnostics integrate the aspects of the Absolute, the Beloved and Mother Nature in quite an elegant way. From the Absolute the Beloved emerges which is its more active and creative aspect and from the Beloved Mother Nature emerges giving rise to this universe or even to multiple universes. As Mother Nature unfolds further and further it forgets its source and true nature and its children, us, descend into more and more destructive and hateful dimensions. The path of liberation consists in remembering our source and true nature.

Kaju do you pray?

For many people prayer is a necessity and I have no problem with it as long as they do not make the object of prayer into a malevolent being. For me my breath is my prayer, sitting down and absorbing the fragrance of the trees and flowers around me is prayer, rejoicing when hearing the voices of my children and holding their little hands is prayer, avoiding to hurt the innocent is prayer.

Meeting Prashad

It was the early ninety eighties and at least fifteen years after my first meeting with Kaju and on my way to Bodhgaya an early evening I stopped by Kaju's place. By then his daughter Prya had obtained a bursary in Bombay where she was staying studying sciences; she had grown into a strong and independent woman determined to break from the old expectations of a female: find a husband, make children, work hard and keep quiet! With time, after completion of her studies she would find a good job near her parents and one of her greatest joys was to be near them and assist them in every possible way. Kaju's son Dinesh had grown into a strong young man very interested in business and very good at commerce mostly interested in collecting local edible goods and finding them an outlet always giving priority to getting the best deal for the local farmers. He also decided to postpone marriage by a few years and he was really happy to live with his parents and do everything in his power to make their life comfortable. Kaju and his family, over the years, dedicated a lot of their time to eradicate the caste system and alleviate poverty. They all felt that since often religions promote privilege and a subservient attitude the world needed a new spirituality free of fear and blind faith where the focus should be inner change and universality.

By now Kaju, who all along had remained a rather self-effacing and quiet person had begun to attract numerous seekers. He never turned anyone away but those seeking psychic phenomenon and a Guru image were disappointed and did not remain for long. Kaju also never expected or asked for donations and he was adamant that he was no Guru and he deeply disliked the thought of a following and an organization promoting him.

'My greatest joy is tilling the land with my bull, smelling the harvest, the flowers and plants in my garden and finally sitting for dinner with my family, everything else is superfluous. If some people come to me asking questions about liberation, their true self and the meaning of life all I can do is just to point them to their own self, their heart and their being as this is where the answer lies and not in a creed, in a Guru or in a temple'

I arrived around 5pm in the most beautiful autumnal Indian evening. I have always loved and cherished those bright and huge red suns whose light blessed and nourished large trees and gorgeous flowers painted in the most bright and varied colours amongst the chants of thousands of happy birds. Ditti greeted me and she looked very pleased to see me; she informed me that Kaju and Dinesh had gone to a nearby village to purchase some goods and should be back within an hour or two. 'Shanti Dev in the meantime if you like go and sit with Prashad, and she pointed out an Indian man in his early forties sitting under a poplar tree, he has had a compelling experience with Kaju that might be of interest with you. I will bring you both a cup of tea.

I walked to Prashad and I was glad I did because he greeted me with a warm smile and a friendly spark in his eyes. After a short introduction he gladly responded to my enquiry about his experience with Kaju and I found his narration very inspiring and heart-warming.

Prashad started in this manner: 'I was born in a relatively well to do business family and since my early childhood I have been very interested in philosophical and religious thought, I can say that even more than just interested I was totally committed to it. At 18 I went to university to attend a course in comparative religion and a few years later I achieved a Masters degree in the subject. Even after my studies I kept travelling meeting many teachers of various denominations and appreciating their unique way to approach spirituality. I also learned and practised various forms of mediation, worship and prayer. With time I developed the strong feeling that there is one all-encompassing reality and we can approach it in different ways and I am referring to the more mystical and spiritual ways taken by groups like the Gnostics in Christianity, Sufis in Islam, Vedantins in Hinduism and by monks in Buddhism.

So far so good! However when I was around thirty disaster struck my psyche as the need arose in me that although there is one reality I should now choose ONE path and practice it diligently otherwise I was going to be all over the place. That was easily said than done! One day I would sit down and practice a mindful Buddhist meditation but the next time I sat down to meditate my mind would feel all Hindu and concentrate on Shiva and so forth. Someone suggested that I should just accept this and allow the mind to go wherever it felt like going but this solution would not work for me because it left me confused and stressed. This inner conflict stayed with me for many years and was a drain on my inner energy and mental well-being particularly when sometimes even during a meditation session my focus kept changing.

I visited various teachers in the hope that they could help me but to no avail. About three years ago on my way to Bodhgaya someone mentioned Kaju to me and I decided to visit him particularly because I was attracted by the description of his simplicity and non -Guru attitude. On my first visit Kaju listened attentively to my narrative and was sympathetic to my pain'

Kaju reassured me that nothing is for ever and even this state of confusion that I was experiencing one day would abate, the problem was that whilst trying to find an answer I was struggling with it so much that as a result I was making it worse.

So this was his advice: 'Prashad accept that you are in a state of confusion and that this confusion does not seem to yield to an intellectual solution. In other words you cannot make a choice with your intellect as to which is the best path for you. One minute you feel like a Christian, shortly after like a Buddhist, an hour later like a Hindu and so forth. As a result you feel in pain and like a child without a home. You have moments of peace and inspiration followed by states of conflict and despair and nothing seems to alleviate this

state of mind' After a brief silence he proceeded: 'Continue with your travels and come back to me after a few months and in the meantime there is just one thing I would like you to do. Enjoy a few meditative moments here and there where you relax and soothe your breathing and when the confusion and conflict starts do not try to resolve it and stop it, simply acknowledge your state of mind with loving kindness and empathy. There are states of mind you can soothe and change but there are some who are truly bothersome and they do not yield to any form of coercion nor to any emotional or intellectual solution. So slowly make peace with it and when you begin to feel a bit more at ease come back to me'

Prashad continued: 'This brief meeting gave me a lot of inspiration and inner peace. I went to live in and around Bodhgaya for a few months often in a Buddhist monastery where I enjoyed mindfully walking amongst the flowers in their garden, relaxing lying on my back and meditating and chanting in the common room. My spiritual conflict was still there but its negative impact was reduced'

'About nine months later I decided to return to Kaju and it turned out to be the most important decision of my life' After some pleasantries and a reinvigorating cup of tea Kaju enquired about my inner conflict and I answered him that it was still there but it had less of an impact. I understood that Kaju had wanted me to do some further work on myself before I could receive and appreciate what he really wanted to convey to me.

Kaju smiled at me with a tender look in his eyes and proceeded: 'These conflicts we feel become so overwhelming because when they arise we identify with them as if they were our true nature, we feel confused and lost and then we conclude that this is who we are, that this is our reality. This is 'me', this is 'I', this is 'who I am' and we believe that they are there for ever. In other words they take over our being. These conflicts can have many origins, emotional like when we lose a relationship and someone we love either because they reject us or they die. They can have an intellectual and spiritual origin like in your case. Or they can even have a pathological background often hereditary. They can also be caused by our arrogance and anger where we end up hating someone because of hurt pride and we pursue vendettas which fill us with unhappiness. They can be also caused by greed and attachment where we want more and more and become devastated by any form of loss particularly a financial loss. The list is endless'

'However, I have news for you, Prashad, all these states of mind are not permanent, they do not last for ever and most importantly a cloud might temporarily obfuscate the rays of the sun but is not the sun. Think of a tranquil lake, you are the awareness hovering over the waters and the water itself. Concentric waves (waves that arise when for example you throw a pebble in the water)might come and go on the surface but these waves are still part of the lake. You are the awareness of these waves, you are the tranquil lake, you can enjoy their movement but you are not caught in them as if they were separate from the lake. Variety is welcome, movement in stillness is welcome, just do not become identified

and stuck in that which is changing all the time.’ ‘Waves arising and vanishing on the surface are beautiful to watch but remember their source and their return to the source’ ‘You are pure being, you are awareness, simple and joyous pure being. In this realization you can truly enjoy your unique personality cause you know where it comes from. Realising your true nature does not mean that you lose your sense of ‘I’ it only means that you realise its source’

Lo and behold at that moment I saw myself as pure awareness, untainted, untouched, simple and kind, totally at peace, nowhere to go, nothing to achieve or to change, pure being, not superior nor inferior. The wave who felt disconnected and lost and which gives rise to the feeling of a separate I, recognised its true nature and merged back into its source, the individual I was now able to release all its contractions and see its nature as free from the ego of separation yet it could still preserve a persona and interact in a creative and non-competitive manner. For a moment I saw myself as a tiny child in the arms of a loving mother, I felt her unconditional love. There was total trust and I had no hesitation in totally surrendering and letting go becoming one with this presence of love. After this initial image the surrender has been constant, just remaining still is a constant reminder of my true nature and home. I turned to Kaju and said: ‘This is so simple! How can we all miss it so badly?’ Kaju laughed and said: ‘Cause it is so simple! However this natural state is covered by and buried by so much conditioning based on separation, hate and greed’

‘Shanti Dev, what comes next, is unbelievable and it truly fills me with awe and gratitude and a sense that no matter where you are you will, soon or later, be taken back home.’ ‘Kaju, after this awakening, asked me to unfold my blanket and rest under the porch for the night. After only a few hours sleep I woke up very early and as soon as I sat on the floor I was struck by the most incredible realisation. The inner torture caused by my total confusion due to the fact that I could not make a choice between various paths had vanished, disappeared, gone! Like a large building that had collapsed and turned into dust my torment and conflict had vanished.’ I asked Prashad: ‘How could it be possible that years of confusion and inner pain can vanish in such a manner?’ Prashad replied: ‘Because the pain was caused by my inability to choose a path to get ‘there’ but now I am ‘there’. I am home, the journey is over, I live in pure presence.

I asked Prashad: ‘Does the world still gets at you with its multiple challenges, can you still be submerged in pain and fear?’ ‘Shanti Dev’, he answered, ‘As Kaju often says, liberation is a love letter written to the whole of life, therefore I am totally open to whatever it sends my way. I feel the pain and so many feelings, sometimes I am out of sink and even insensitive however I know my way back home and the stillness that reveals my true nature. So when the wind sways me back and forth I stand still for a moment, I rest in the peace and silence that I am and if necessary I make amends and then move on.’ ‘When you rest in silence without a sense of ego and rivalry the way is shown to you, you know how to atone yourself

to your true nature and move on. The old tendencies might occasionally resurface but now you are able to recognize them, learn from them and move on'

'However I like to stress what often Kaju reminds people of. Do not separate life in 'before awakening' and 'after awakening'. We all have at times moments of awakening and liberation where we are in touch with our true nature and we will always remain on the path as long as we acknowledge the necessity to be honest with ourselves, free from a spiritual ego and the desire to become a Guru personality. Therefore do not be attached to a concept that there has been a final awakening episode because even when you have a perception of your true reality you still need to keep growing in grace and presence. You still need to remain alert and willing at all times to look at yourself, your words and attitude. You are not freed by an episode of liberation, you are freed by constantly releasing your attachment to conceit, hatred, greed and delusional images of yourself.'

Disengaging from the web

Prashad continued: 'In this world we live caught in a web, it is a web filled with anger, resentment and destructive greed and we cannot find a way out of it and there are two main reasons for this state of mind.

The first is that we always blame others for this entanglement and we create all kinds of conspiracies about who is behind this matrix dominating us. A very important step towards inner freedom is to realise that we are the ones who create this web with our fears and rage. We fall deeper and deeper into this matrix of our own creation by feeding it with our rage, projections, fears and a spirit of blame.

The second reason is that we do not know how to get out of it because we do not realize that we need to stop feeding it to disengage from it. How do we do this? We need to become aware of our self-destructive mind patterns through mindful living and, as far as possible, start spreading a little love around us.

We also need to realise that in this world almost everyone is caught in this net so a lot of the time we will be bombarded with people's frustrations, fears, suspicion and lots more. Sometimes there might be some truth in what they project on us so let us gladly examine their words and see if there is something we can learn from them. Then let us see if we need to express something back and clarify an issue. However after that we need to drop our obsession and attachment to this event, let us be free from it because when we get plugged in we keep recreating the pain and we also nourish it. Let us rejoice that we are not that event, we are not that memory, we are free, we are free!

And the journey continues

During the visit where I met Prashad, after a few days, I had the opportunity to witness another inspiring meeting between Kaju and Martha a Dutch woman in her thirties who stopped by on her way to Bodhgaya.

‘Kaju’, Martha asked, ‘I am a spiritual seeker who is feeling very confused and dejected by a difficult experience which I find very difficult to make sense of.’ Kaju looked quite attentively at her signalling that he was very interested to hear about it. Martha continued: ‘A couple of years ago I met a mystic in New Delhi. He was a fascinating man. Years ago he experienced a kundalini arousal which gave him a lot of bliss and a truly transcendental experience. After this achievement he decided to withdraw for a few days in a secluded place near a river to consolidate his attainment. However to his consternation, whilst in this retreat, his experience of mystical arousal suddenly vanished. No more ecstasy, sparkling lights, no more sensation of floating through space and bliss. He came back to total normality so he took a bus back home feeling rather sad and consternated. During the return journey to his total amazement another new awareness descended on him totally unexpectedly, an awareness way beyond exhilarating mystical arousals. He felt a deep peace and tranquillity, a peace residing in the core of his being and with it shone a presence of tender and unshaken love but most importantly he realized that this was his true self which had been hidden by his mind and emotions. This realization was totally unrelated to yogic concentrations and efforts to reach psychic experience and it was available in the silence and tranquillity of our inner being.’

Martha continued whilst I started to feel that her narration was leading to something very interesting and my attention was totally concentrated on her. ‘I stayed with him and other disciples for a few weeks learning how to sit in silence and inner quietness allowing this inner presence to reveal itself. He could sit quietly in his room for hours with just a gentle smile on his face and a sense of tranquillity all around him. I now had a happy and satisfied feeling that I had found my teacher and guide into the inner journey. I also believed his assertion that he was truly free of ego and selfishness.’

‘To my great consternation and disappointment, over a period of time, I began to realize that he was not so realized and selfless as I previously thought. He started to claim that because he had no ego or illusions he was virtually always right and he could not do or speak anything wrong. Again he asserted, that because he had no ego his anger or other difficult emotions that he often manifested were a pure manifestation of his pure self. As a consequence of these views he soon started to manifest a rather tyrannical personality demanding total obedience from his disciples even refusing to accept any contrary views or opinions.’

The situation got worse when he started telling some of his female disciples that sex with him was part of their spiritual growth and an obligation on their part and the list of his narcissistic behaviour got larger as time went by'

Martha proceeded towards the concluding part of her story: 'What upsets and bewilders me is the fact that I cannot understand how a man who has achieved such high levels of self-realization can gradually transform himself into such a self-centred and self-obsessed person.

Kaju replied after a brief pause: 'I appreciate how confusing and hurtful your experience is but if it is of any comfort to you it is an experience that many people went through and are still going through. Your advantage over many of them is that you have the strength and honesty to acknowledge what is happening and question it. Many disciples would rather ignore this reality not to face the disappearance of their dream and the shattering of their illusions.'

Kaju continued: 'Many stages of so called enlightenment can be corrupted by our ego and our need to be acknowledged and worshipped and the 'enlightened' person can choose to ignore this reality as his pride and arrogance are clouding his vision. There is one thing I often repeat and I will say it again. Enlightenment or liberation doesn't necessarily mean a mono-tone state of bliss. **In the first stage** we are liberated when we become aware that we are creating unnecessary suffering in others and in ourselves and we let it go. This creates a sense of relief, liberation and peace. Mindfulness and presence allow us to realize when we are holding a cat too tight, when we are distressing a child, when we shout in a way that annoys those around us as it allows us to become aware when we are being egotistical and unfair, we are enlightened when we become aware of our intolerance and self-righteousness.' (see the chapter on Buddhism and mindfulness).

'In the second stage we often have a realization that our true nature is peace and love and the sense of ego and separation are tremendously loosened. We still have a sense of 'I' but mostly we sense it as originating from the divine. There is a tremendous release of many of our stored painful experiences both consciously and unconsciously therefore we experience a new sense of grounding and joy. Another important realization, at this stage, is that although emotions and states of mind come and go we can experience them but we are not defined by them. For example I might be a person who experienced a lot of depression but suddenly I realise that depression is like a wave in the sea but I am the sea therefore this feeling cannot overtake me anymore. Life sends so many challenges but now I know that my true home is not amongst the challenges but in my divine being or we can also use words like 'in my Buddha mind'.

Quite a few people touch or enter in this state of mind or being and because it feels so fulfilling they feel that they have reached the ultimate frontier and they start relating and talking to people as if they were a living Buddha. They also lose the capacity of self-

criticism and mindfulness as they think that they reached the ultimate state of mind and therefore they can become quite arrogant and conceited to the consternation of their disciples.

How can such an enlightened person also be so selfish and opinionated?’

I felt my attention increase exponentially my desire to understand this contradiction increasing by the second.

Before enlightenment be aware, after enlightenment be aware, then you will become truly liberated!

Kaju continued: ‘Although this stage is truly beautiful and sublime still it contains many traces of a divisive ego. As the level of awareness has increased the power of the ego to metamorphose and hide in the deepest recesses of our mind has also increased. It pretends that it has died but in reality it has found a deeper place to hide nourished by our sense of being enlightened and therefore special. The more we feel liberated the more the ego takes possession of our being and laughs in happiness to our lack of awareness. The person in this condition then slowly becomes like Martha’s Guru.

Kaju now proceeded to talk about the **third stage** and.

‘This tremendous and cathartic realization we explored is not the final state of liberation, there is still work to do, there is still a mountain to climb. And what is this mountain? It is the road that leads to the final release of separation from your true self which is the self of all and beyond, it is the final liberation from an ego that wants you to fight and struggle against everybody and wants you to feel superior because in reality you are feeling inferior and unloved.

On this journey you then speak, not because you want to impress others and seek adulation but only because you like to share your realization and at the same time you are ready to listen and have a genuine exchange of experiences. If nobody is interested in your spiritual achievements you are more than happy to talk about the weather and hear their problems.

So how do we move in the right direction? The simple realization is that even if we have died and reborn in a state of tremendous inner freedom with a sense of peace and joy we still need to remain aware, we still need to stay awake and not to fall asleep in the laurels of a perceived state of enlightenment. The ego has buried itself deeper so we need a bit of attention to deal with it but this attention cannot take place if you think that there is nothing else left to learn.’

These words of Kaju came back to me years later when in London a ‘semi-enlightened’ person said to me whilst we were talking about psychoanalysis: ‘I don’t need any form of analysis because I have no more ego therefore there is nothing left to analyse’ yet I could clearly see his ego as he was talking. The ego denies its existence in order not to be

perceived and therefore survive. I also remember another enlightenment teacher say that there is no one getting angry but just pure anger as an energy state however I soon discovered that he was only saying this to deny his responsibility in carrying a very quarrelsome and opinionated nature. I am so thankful and grateful to Kaju's teachings: 'Before enlightenment be aware, after enlightenment be aware, then you will achieve true liberation'

If you can remain in this state of openness then the buried conflicts in your deepest unconscious begin to gradually emerge and take leave of you leaving behind a sense of fulfilment, love and understanding. The Buddha said that in this journey he gradually remembered all his past lives but we can all say that he gradually become aware of any unresolved issues in his deepest unconscious levels. In this way Liberation gradually becomes total. However not many can reach this totality but already being aware that we still need to remain humble, awake and aware and follow the convoluted dance of the ego so that we do not fall prey to it is in itself a beautiful state to be in.

We also read in the Buddha's narrations that during this journey he was at first threatened by some pretty scary demons but unflinching commitment to remain in awareness took him to a safe and comforting shore. These demons can be just the creations of our unconscious or they can even manifest as pretty nasty people who come in our lives and threaten us. It is important for the seeker to first enquiry if they have played a role, even as small one, in attracting these people and the mental states in them that contributed to this attraction. For example if I attract a person violent and full of hatred I will ask myself if there is in the depth of me hatred and violence and they are doing me a favour by pointing that out to me. I then remain steadfast in the presence of the One and usually these negative forces find their way out gradually leaving me with an enhance sense of peace, more understanding and gratitude.

Again in this journey you will find that many people can be attracted to you and it can be very tempting to bask in this admiration. Basking in this admiration also brings the temptation to abuse one's status and abuse the followers who are in a vulnerable state. At all stages to seeker should remain aware of any tendency to acquire a privileged position and take advantage of admiring and trusting people. All this is not a chore, far from it, it is a renewal of the vows of love that the seeker makes at every moment.

At this point Kaju became silent and rested his eyes with a gentle smile on his face and we all embraced this silence, the cosmic Mother had opened her arms and I truly felt at home.

Do not stress about Enlightenment

Many people these days have become very keen to achieve 'enlightenment' as an experience that you can have all of a sudden whilst having a walk or sitting next to an enlightened person. Often this desire can become a little bit obsessive with the person

always in a state of expectation and this passion can take us away from ourselves and the present moment.

My strongest advice is that there is no need to worry about experiencing liberation all of a sudden which can lead us to forget out to live and relate to those close to us and to life in general.

You are ok as you are now, you do not need to become a Buddha in a split second to live in peace with yourself and the world around you. No need to be enlightened to appreciate who we are. Just breath-in and out, be mindful, follow as best as you can the universal law (do unto others as you would like others to do unto you), cry if you have have to, say no if you need to but above all be kind to yourself and others and then life will take you where you need to.

The Tyrant, The Beloved and Morality

I often hear many committed religious people ask: 'Do you believe in God'? If you answer that you are agnostic on the matter or you don't believe in God they become indignant and they warn you that their loving God will burn you in hell for ever. Some of their books even go in great detail on how torture will be implemented in their loving Deity's dungeons. It is a bit like saying, as we are all supposed to be God's children that if one of your children does not believe in a story you told them you will tie them up and inflict the most cruel forms of torment on them. And when your child will scream: 'Daddy, daddy, when will this end? Please stop! You will answer: 'Never! This torture will go on for ever, and there is no reprieve!

Now imagine that you are walking in the park and you see someone burning a child with a blow torch you will immediately call the police and the maniac will be arrested. Yet some people worship this maniac! And the worshippers of this maniac threaten us that if we don't also worship it we will suffer eternal torment in hell. My thought on that is: 'Why shall I follow your belief when I see that you are already in hell? I am talking of a mental hell created by their intransigence, intolerance, condemnation and wilful ignorance.

So the question is, when you ask me if I believe in God, which God are you talking about? Now let us have a look about a few basic differences between the tyrannical God the Gnostics called the Demiurge and the Beloved Father which I also call the Great Silence, the Absolute or Mother Nature.

Demiurge – You must believe in my existence and worship me like a slave, you need to fear me and follow my every command or else. If you worship me I will give you unbridled pleasure in heaven. The tyrant rules through fear and reward.

The Beloved – Your true nature is love and unity, if you hurt the innocent you are hurting yourself. You will do good and plant loving seeds not out of fear and hope for a future reward but because you see all beings in you and you in all beings. Your belief is inconsequential because it is only an opinion and a belief, what matters is the energy you carry in your heart and your actions. Love begets love. This is why as we have seen in the chapter on Near Death Experiences that atheists can often go to a very beautiful and loving place on their death bed.

Demiurge – It is not in this universe or any universe, it is outside nature, aloof and unseen. Its followers often describe nature as inert, blind and unintelligent to prove the need for an outside source of intelligence. We can only draw close to it by worship, obedience and fear and most importantly by blindly following scriptures written by men claiming to hear its voice.

The Beloved – It is everywhere, it is in us, it is everything in infinite forms and permutations. Nature in all its awe, majesty and unicity is composed of ripples within the Beloved. As the

Isa Upanishad say: *'It is whole, whatever you add to it, it remains whole, whatever you subtract from it, it remains whole'* Countless ripples can come and go in the ocean yet the ocean always remains the same. Therefore nature in its creative and destructive forces, in its galaxies that come and go and its symmetries that always follow an episode of explosion is a beautiful object of meditation that can draw us close to the Beloved. The Beloved is in nature and mother-nature is in the beloved. The Beloved is nature and nature is the Beloved.

The Demiurge and Absolute Morality

Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hopes of reward after death. It is therefore easy to see why the churches have always fought science and persecuted its adherents." Albert Einstein, "[Religion and Science](#)," in the [New York Times Magazine](#), November 9, 1930

Absolute morality is one of the favourite topics of religious traditionalist and literalists. Their argument goes something like this: Morality and civil laws made by men can change over time and they do not have a solid ground. What we thought as correct a century ago might not be considered so at present therefore it is fallible and not absolute. On the other hand what has been dictated by God often by talking to a prophet is absolute, unchangeable and totally correct. For this reason we cannot question it or attempt to change it since it comes from an all-powerful and all-knowing being. The Demiurge does not allow questioning nor any form of innovation because its word and command is set on stone. When a literalist is questioned about some aspects of a religious law, which seem cruel and unfair, they only have an answer: 'If God ordered it who am I to question it?'

However as a free thinking and rational person I do question and this is what I ask myself. Can really an all knowing and just being approve of a widow burned alive at the pyre of her dead husband so that she can join him in the after-life? Can it really also approve that a woman accused of adultery is buried with the top of her body above the ground and then stoned to death over a period of two hours with her killers choosing the right size stones so that she does not die too quickly? Can a just super-being declare that Hitler, if on his death bed says sorry and accepts that Jesus dies on the cross for his sins, will automatically go to heaven and enjoy eternal peace and bliss whilst Schindler who saved the lives of thousands of people at the risk of his own will burn in hell for ever if he doesn't convert? I could bring you tons of more examples that make my skin cringe.

It seems to me that absolute morality leads to absolute immorality as it justifies the worse possible crimes and abuses and removes any possibility of avoiding them

Who sees nature in the Beloved and the Beloved in nature has a far less autocratic view of life and accepts that everything is in a flux. He/she also appreciates that nature evolves and one of the best outcomes of evolution is the capacity of humans to use their sensitivity and

rational capacities without fear of dogma. Nothing is perfect in this world but we can aim towards a more fair and tolerant society rejecting what is cruel and irrational.

For example in traditionalist societies, no matter what they say, women were seen as inferior, even defined as chattel, and the Demiurge's will was and is that their main role is only as household keepers subservient to the man. As societies are evolving into a more modern and humanistic outlook the role of women is also dramatically changing, of course there is still a long way to go but we are making progress. I trust that in the near future they will have equal pay and I welcome the fact that sexual abuse physical and verbal is no longer tolerated in democratic societies. But the worshippers of the Tyrant are very unhappy about this and they claim that modern women have no shame and we should go back to a society governed by religious laws and punishments.

The worshippers of the Tyrant are extremely autocratic but in the West they have had to tone down their demands due to the liberalisation of our societies and the decision that we will be governed by a secular system and not a religious one. Gone is the inquisition, the religious courts, the torture chambers and the burnings.

The Tyrant does not always manifest in a religious creed, it can also be a political dogma which takes the place of 'God' and classical examples are Maoism, Stalinism and Maoism. Dogma and absolutism are the enemies of progress. Any ideology that places its dogma above human rights and free thinking is in the domain of the Demiurge.

The principles of Ethics

We are all part of the same reality and we are all made of the same stuff, we are in everything and everything is in us therefore when we are hurting someone or something unnecessarily we are only hurting ourselves. From this we can easily follow the principles 'Do unto others what you would like others to do unto you' and 'Don't do to others what you don't want others to do to you'

"All beings tremble before violence. All love life. All fear death. See yourself in others. Then whom can you hurt? What harm can you do?" Buddha

The virtuous person enjoys a form of happiness which is not tainted with guilt, fear and nightmares. The criminal, true, enjoys the hurt he gives others and enjoys appropriating himself of what does not belong to him but he is always looking behind his shoulders and in his darkest nights he battles against his demons. The virtuous person chooses wisely what gives him happiness.

The principles of ethics are permanent but morality, in other words, how we apply those principles changes with time in accordance with the evolution of understanding and justice.

In the past the Old Testament told us to stone to death disobedient children but never mentioned what to do with abusive parents which often can cause rebellion in children.

Fortunately we now have evolved into a wiser and more caring society and we highly value the welfare of children and if someone wanted to stone to death their child for disobedience he would be locked up for a long time and the child would be taken away to safety.

In some ancient scriptures it is written that wives have a duty to satisfy their husbands and be obedient. I rejoice to the fact that in secular societies a woman is no longer viewed as subservient and as an object of pleasure; on the other hand she is given control of her body and the law now says that if the husband forces himself on her he is guilty of rape and this is something that religious societies never considered. Why they never considered it? Simply because most religions have been written by men for men.

Of course some 'prophets' and 'visionaries' had a glimpse unto the unity of life and the love and peace that is generated when we glimpse unto this reality but those realisations and subsequent expression in scriptures was mired by our worse conditioning as humans.

Human evolution and our understanding of justice and morality is a work in progress and what can evolve and change is alive. Being alive means you can grow, change and improve; it also means that you can eliminate what is no longer valid and proven wrong therefore truth and facts are more important than opinions and being proven right at any cost. Being alive means being honest.

Following a false sense of 'absolute morality' instead means to be dead and dishonest. What is written in stone cannot grow or eliminate, change and improvement are excluded. Individual rights and compassion are totally repressed in an absolutist and dogmatic society and we justify stoning, hangings and mutilations.

This is a very long subject and there is so much more that I could write about it but I hope that I have given you an idea of my view on the subject. So let us strive to create a better society because we are all in it together and we can try our best to create the highest collective good with minimal individual harm. Let us create a better world because we want to be better and loving individuals and not because we are afraid of a murderous maniac.

The Demiurge and the Beloved

Demiurge – I am all powerful, I have created you, I can see everything you do. You must acknowledge my existence, you must worship me, you are my slave. You must follow my laws even if my punishments are cruel and extreme and you have to do it cause I said so. Never question me! I love you but if you do not acknowledge me I will torture you for ever and ever.

The Beloved – *You are part of me and I am part of you. I cannot care less if you don't believe a particular story. Whenever you tend a flower, help the survival of the planet, help the sick and the hungry, whenever you are constructive and understanding you shine within me and I shine within you. When we create unnecessary pain there are repercussions and we will need*

to learn lessons so that we do not hurt the innocent again but be reassured, whatever your after-life belief is nothing is for ever and ultimately you will return into my bosom.

I am the cosmic song and whenever your song is in tune with mine you will come to me irrespective of which instrument you use to accompany your song. I am the love in Jesus, the repose in Buddha, the wisdom in Socrates and the equanimity in Lao Tzu and I shine bright in the heart of the atheist medic who offers his life to rescue those of others in war torn countries.

I will not impose my laws on you and I will respect your intelligence and reason. What I will do instead is to follow you patiently through your evolution and lead you gradually to realise that everything is in you and you are in everything therefore one day love will flow without limits from your heart and there will be peace and justice.

Mindful Meditation, Insight and Buddhism

Around two thousand and five hundred years ago in the subcontinent of India a prince turned ascetic left us a spiritual inheritance which in my view is the royal path to self-knowledge and liberation. I am talking about the practice of Sati and Vipassana and my favourite translation for these two words is mindfulness for Sati and insight for Vipassana..

I must make clear that at times I will not follow a strict script and convey at verbatim the traditional teaching of Theravada Buddhism concerning doctrine and the practice of meditation. I am not a literalist, far from it, and as far as I am concerned everything needs to adapt itself to the passage of time and new situations.

Reminder

I am not interested to convert anyone to anything and I am only sharing my experience and perception in the hope that parts of it can one day be of some use to a few seekers. If there are aspects of what I share that you do not agree with make yourself at home and happily discard them. I am only showing what has worked for me and my path in integrative consciousness.

In this chapter I will concentrate on the mindfulness Buddhist practice, if you are interested to learn about the Buddhist philosophy and spiritual path you can easily find a resume on the net explaining the principles of the four noble truths and the Eightfold path

My Youtube Playlist

The principles of this meditation are also explained in two of my youtube channels which contain the same playlist about this Buddhist meditation The first channel has also a lot of videos about natural medicine and bodywork. You can find the playlist in that channel here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Xu4ptGmqvg&list=PLQbb0NGdeW7u17rtNXyT4SUp4yxG3IzTu>

I have also created another channel called universal oneness with more than 70 clips about the spiritual path and it also contains the same playlist, [click here](#)

You can also visit my website with all the content of both channels here:

<https://newspiritualhumanism.wordpress.com/>

The diamond of Buddhism, in my opinion, is the meditations on mindfulness and particularly the meditations on feelings and our states of mind so that we can release destructive greed, hatred and delusion.

Why do we meditate?

At the first level to release some of the tension that we accumulate throughout our lives and reduce the havoc that it can create in our body and mind. Gentle breathing and body relaxation are great techniques to achieve this. Gentle breathing and relaxation also help us to achieve effortless concentration on whatever we are doing or thinking about and as a consequence we can be more creative and capable to retain information and in a manual job we can do it more efficiently.

At another level we meditate to look at ourselves without the barrier of an ego which always tries to justify our actions and thoughts no matter how destructive and absurd they are. We then start to know ourselves better and we can start to recognise our destructive impulses and gently release them. The consequences of this process of liberation are far reaching as they can change our lives and relationships for the better.

As we release our knots and ignorance we also cultivate a more benevolent mind and heart set with the loving kindness meditations. We wish peace and well-being for ourselves and others.

There are also higher concentration practices but they are not necessary. Some of us might be interested to explore life and its dimensions. For example I studied cosmology particularly to have fun during meditation. In advanced meditation you don't just meditate on the cosmos, you dissolve and you become the cosmos. Deeper perceptions can help you to further the deeper dimensions of life. Of course a good teacher is useful at this stage as the novice can easily extrapolate into all sorts of delusions. Stage one and two are really the most important aspects of this path.

Next we will examine some of the common problems faced by many people in regards to meditation and mindfulness particularly in this modern world.

Does it ever get better?

Years ago I used to go to a Buddhist meditation centre in the East End of London. Half way through the meditation session we had a short break for a cup of tea. During one of those breaks a young lady was sitting near me and with a rather painful look she addressed me like this: 'Does it ever get better?' 'What do you mean?' I asked. 'What I mean is this: I have been coming here for months and I was told to keep my back straight and have been shown techniques to stop my mind but the only result is that my back hurts and my mind is racing more than ever.' As she was talking I could see the hurt and dejection in her face so I tried to be encouraging and persuade her to continue.

Over the years it became clear to me that techniques based on effort and coercion can in many instances lead to a pleasant state of concentration however they can in other cases create tension and restlessness and miss the main aim of insight and awareness which is understanding the destructive and divisive states of our mind.

Our brain has trillions of neural cells each firing electrical and chemical impulses and in turn they communicate with each other through trillions of neural pathways creating memories and impulses. In simple words our brain is firing full time on all cylinders with a force that could power an electrical factory. To forcefully stop this gigantic activity requires a supramundane effort which is often destined to failure. Sometimes ago I heard a junior meditation teacher say: 'After so many years I have only managed to stop my mind for about two minutes in a ninety minutes session so progress is slow'. In other words he was spending all his meditation time fighting with his mind like taking a bull by the horns and trying to force him into submission. No wonder so many people stop meditating in utter frustration!

On the other hand a few years ago I was at a lecture by a senior Buddhist monk and I was pleased to hear him say: 'If a mindfulness teacher tells you that meditation is about stopping the mind he is not a skilful teacher' I agreed with him.

One of the aims of meditation is to bring tranquillity, peace and self-understanding and it is difficult to achieve these if we use a confrontational and forceful method to subdue the restlessness of the mind.

So what is the alternative?

It is a simple one. Avoid going for a frontal attack like if the mind was your enemy. Have compassion and understand that actually the mind is there to serve us by providing necessary memories and directions, without your brain you could not read and understand my writing. True, because of our conditioning and frantic life style our thoughts are racing very fast and at times are all over the place. When I talk about thoughts keep in mind that I am also talking about emotions and feelings.

The path that we will be exploring together is a gentle one, rather than taking a bull by the horns we will be caressing a cat and gently put it to sleep and we will feel soothed and relaxed by its purring. Trust me it does work!.

Stages of mindfulness and insight

Posture

Before we explore the practice let us talk a little about a basic step in the process of learning meditation and that is our posture. Most of you have heard that you need to keep your back straight and legs crossed, sometimes even face a wall with your eyes open. Even when pain and discomfort occur you should repeat: 'pain, pain, pain' and release it and maintain your posture unchanged. At the same time if there are thoughts present, like a renown monk wrote, you should take a stick to it.

If this approach suits you, by all means, stick to it. It definitely did not suit me and with time I found that this approach although it led me to a strong state of concentration ultimately it

was the result of suppression. My path is: 'smile at yourself, be kind, understand yourself, free yourself' from unnecessary tension and once I took this path my meditation not only flourished but it came easy and naturally. Yes it is done naturally with a kind mind but don't let these words deceive you, they are not just all honey and sweetness beneath this approach there is a commitment and passion that can go places.

Sitting – No need to put yourself in a posture which is unnatural to you and heralds the beginning of your mindfulness practice with a sense of discomfort and dread. If your back hurts find a support for it like the back of your chair, a wall or a cushion. If sitting on the floor does not suit you sit on a chair. If keeping your back straight hurts you don't need to spend your whole meditation session cursing your posture. Instead bend it and recline in such a way that sitting is pleasant and comfortable and you end up looking forward to your mindfulness session. Now let me tell you something really cool, after using this approach for a while I found more and more often that after a few minutes of meditation my back would spontaneously and without effort straighten in a pleasant and relaxed way. The shoulders would remain relaxed, the chin slightly forward to avoid curving and hyper extending the neck. You will be amazed on how your body can respond when you treat it kindly and with respect.

As we explore the stages of mindfulness we will also look into the postures of lying down, standing and walking.

Sleep is ok

One monk once wrote that in order not to fall asleep during meditation he sat next to a deep well with no protective wall meaning that if he would have dozed off he would have fallen into the well putting his life at risk. Sleep is a dreaded body function amongst ancient schools of spirituality. Sleep is the enemy! Ok here I go again! There is nothing wrong with sleep! If I start meditating either sitting or lying on my back and feel like going to sleep do you know what I do? I sleep! After twenty minutes or so I wake up refreshed as I have allowed my body to rest and regenerate.

Mindfulness of body and breath

Before we can move into releasing and soothing destructive states of mind we might find useful to first calm our body and particularly our breath. I love this meditation because it is the most natural form of awareness available to us, no need to awaken the kundalini, visualise a powerful light or try to levitate. Just relax and watch your breath coming in and out of you and whilst you do this relax your body.

Let us start

Choose a comfortable posture either sitting, standing, lying down or walking at a slow pace. Bring your awareness to your breath and just watch it entering and leaving your body. Do not interfere with it, just observe it with a sympathetic gaze. Your attention will caress it and soothe it.

If your breath is short and shallow, simply say silently to yourself: 'short....short.....short' if it is long and even a bit laborious say to yourself: 'long...long...long'. You can also use other words to that effect, whatever works for you. Once your breath calms down and harmonises itself just enjoy the poised and soothing rhythm. Simple isn't it?

Variations

To help this process if you require it you can also try other techniques which will help your awareness and concentration.

- 1) Breathe in and out and count after each breath. Count till ten or in other words ten breaths and then start again another cycle of ten breaths. You can for example complete ten cycles that is hundred breaths. This can help you to concentrate and have an idea of how long you are meditating each time and monitor your progress.
- 2) Recite an inward sound with each breath. For example many Yogis they think of the word 'Soh' as they breathe in and the word 'Ham' as they breathe out. So-Ham in Sanskrit means 'I am' not an egotistic I am but an expression of pure being. The variations can be almost never ending. If you are a Christian you can say for example 'Jesus' as you breathe in and 'Lord' as you breathe out and so on.
- 3) This is a meditative technique by one of my favourite Buddhist teachers, his name is Thich Nhat Hanh and he teaches a very effective five stages meditation. The meditation is divided into five stages where you inwardly repeat a word or phrase when breathing in and out. You can repeat the same combination of words a few times and then proceed to the next stage. This meditation is part of one of the videos on my youtube playlist.

Breathing in I know I am **breathing in**

Breathing out I know I am **breathing out**

Breathing in, I notice that my in-breath is **deep**

Breathing out, I notice that my out-breath goes **slowly**

Breathing in, I **calm** my whole body

Breathing out, I feel at **ease**

Breathing in, I **smile** (at everything – including my worries!)

Breathing out, I **release** (everything including all tension)

Breathing in, I am aware that I am dwelling in the **present moment**

Breathing out, I know this is a moment of happiness, a **wonderful moment**

Of course this is a bit too long to memorise and repeat inwardly therefore we simplify in this way:

Stage 1: for a few breaths breathing in just think **'In'**, breathing out say **'Out'**

Stage 2: for a few breaths breathing in say **'Deep'**, breathing out say **'Slow'**

Stage 3: for a few breaths breathing in say **'Calm'**, breathing out say **'At ease'**

Stage 4: for a few breaths breathing in say **'I smile'**, breathing out say **'I release'**

Stage 5: for a few breaths breathing in say **'Present moment'**, breathing out say **'Wonderful moment'**. You can also substitute the two affirmations with: **'Here'** breathing in and **'And Now'** breathing out.

Mindfulness of the body

We usually carry so much tension in our body and we are not even aware of it and this is normally a manifestation of tension in all our being including the breath, thoughts and emotions.

Now as the breath is relaxing and becoming more harmonious let us bring our attention to our body. Let us scan it starting from the head (you can also start from the feet).

Breathing in and breathing out I become aware of your skull, is there any tension there? Relax your skull and release any tension there. Feel it becoming softer and tension free. My skull is becoming more relaxed. You can remain in this area as needed.

Next go to your face and practice the same. Relax the forehead and any tension wrinkles as the forehead relaxes and any worries frowning it leave as well. Relax your forehead and feel your breath becoming harmonious, calm and deep.

Do the same with the rest of your face. Have a gentle smile whilst relaxing the face. Let your face be relaxed with a gentle smile, no need to frown and show hostility to anyone.

Relax your ears, your chin and move to your neck. Breathe in breath out and become aware of your neck an area of great tension. Make sure that it is not hyper extended and contracted.

Now move to another very important area, the shoulders. They are often an area where we store so much tension and muscular contraction. Repeat to yourself: 'Breathing in and breathing out I relax my shoulders. I lift the weight and contraction in them. My shoulders feel light and free. What a relief!

Of course you do not need to say all the things I am writing. You can simply say: 'Breathing and breathing out I relax my shoulders' or even 'shoulders, shoulders' see what works for you.

Now that you get the drift do the same moving gradually throughout the rest of your body. The back, the chest, the abdomen, the thighs, the knees, the calves and finally the feet including the dorsum and the soles.

If any area feels particularly tense or even painful stay a little longer there. Breathing in and breathing out feel that you are soothing it and healing it and sometimes you might be able to improve it.

Before we move to the next part let me again remind you about my Youtube channel 'massagevideo' and the playlist about Mindful meditation, all these instructions are there in much more detail. The link is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Xu4ptGmqvg&list=PLQbb0NGdeW7u17rtNXyT4SUp4yxG3IzTu>

Lying down on the back and on the side

Lying down, particularly on my back, is one of my favourite poses, not because I am just plain lazy but because in this pose meditation comes to me effortlessly. We are already struggling so much about so many things and I like to keep my meditation, as much as possible, natural and free from struggle. In this state of relaxation it is easy for me to harmonise my breath, relax and soothe my body as I scan it with my mind going up and down my muscles and organs. I happily flow with the sensation of my body on the one hand grounding itself and at the same time feeling lighter and freer.

A variation of the above posture is the renowned posture of the reclining Buddha lying on one side, the knees slightly tucked in like in a foetal position. His face is lit by a serene smile. To many people it represents the dying moments of the Buddha ready to let go of the body and this world and blissful to enter into Nirvana.

Sometimes I start meditating lying on my back for a few minutes or more, then I turn to one side in the reclining Buddha pose. I remain in it for some time then I take the same pose on the other side and finally complete my session by returning on my back and staying there for a while. Easy and pure bliss!

Don't get too attached

Because in meditation we can feel so blissful and relaxed we can start getting attached to these states of mind and we start categorising our mindfulness session as 'a good meditation' and a 'bad meditation'. My advice is don't because this is another form of attachment which can cause you strife and pain, suffering when we don't get what we were expecting. If in meditation you have a lot of thoughts and you feel restless simply say to yourself: 'wondering, fidgeting' or something like this. Don't fight against your state of mind, simply acknowledge it and accept it as it is with a gentle and kind gaze. In this manner with

time you will touch the state of equanimity which has a flavour of peace and contentment that even transcends bliss.

A reminder

Before I continue I like to remind the reader one more time that all I am doing is to share what is working for me and in some cases I do not toe traditional teachings but I brought some adaptations which are in tune with my particular nature and most importantly with modern times and challenges. For example in most traditional schools of Buddhism you concentrate on repeating with the breathing words like: 'Impermanent, No self, Suffering'. These words are also repeated when doing other practices like walking meditation. These words aim to remind us the transient nature of life, its suffering, sorrow and the illusory nature of our self and personality and ultimately should lead us to a complete detachment from this world. Part of this process also involves the eradication of all desires, the extinction of the flame of life.

I love many aspects of Buddhism to bits and I am ever so grateful for the many things I have learned from it and their results on my life. However this aspect of traditional Buddhism is not for me, it has worked and works for so many but personally I find it rather depressing. Of course often life really stinks and is really painful and after 69 years on this earth I can vouch for it, nevertheless my experience is that if we begin to loosen the hatred and contractions that brought us here, amongst all the pain, we can begin to appreciate the beauty of nature and the blessings of being in this universe. The Absolute with its unconditional love and liberating repose is ever so close to us, it is in us, it is us, our true self.

For this reason I am more in tune with teachers like Thick Nat Han who bring a far more life appreciative and positivistic approach to the practice of Buddhism.

At the same time I appreciate the usefulness of the suffering, no-self and impermanence concept due to the fact that we can be too attach to our ego and to our possessions and we forget the fact that nothing is ours forever and this attachment can lead to a tremendous amount of suffering. Therefore from time to time we can remind ourselves of this reality.

Feelings and states of mind

Mindfulness of body and breath has an element of relaxed concentration in it as we are learning how to relax and become aware of our bodies and the tension in them. By focusing our mind we become more one pointed, alert and aware and these are qualities that can improve many areas of our life like our studies and work. When we are able to be more focused and relaxed we are able to better absorb information and perform tasks with care and concentration. Most meditation centres are happy to teach you just these two aspects of mindfulness as over time they can improve your life in an easy, safe and simple way.

However a keen seeker will proceed to the next stages of inner knowledge and transformation.

Awareness of feelings and states of mind

Previously I said that I love Buddhism to bits and one of the reasons is I love its teachings on awareness and insight on feelings and states of mind because I believe that it is this awareness that triggers and maintains the process of liberation, so let us take a look at this practice. I must stress that mindfulness of feelings and thoughts is not just an awareness to be practiced during meditation. It is an insight unto ourselves that we can cultivate through any waking moment particularly when powerful emotions and feelings overpower us.

Let us start. It is natural that when we meditate after a while feelings and thoughts will start to emerge. Many of them are not very important, they are just the usual chatter of the mind but others carry more energy and they are recurring and at times unpleasant. At this stage we simply become aware of them, we accept them as they are. We do this without judgement and with a kind gaze, after all we all are conflictual and flawed individuals. We do not need to suppress and judge ourselves because with this approach we only reinforce our conflicts. Do we have feelings of anger and frustration? Do we have feelings of depression and despondency? Maybe we notice fear and apprehension. Do not oppose them, just notice them and soothe them with your breath, relaxation and compassion.

Overtime our awareness will deepen into the next stage. At this level we will begin to observe that some feelings are more prominent and frequent than others and they form our states of mind. For example we see that feelings of anger and frustration are quite frequent and that our state of being is a frustrated and angry one. This is a very important realization because it opens a portal unto a positive inner transformation.

We then can observe how this state of mind influences our lives. We can see how this incipient anger makes us aggressive and bitter and jeopardises many of our relationships and situations. It colours how we behave with our family, friends and colleagues and how often it makes us self-righteous and opinionated. In this state of mind we look for confrontation and we always blame others. We make a mountain out of a molehill and when people react to our unreasonable behaviour we refuse to take responsibility for our attitude and the results it creates. Blame and more confrontation is the only response we know.

When we are truly honest and we realise the reality of our situation and how it colours our life in a destructive manner we can then begin to let go. We do not judge anger as good or bad, we just soothe it. We realise how this constant state of mind harms us and everything around us and this realization gives us the capacity to release it.

No-Self and Honesty

In some instances the concept of No-Self is extremely useful. What do I mean by this? If during my meditation and reflection I release the ego that is always judging and evaluating situations with a sense of self-righteousness and I just look at whatever memories and situations come to my gaze without a sense of a self that wants to colour them with a gratifying interpretation I open the portal of liberation.

Let me give you an example. When I broke up with my last girlfriend I was full of bitterness and resentment totally in the grip of blame and with a wish to see her suffer to satisfy my desire for vengeance. What I mean by this is that I felt what so many of us feel in this situation IE Our ex-partner is to blame for the break up and he/she was dishonest and deceitful and because I am so hurt I wish her ill. As my meditation deepened and I began to observe events just as they were and without bringing into it a sense of judgement and without being attached to an 'I' whilst looking at them something really liberating happened to me. I began to realize that, actually, I was the cause to a great extent of our conflict. I saw my inability to have nurturing feelings and to be tender and of accepting her emotional needs and in the end she had no other choice but to walk away seeking a more fulfilling relationship. This perception gave me a sense of joy and freedom and I felt like a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders. My righteous ego was hurting me causing needless suffering by hiding the true causes of the pain in the relationship.

Another example

Walking has been one of my greatest passions in life, not only it helps my fitness but it also exhilarates me and makes me 'high', inspiration and new ideas follow. However for a long time the benefits of my walks were somewhat hampered by a constant feeling clouding my mind and I am talking about anger and resentment and this feeling was always triggered by a memory reminding me: 'He said this, she said that, he did this, she did that. How could he? How could she?' A few times friends who met me on the street drew my attention that I was sulking. As I progressed with my mindfulness I began to become aware of the extent of my resentment and whenever I observed that it was raising I just said to myself: 'Anger, anger, frustration' Soon I realised that there was a lot of anger in me and that various events, some even minor, could easily trigger it. However those events were not important, what was relevant was the anger festering in me. As I started owning that reality and begun to observe it with an impartial, no-self mind, this resented dynamic begun to show its nature to me. I started to observe that beneath anger and frustration there is often a sense of past vulnerability and impotence and the incapacity to express my feelings, when necessary, with clarity and without the need to attack and hurt someone else's feelings. I also saw that sometimes there was no need to express them but simply it was better to let them go.

I saw that sometimes the other person did not mean to upset me, it was me just upsetting myself. Of course sometimes people can be very aggressive and insensitive but then there is no need to fester inside, it is only hurting my own self, better to move on and say NO to further contact with them if possible. If this is not possible then just let them understand that you are not a victim and will not accept the abuse.

There are many possibilities and scenarios but mindfulness can gradually give you a very peaceful and grounded emotional intelligence on how best to respond to these kind of situations.

I can now honestly say that a lot of that unnecessary anger has dropped and I am satisfied with the outcome. Awareness with a compassionate mind is a great healer. It is great to walk without a bubbling cauldron of frustrated memories.

Just let it flow, the art of Vipassana (Insight)

Insight teaches us to observe the movement of thoughts and feelings as a flow and we do not need to get hung up on them and think that they are eternal. For example the pain of separation can seem unbearable and unshakable yet when we observe it without identification and a kind gaze it soon begins to flow away and change. Of course some states of mind take longer than others and that is ok but soon or later pain and loss become peace and love.

A new acquisition can give us a lot of pleasure and excitement yet the fear of losing it can create apprehension and fear so whilst we can appreciate it in the present moment we should also be willing to accept that this possession can fade away one day. All things move in a flow, they take birth, they grow and then they transform. The elements in our body they give us life but one day they will return to their source, they will become molecules and form another form elsewhere. The old passes away to give birth to the new. We become old and die to let the young take our place, this is how nature unfolds itself, so let us flow with it.

So many feelings both of pain and pleasure and so much attachment and also aversion arise in our minds and we constantly identify with them as if they were permanent and constituted our personality and defined our sense of being. When we feel loss we think that this pain is going to be there for ever and define who we are. When we feel anger and outrage we feel again that we are this rage and this rage defines us. Insight teaches us that although these states of mind have a temporary reality and they are not eternal. They are waves that come and go, some are stronger than others yet they all come and go. So breath in and breath out and let go of the illusion and when pain or hatred choke you just remember the magic words: **'This not me, this is not mine, this is not I'**

When emotional pain arises in us if we breathe in and out with it and send it loving kindness it will transform itself and teach us many things.

A guided meditation

I am breathing in, I am breathing out, calm and deep, a gentle smile of relief and repose adorns my face. I relax my shoulders, neck, pelvis and legs. I breathe in and breathe out. Mindfulness is releasing the most troublesome and repetitive emotional patterns, the chatter is subsiding. Peace comes and goes like a caress and every time it settles a little deeper in my being.

I now visualise that I am sitting on the shore of a flowing river, the air is fresh and carries the scent of the water and the fragrance of the flowers, tall and majestic trees adorn the waterside. My mind and heart blend with this idyllic environment. I breathe in and breathe out, my body is at ease and relaxed. I contemplate the flowing waters of the river and I appreciate that it is its constant flow that keeps it clean, fresh, and allows so many forms of life to flourish in its banks. In this world nothing is constant, nature is forever renewing itself, the old bows to the flow of time and gives space for the new to flourish. So why should I hold on to anything hoping that it will never change. I accept change, I accept the flow and renewal of all things. I realise that whenever anything or anyone move out of my life they are leaving a space for new things to come in. (End)

Let it Flow

In the same way the pain of separation that I am feeling today is not eternal, is not for ever, all feelings come and go, they all change, they all are part of the flow therefore I do not get attached to any feelings as if they were eternal and unchangeable. Of course sometimes life sends us some very challenging events and suffering is inevitable and grieving can be a healing emotion as we should not become automats. However rather than getting attached to the pain we can breathe through it, bless it, heal it and gradually let it go.

I often hear some Buddhists say it is not skilful to suffer about painful events like the death of a child or a parent, in other words we should not have any human feelings. I totally dissociate myself from that frame of mind. I bless and cherish my humanity and my capacity to grieve, to hurt, to cry, to love and cherish the ones I love. The only difference with someone who is on the path and others who are not is that some people get unduly attached to their pain and they keep reinforcing it by obsessing over it.

Let your tears flow, let your heart hurt, be human, be alive, bless your pain and then gradually breathe in and breathe out and accept that nothing is for ever and that everyone is crying and grieving about something. Slowly and surely move on, let it go, start anew, bless the earth you walk on, caress the flowers and appreciate their fragrance when it enters your nostrils and fills your lungs. Move on, move on, let it be, let it flow

Psychoanalysis and mindfulness

When I was in my thirties I became aware that, as most people do, I had emotional issues and I became very curious to find out about their root. For this reason I embarked on a journey that lasted nearly four years and saw me on the therapeutic couch, so to speak, with more than one therapist exploring also more than one psychotherapeutic approach.

In the end I was totally committed to relieve the 'final trauma' in order to free my psyche once and for all. The idea is that you uncover various events in your early life that shape your present mind set and emotional make up. I began to spend hours and hours every week investigating my feelings and their root in the hope that one day I would be free of pain and conflict. What happened instead is that I kept digging deeper and deeper removing more and more dirty laundry but the more I dug and the deeper I went the more stuff came out and this could go on for ever. I then realized that this approach, although very useful at some level, had limitations because, although understanding the origins of our psyche is important, digging the past only uncovers more past events and this process can go on for ever.

Mindfulness gave me a way out of this conundrum. Instead of examining I began to just observe what was emerging without interfering with it and trusting in the inherent intelligence of my pure consciousness. Why I am using the word 'pure consciousness? What I mean is that I am observing with an awake and attentive gaze but without the interference of my ego and conditioning. See it as its. What matters is the feeling that emerges, its energetic state, it's wave length and how it affects us. When we simply look at it with a gentle gaze and a tender heart this feeling relaxes, what we need to know about it will emerge and then one day it will depart. The emptiness left will be soon be filled with peace and joy. Of course my past psychotherapy did help to some extent by adding some very useful snippets of information to my mindful perception.

Important

Many people who are new to mindfulness often start with a course where they are taught to visualise themselves as being separate from their mind observing their thoughts as if they did not belong to them and to watch them from a distance. This method has many merits and has helped many people however with some beginners it can create a sense of separation and an unpleasant sense of alienation. In this event I suggest that you visualise your thoughts and emotions as ripples that come and go into a lake which is your own self, they are children who stray and then when they see the kind gaze of their mother they happily return to her and melt away.

Loving Kindness

So far in this chapter we have examined various ways to release and let go of unnecessary tension and destructive feelings and emotions. Now we are going to explore the best ways

to assist the process of acquiring a more constructive and loving state of mind. Already by releasing hostile and depressive states of mind we automatically start to acquire a more creative and conciliatory outlook but we also want to assist this process and the practice of Loving Kindness is one of the best ways to achieve this aim.

Before we start the practice I like to share with you the prayer that is recited in most Buddhist centres before starting it.

Prayer of Loving Kindness

He who is skilled in his own well-being, and who wishes to attain that state of Calm (Nirvana) should act thus: he should be sincere, upright and conscientious, of soft speech, gentle and humble.

Contented, living simply, peaceful and unburdened, of simple livelihood, with senses calmed, prudent, modest and without showing anxiety for recognition and support.

Let him not perform the slightest wrong for which wise men may rebuke him.. Let him wish 'May all beings be happy and safe. May they have happy minds.'

Whatever living beings there may be - feeble or strong, long, stout, or of medium size, short, small, large, those seen or those unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born as well as those yet to be born - may all beings have happy minds.

Let him not deceive another nor despise anyone anywhere. In anger or ill will let him not wish another ill.

Just as a mother would protect her only child even with her own life even so let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings.

Let him radiate boundless love towards the entire world - above, below and across - unhindered, without ill will, without enmity. (Towards the whole world also means all forms of existence including vegetable and mineral).

Whether standing, walking, sitting or reclining, as long as he is awake, let him develop this mindfulness. This, the wise says, is the highest conduct here.

You can recite this prayer before the Loving Kindness meditation or mindfulness practice or any other time you wish.

There are many ways to recite Loving Kindness, I will show you a couple of them and you can change it to soothe your psyche and inclination.

Let us start

Breathe in, breathe out relax your body

Breathe in, breathe out relax your mind and feelings

Bring your attention to your own self, let your gaze be kind and caring, and silently repeat a few times:

‘May I be blessed by loving kindness’

Blessing yourself with loving kindness means that you wish yourself well before wishing well for others. Why is this? Simply because you cannot give that which you haven’t got. The idea is that you fill yourself with peace and compassion and then you extend to others.

So what is the meaning of wishing yourself and then other to be filled with Loving Kindness? It means that you wish yourself and others to be released from conflict, confusion, hatred and restlessness acquiring a more peaceful and creative mind. From a more harmonious space you can be more creative, resolve conflicts and have better relationships all round and your health could in some cases improve. From this space you can be creative and successful without hurting others and without being prey to envy and jealousy. When you are blessed by Loving kindness you can be more self-assured and grounded with a clear mind. At the same time you are also caring and supportive of others with a calm mind and loving heart. This is the route to peace and happiness.

After you have recited a few times ‘May I be blessed with loving kindness’ or you can also say ‘May you be blessed by Loving Kindness’ (thinking about yourself), just shorten the phrase to simply ‘loving....loving....loving’. Don’t repeat in a quick mechanical way, leave sometime between repetitions and feel in your heart the love and peace that you are generating.

Next feel the loving kindness that you have generated expand from you to the city or area you live in and offer it to all the living beings residing there and again use the same recitation as above. In your blessings and well wishes include nature like the soil and rivers, see them free of pollution and toxins and see plants and trees growing healthy and luxuriant.

In the same way after a few minutes expand your blessings to the country you live in. Follow this visualisation by expanding your blessings to the whole world and end the meditation by wishing Loving Kindness to the whole universe.

There are many ways to practice Loving Kindness and another popular one is the following. You start as usual to bless yourself and then you expand the blessings to someone you love, and then continue by expanding it to someone for whom you have neutral feelings. Next go to someone you don’t like or maybe even hate, see them being filled with LK, peaceful and happy. Complete the meditation by sending LK to the whole world and universe.

Standing meditation

There is also a *standing meditation* and here nothing much changes. You still practice the same awareness as in the above instructions except that this time you stand up with your

feet parallel to your shoulders, your spine straight but not rigid and shoulders relaxed. You can place your hands on the sides or one on top of the other resting on your lower abdomen just below the navel. In this pose you can practice mindfulness, insight and loving kindness. Some people alternate sitting meditation with standing meditation and also with walking and lying down. As you can see Buddhism has made meditation simple and also fun!

Walking meditation

Walking Meditation is another effective, simple and fun way to practise meditation. The idea is to walk slowly and mindful of your steps. Your breath and shoulders relaxed, a soft smile adorning your face, you feel the earth under your feet and you thank it for the support and sustenance it offers you. Besides being aware of your steps, particularly if you are in pleasant surroundings appreciate the beauty around you and breathe its fragrance. Thich Nhat Han expounds this practice in a beautiful and poetical manner so I strongly recommend that you do a search and read his instructions.

We have covered quite a lot in this chapter yet it is just a grain in the Buddhist collection of teachings. However I hope that I have been able to illustrate why Buddhist mindfulness and insight constitute such an important facet in our diamond. Buddhism is an important facet because it can contribute to show us our contractions and hostility, our war against life and by looking at them with calmness and compassion it shows us how to release them.

I like to close this chapter by sharing with you this beautiful affirmation. I found it by chance on the internet and the author is unknown.

"If I have harmed anyone in any way either knowingly or unknowingly through my own confusions

I ask their forgiveness.

If anyone has harmed me in any way either knowingly or unknowingly through their own confusions

I forgive them.

And if there is a situation I am not yet ready to forgive.

I forgive myself for that.

For all the ways that I harm myself, negate, doubt, belittle myself, judge or be unkind to myself through my own confusions I forgive myself."

Upanishads and Vedanta

And now let us go to the next facet of our diamond. Veda means knowledge and anta culmination therefore we are talking about the highest realization and understanding of life. There are four Vedas and besides all the various aspects of knowledge contained in them there is a part that expounds philosophy and spiritual realization. This spiritual vision is summarised in two mantras:

‘Tat Tvam Asi’ also written as Tatvamasi can be loosely translated as ‘Thou are That’; the second mantra is ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ which is mostly translated as ‘I am the Brahman’. As I mentioned before the word Brahman can be loosely translated as Absolute, The Whole, Totality, All there is etc.

The Upanishads are a collection of texts written around 800 to 400 BC. There are about 200 surviving Upanishads and 14 are considered the most important. They expound the philosophical part of the Vedas a monistic vision which sees the totality of existence as a manifestation of one energy that can transform itself into infinite forms yet always remains whole. Infinite forms emanate within the Brahman, like waves and drops in the ocean, and although they have a temporary existence which appears as separate ultimately they realise their true nature and the illusion of separation vanishes. Therefore mantras like ‘I am the Brahman’ point to the realization that although I am just one separate form amongst trillions of forms and one day I will die my true essence is the eternal source of the totality of all life. Please try to avoid this common mistake in understanding monism: ‘You, your present separate self, the separate wave is not the whole, it is only a tiny part of it. So do not use this mantras as an ego booster, it is only when your separate ego merges into the whole and you disappear then you can grasp what being the Brahman really means. This is actually a very humbling experience and not something you boost about.

Most authors of the Upanishads were not keen on Vedic rituals and did not follow the Brahmanic priesthood. They considered rituals and offerings as useless and stressed the importance of meditation, enquiry (Who am I?) and direct experience of the Absolute.

The illusion of separation in Sanskrit is called ‘Maya’. Some Yogis and Indian theologians consider Maya purely as a negative force which makes us forget our true nature however others see Maya as part of the Brahman and once we realise our oneness we can enjoy the multitude of forms she creates. In the awakened stage Maya no longer imprisons us but she exalts the beauty and majesty of creation and holds us in awe to the majesty of the universe.

Of the 14 main Upanishads the Isa Upanishad is considered the principal one so let us read together a few verses to penetrate its essence.

That is whole; this is whole; from the Invisible Whole comes forth the visible whole. Though the visible whole has come out from that Invisible Whole, yet the Whole remains unaltered.
Translated by Swami Paramananda.

*Those who see all creatures in themselves and themselves in all creatures know no fear.
Those who see all creatures in themselves and themselves in all creatures know no grief.
How can the multiplicity of life delude the one who sees its unity?*

Beautiful verse, isn't? Let us see the next:

*In dark night live those for whom the world without alone is real;
in night darker still, for whom the world within alone is real.
The first leads to a life of action, the second to a life of meditation.
But those who combine action with meditation cross the sea of death through action
and enter into immortality through the practice of meditation.
So have we heard from the wise.*

I like the above verse because it stresses that we cannot follow a path alone as we need to combine together meditation and study with a life led in a compassionate and charitable manner. It says that good actions help us to cross the sea of death meaning that we can transcend the bonds of Karma that keeps us chained to a life of suffering. Good actions slowly undo our bad Karma and meditation shows us our true nature.

Now let us look at a few verses from some other Upanishads

He who in this world, without knowing this Immutable, offers oblations in the fire, performs sacrifices and undergoes austerities even for many thousand years, finds all such acts but perishable; he who departs from this world without knowing this Immutable, is miserable. But he who departs from this world after knowing this Immutable, attains immortality.
Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

Performing praying rituals and reading scriptures is a useless act unless you have the beloved in your heart

As a person acts, so he becomes in life. Those who do good become good; those who do harm become bad. Good deeds make one pure; bad deeds make one impure. You are what your deep, driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

By destiny the Upanishads do not mean that you can create a material life in this world with you having all the material objects you desire. By destiny they mean a life full of peace and the ultimate liberation from suffering and rebirth. If you do not like the idea of rebirth simply view this expression as repeating the same mistakes over and over in this life.

Smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a grain of millet is the Self. This is the Self dwelling in my heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than all the worlds. Chandogya Upanishad

In our hearts the beloved resides smaller than a grain of rice but when we penetrate into it we see that it is the love that it pervades the whole of life.

As the sun who is the light of the world cannot be tainted by the defects in our sight or by the objects it illuminates, so the one Self, dwelling in all, cannot be tainted by the evils of the world, for this Self transcends all!

The supreme ruler, inner Self of all, multiplies his oneness into many. Eternal joy is theirs who see the Self in their own hearts. To none else does it come!
Katha Upanishad

This verse truly condenses the essence of Vedanta and the Upanishads. The Absolute multiplies itself into the many and we as one of the many carry its presence in our hearts. By meditating upon the Loving Kindness in our hearts the drop that we are merges back into the ocean.

Vedanta explains this relation between the drop and the ocean by pointing out that in our hearts beyond the sensation of a destructive and separate ego there is a spark called the Atman whose essence is pure love and bliss. Through meditation and right action we can realise that the Atman is part of the Paramatman the universal Self and with this realization the Atman remembers its true nature and raises above duality and conflict.

Philosophical speaking I like the resemblance between Vedanta and Quantum cosmology because both at different levels speak of a similar reality and that reality is an essence from which all manifestations of life emerge and ultimately go back to and although they seem separate they are still part of the same essence.

Later on we will read about the Christian Gnostics and you will be able to appreciate how close those Christians were to Vedanta. According to the Gnostics the main mission of Jesus was not to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, far from it, Jesus came to awaken in us the realization of our true nature, in other words to realize that we are one with the Father.

So we have now concluded another chapter in the diamond which expounds the unity of life and how we can be separate and unique yet aware of something that ties all together.

Self or No-Self, the ongoing debate

When the Buddha was born at that time India was profoundly under the influence of Vedic philosophy and most yogis and religious scholars followed the concept of an individual self being part of a universal Self, Jiva- Atman (Individual) vs Para-Atman (Supreme). The power of illusion (Maya) can dupe the Jiva-Atman into believing to be separated and at the mercy of the elements. Gyan, which in Sanskrit means knowledge through direct realization, can free us from this illusion and give us liberation (Moksha).

So the Buddha, as all good reformers, decided to turn the prevailing religious tenets on their head and expound a concept totally opposite to them. He proclaimed that there was no Self! Two of the main points for this assertion were:

All the constructs of our mind are just a succession of thoughts with no centre to them and without any permanent identity, in other words we just jump from a thought, memory and idea to another without a particular identity which is constant. The second is that there is nothing permanent or unique in us, we are made of the same elements as everything else in the universe and these elements come together out of natural causes and at the dissolution of the body they go back to their source. However Buddhism speaks of rebirth although it denies a permanent soul and it explains this concept by saying that what goes from body to body is just a string of memories like pearls in a necklace and there is no permanent Self to hold them together.

Some schools of Buddhism like the Tathagatagarbha school attempted to bring a form of unity to the division between Buddhism and Vedanta. The fact that we are made of elements that are the same everywhere was seen as a positive and life affirming reality that show us the unity of the whole life and, although our individual ego is an illusion, our true Self is interconnected of the whole of life and free of conflict and pain. The Tathagatagarbha school stressed that our true mind is the Buddha mind, enlightened and free, but it is covered in the dust of illusion, greed and hatred and with practice we can remove this dust and express who we truly are. However the schools following this approach and similar concepts like the Yogacharas have always been in the minority amongst Buddhists.

So which when is it? Is there a Self or is there no Self?

When you follow a doctrine hook, line and sinker you might not see reality independently of your conditioning instead you will see a confirmation of your conditioning. If you are a Buddhist no matter how much you meditate and enquiry you will always see that there is no Self, if you follow Vedanta you will see the opposite.

My path when I am looking at a profound spiritual question is to attempt, as far as possible, to empty my mind from preconceived ideas and just look at the question without any ready made solutions.

So when I started reflecting on this question this is what I perceived. If I am communicating with someone and I am truly relaxed and feeling in harmony with that person the communication that occurs is free from a sense of profound separation and there is a sense of depth and true communication. In that state I perceive a light in them which is also in me and all around us and I feel a presence which is far more than a meaningless succession of thoughts.

To further investigate this enquiry I like to present three important concepts purely for the aim to put into words a deeper feeling. We will look at a 'Universal Self', an 'Individual Self' and at the 'ego'.

Next let us visualise an orchestra playing the most harmonious and uplifting music you can imagine. Every player and instrument is in perfect harmony with the orchestra, all the individual players are in a perfect merger with all the other players in the orchestra. So is there an individuality in that state? Well, it depends from which angle you look at it. As a whole the orchestra could be seen as not having individual selves and in this case we can stress its no-Self quality. However from another point of view we can say that each player is unique and has studied for years to achieve this state of harmony with the whole orchestra.

In conclusion what I am saying is the following. The orchestra is a whole with no individual and separate Self. On the other hand each player is unique with a unique skill vital for the harmonious functioning of the whole and in this dimension an individual Self is a beautiful presence that contributes to the welfare of the whole. Individuality and universality work together in symbiosis. A destructive ego only occurs when an individual self forgets and denies its relation to the whole and becomes divisive and out of tune. Realising our true Self does not have to mean that we totally transcend an individual self, to me it means that we can enjoy being unique but as a part of something universal.

If I act from the dimension of an ego I become envious and competitive in a hostile manner harming myself and others. However if I act from the dimension of an individual Self who is in harmony with the whole of life and other selves I then enjoy my unicity and unique expression and I also enjoy the unicity of others. Sometimes I look at myself physically and mentally and I wonder and rejoice of the fact that none exactly like me has existed before neither will ever exist. I love my unicity and the contribution I give to the whole. I love my difference and unicity yet in this unicity there is also a sense of communion and no-separation.

Therefore my conclusion is that this is a pointless question and debate, we are neither and we are both in the final dance of life which is above concepts and doctrines and in that silence all concepts and doctrines come to rest and merge in the whole.

Psychic experiences, powers and visions

The biggest misunderstanding amongst people who become interested in a spiritual and philosophical quest is the sensationalist belief that achieving a spiritual goal consists in having visions and all kinds of psychic powers and experiences. They get over excited and exalted if they see lights, experience an out of body sensation and can demonstrate healing powers. One thing I really like about Buddhism is that it considers these experiences as superfluous and a distraction which very often deviates the seeker from the path of liberation. Why is that? Because first of all most of these experiences are just cerebral and neurological excited states and many of these states occur when transitioning between a wake state and sleep. This state is called Hypnagogia and its physiology has been well researched, just do a search on the net and you can see the data.

Other experiences are just a consequence of prolonged sessions of mental concentration and other forms of hyper activity. But of course our ego loves to describe them as supernatural and to feel like it has been 'chosen' by a higher power and this makes it feel superior and subtly arrogant. This psychic arrogance only reinforces our separation from life, it strengthens our ego by making us believe that we are ever so special. In my view the true seeker walking on the path just glances at these phenomena and keeps walking without being allured by them.

Although my experience tells me that 99.99% of all the claimed psychic phenomenon, particularly in the West, are illusory I am not a total sceptic, far from it. I am open to the possibility that we can transmit electro-magnetic waves which can create telepathic events or that sometime we can dream some aspects of future events and so forth. However these events on the path are not important, we can appreciate them and move on without making a big deal about them and seeking admiration and adulation.

There is a story in the Buddhist texts that narrates how the Buddha was waiting for a boat on the shore of a river to cross to the other side. An ascetic suddenly started to walk on the water and crossed the river. When the Buddha crossed the river with a boat and met the proud ascetic on the other shore he asked him how long it took him to achieve this power, the ascetic proudly answered that he had performed penance for twelve years to be able to walk on water. The Buddha answered: 'The boat trip only costs 25 pence, so you spent 12 years of penance to save this paltry sum, it would have been better if you had spent this time to liberate yourself from greed, hatred and delusion'.

What is the point to seek Kundalini awakenings, flashes of light and visions when you are trapped in confusion, hostility and egotistic delusions? Just breath gently and peacefully, let love and tranquillity arise in your heart and don't seek experiences that reinforce your sense of separation. These experiences might arise on your journey but do not be distracted by them.

As I said earlier I am not a total sceptic. In the chapter on Near Death Experiences I have expressed my interest and admiration for these phenomenon because they were well investigated and verified therefore I have a very open mind about them. What I am not very impressed by is when a 'medium' tells me that my mother is talking through him and then I ask her (my mother) what my name is and what is the name of the town I was born in and she cannot answer it. I am also not impressed when people tell me that they can leave their body at will and I ask them what does a note says in the next room and they just look lost and confused.

Be grounded and strong but walk gently, be kind when possible and don't forget to smile, when flashes of light occur and you think that you hear voices don't be distracted, it is all in your head, they are not important, smile at them and move on.

Does the Absolute talk to us?

If someone tells you that they are receiving messages from a higher being my advice is: 'run and keep running and when you feel tired run some more' A born again church near me has over the years split into about 30 different branches and sects. You might ask why did this happen and how it happened. The answer is simply that they all heard voices from a higher source and after a while they all started saying that the spirit was telling them that they should start their own church and that one day they will take over all the churches of that particular denomination. And why stop to that denomination? What about taking over the world? Of course those voices are just a projection of those people's mind, expectation and egos.

We are not separate from the Absolute or Mother Nature, we are part of it so when we are communicating with anyone we are talking to a manifestation of the Absolute. The problem is that we create an external being often portrayed as a jealous and insecure person on whom we project the worse of our fears and greed. To validate it we then give it a voice we claim to hear or we claim that someone else heard it.

In a way yes we can hear something similar to a voice when we feel in tune with something deeper in us but the reality is that the voice we hear is just our mind interpreting the inspiration we are filled with. Let us say that someone said something that did hurt me and I felt very angry but later on when I was meditating and centering myself the awareness was awakened within me that this person did not mean to hurt me at all and actually was being supportive. This realization makes me repent for this erroneous feeling and after dropping it I am filled with sense of loving kindness towards that person that I wrongly accused of hurting me. All of this process normally happens in a space of inner silence and reflection but sometimes I can have the feeling that a voice coming from the heart is telling me this however I am aware that my mind is putting this experience in common language therefore I do not get attached to the fact that I heard a voice. Sadly our need for reassurance and

self-importance can make us turn this voice into something more like a permanent persona who will tell us all the things that we want to hear.

With the claim that a superior being is talking to us we can impress people and make them follow us and do everything we want them to do. 'You must obey me or else the Big One who talks to me will make you suffer'. In reality the speaker out there is only a projection of the worse in them.

For those of you who are particularly interested in early Christianity this chapter is available in an extended form in the ebook 'The new covenant and the words of Jesus' which is available on my website at www.newspiritualhumanism.wordpress.com

Christianity, a return to the origins

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. Mathew 7:21-25

When Jesus said ***Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock*** he was delivering the Sermon of the Mount recorded in the gospel of Matthew and it is extremely clear that he is referring to the commands he gave in relation to his new covenant. There is the recurring refrain 'You have heard but I say', by 'You have heard' he is referring to an old law and by saying 'but I say' he is giving a new law. A new law not to abolish the old law but to take it to another level. In the sermon of the mount Jesus is showing a path to the Divine which comes from love and from the heart and not from fear and when you receive his word this love will guide to liberation and inner fulfilment.

Jesus was emphatic that this new covenant can be easily encapsulated in the saying which is the golden rule: ^{5 12} *"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Jesus was talking with the force of thunder when he said to those who did not follow his teachings that he will deny them in front of the Father and he even called them evil doers he also admonished them that their miracles are useless when devoid of his teachings yet tragically this is exactly what has happened to Paulian Christianity which has dramatically made a u turn from the sermon of the mount and the new covenant and declared that you are automatically saved by faith alone and by blood sacrifices.

Anyhow let us start from the beginning and examine this proposition step by step

I apologize if this chapter will offend and upset some Trinitarian Christians but I do not mean to hurt anyone. As I have said before I am only sharing my studies and experiences in the hope that some of you can benefit from them and in this section I am sharing my studies and research about early Christianity. It might represent a daunting possibility for literalist Christians to conceive that the present day Christian doctrines, as they know them, have very little connection to the Apostles. However if they could consider this mounting evidence as a possibility they would discover that a return to the Nazarenes and James the Righteous Jerusalem church could bring them a lot of peace and joy.

'Christianity', as it will subsequently evolve from Paul, has by now severed virtually all connection with its roots, and can no longer be said to have anything to do with Jesus, only with Paul's image. Baigent, Michael. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (Kindle Locations 3399-3400). Random House. Kindle Edition.

It is with some trepidation and the sense of a heavy weight on my shoulders that I start writing this chapter, the reason being that there is so much research that could be mentioned and presented in great detail but this would take a considerable amount of time and a large book written however I will attempt to do the best I can. The aim is to illustrate that once we drop the concocted doctrines of the Trinitarian Roman church we can return to the original teachings of the apostles and early Christianity and find a sense of fulfilment far deeper and loving than is offered at the moment. Once this is presented then we can appreciate how the message of Jesus fits into one of the facets of the diamond.

I am severely allergic to conspiracy theories born out of lack of knowledge and a fervid imaginative mind and I do not easily accept information unless I thoroughly investigate it first, and after months of investigation and after reading numerous books and reading through many websites I have to say that the information available at present about early Christianity has literally blown my mind.

About 20 years ago, in the shelves of a London bookshop I saw a book by Robert Eisenman entitled 'James the brother of Jesus', I quickly browsed through it and I could see that it was about the early years of Christianity in Jerusalem and the conflict between the apostles and Paul. A lot of the material was based on the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient Judaic literature. I need to point out that the Robert Eisenman was an American biblical scholar, historian and archaeologist. He is currently professor of Middle East religions, archaeology, and Islamic law and director of the Institute for the Study of Judaeo-Christian Origins at California State University Long Beach. At the time I found the contents of his book interesting but not enough for me to purchase it and read it not knowing that years later the information contained in it was going to blow my mind and confirm something that I was feeling deep down. There are quite a few things that I disagree with Eisenman's interpretation of the scrolls but I definitely agree with their validity.

Other authors who figure predominantly in my research are Michael Baigent, he had numerous university qualifications in psychology, comparative religion including an MA in spiritual experiences and mysticism. He is the author of many best-selling books like 'The Jesus papers, covering up the greatest conspiracy in history' and 'The Dead Sea Scrolls deception'. Another author who has greatly inspired me is Geza Vermes an ex-Catholic priest with a doctorate in the Dead Sea Scrolls and numerous other academic qualifications in ancient Christian and Judaic history. He also wrote numerous books on the subject including 'Christian beginnings' and 'The authentic Gospel of Jesus'. I also need to quote as one of the most prominent writers on this subject Bart Ehrman. Professor Ehrman completed his M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees at Princeton Seminary, where his 1985 doctoral dissertation was awarded magna cum laude. An expert on the New Testament and the history of Early Christianity, he has written or edited thirty books, numerous scholarly articles, and dozens of book reviews.

I must also mention one of the most amazing websites that have helped my research enormously is 'Early Christian Writings.com' compiled by Peter Kirby. Kirby must have spent a very long time gathering information about the earliest Christian writings many from the early church fathers. I will go into a little bit more detail about this later on but I what I will say now is that reading through those writings was a rather heart breaking experience. I say rather heart breaking because it confirmed the massacre and destruction of the genuine message of Jesus in order to perpetrate one of the biggest hoaxes in the history of humanity.

I recommend you to read 'The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception' by Michael Baigent, 'Christian Beginnings' by Geza Vermes and 'James the Brother of Jesus, the Dead Sea Scrolls' by Robert Eisenman and 'Misquoting Jesus' by Bart Ehrman. I need to warn you that Eisenman's book is mostly for the serious researcher as it is nearly 400 pages long and it contains a huge amount of very detailed information.

Two very important discoveries have kick started modern research in early Christianity. The Nag Hammadi Library, a collection of thirteen ancient books (called "codices") containing over fifty texts, was discovered in upper Egypt in 1945 by a local farmer. This immensely important discovery includes a large number of primary "Gnostic Gospels" – texts once thought to have been entirely destroyed during the early Christian struggle to define "orthodoxy" including scriptures such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Truth. The discovery and translation of the Nag Hammadi library, initially completed in the 1970's, has provided impetus to a major re-evaluation of early Christian history and the nature of Gnosticism. This discovery has further highlighted the agenda of the early Roman Catholic church to destroy every trace of scriptures that could contradict its dogma. We will examine Gnosticism a bit more in detail later on.

The second extremely important discovery were the Dead Sea Scrolls found in 11 caves in the region of Qumran, West Bank from 1946 to 1947 They are of huge importance because

they consist of thousands of texts covering a period from 135 BC to 73 AD. What is important is that these texts were neither tampered or destroyed by the Paulian and Trinitarian Roman Church .

I will now quote Wikipedia because in this case it illustrates quite well the importance of this find. 'Archaeologists have long associated the scrolls with the ancient Jewish sect called the Essenes, although some recent interpretations have challenged this connection and argue that priests in Jerusalem, or other unknown Jewish groups wrote the scrolls. Robert Eisenman vigorously posits his theory that the later, non-biblical "sectarian" scrolls must be viewed in the context of a wider first-century CE "Opposition Movement," including Essenes, Zealots, Sicarii, and/or Nazoreans, and particularly the early Judeo-Christian community of Jerusalem, the Nazarenes, whose leader, James, the brother of Jesus, was acknowledged by the entire "Opposition Movement," and who is no other than the Scrolls' Teacher of Righteousness. He thus creates a strong link between the Scrolls and the pre-Pauline Jewish Christian community'.

Many of the narrations in the texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls are confirmed in other early Christian texts like the Didache and the Clementine Homilia which have only recently been brought to light. They can be read in full in the website 'Early Christian Writings'.

The amount of data is such that I cannot go into it in detail however I have given you the information on how to conduct your own research.

Various scholars have a few disagreements about the wider meaning of some of the text however there is no doubt about many key points.

What I like to attempt in the following pages is to show you that the original apostles accepted James as the successor of Jesus and that they followed a spiritual path away from the belief that you are saved by the blood of an innocent animal or person. Quite the contrary you are saved by putting into practice the teaching of Jesus and his commandments. The peace of Jesus and his love descends on you when you cultivate the seed of the kingdom of heaven by doing what he asks us to do. The early Christian church also totally rejected the idea of multiple Gods and that Jesus was one of three Gods.

1 – The early Christians were called Ebionites and Nazarenes. One of the meaning of Ebionite is 'poor' and 'humble' and it doesn't just denote material poverty but it stresses the need to remove arrogance and pride from our lives. Nazarene is interpreted by many as coming from Nazareth indicating that Jesus was born in Nazareth and therefore the followers of Jesus are the Nazarenes. However many researchers now think that these term has other meanings like 'branch' Jesus being the trunk of the tree and his disciples being the branches.

2 - There was no 'international Christian Church' at the time of Jesus, the congregation was based in Jerusalem and it was the main site of the Nazarenes. The Gnostic Gospels, the Dead

Sea Scrolls, The Didache and the Homilies of Clemens are in full agreement that Jesus elected as his successor James the Just and not Peter. From the Gospel of Thomas (uncorrupted by the Roman Church) verse 12:

The disciples say to Jesus, "We know that Thou wilt leave us: who will then be the greatest over us?" Jesus says to them: "Wherever you go, you will turn to James the Just, for whose sake heaven as well as earth was produced."

Pope Clement of Rome (30-97 CE), addresses his letter in the non-canonical 'Homilies of Clement' to "*James...the Bishop of Bishops, who rules Jerusalem, the Holy Assembly of the Hebrews and the Assemblies everywhere,*" as does Peter similarly in his Homilies letter. This document and many others clearly show that the early Christians consider James as their undisputed leader.

Eusebius of Caesarea, (260-340 CE), Archbishop under Constantine, tells us in his Ecclesiastical History that James was "*the Lord's brother, who had been elected by the Apostles to the episcopal throne at Jerusalem,*" (E.H. 2.23).

Hegesippus, who lived immediately after the apostles, gives the most accurate account in the fifth book of his Memoirs. He writes as follows: "*James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day....He was holy from his mother's womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath. He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woollen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became hard like those of a camel...*

- Church History II.23.5-6

The **Epistle of Clement to James**, found in the collections of early church history of Tertullian, is a letter that Catholics cite to prove that Peter initiated the line of popes in Rome as supreme leaders of the Apostolic Church. They use this letter because in it Clement writes to James that Peter has left to him the teaching post in Rome. However let us have a look at how Clement addresses James:

"Clement to James, the lord, and the bishop of bishops, who rules Jerusalem, the holy church of the Hebrews, and the churches everywhere excellently rounded by the providence of God, with the elders and deacons, and the rest of the brethren, peace be always."

Now let us look at how ends the letter:

Whence I, my Lord James, having promised as I was ordered, have not failed to write in books by chapters the greater part of his discourses in every city.

The Epistle of Peter to James

This epistle also cited by Tertullian also reiterates the obedience of the Roman Church to the Jerusalem church of James. The letter starts with these words:

Peter to James, the Lord and bishop of the holy Church, under the Father of all, through Jesus Christ, wishes peace always.

You can read many passages attesting to this reality in the early Christian writings website. Another very good site giving you ample evidence for this reality <http://www.sullivan-county.com/id2/james.htm>

3) If you have look at the websites and books that I have pointed out you will be left in no doubt that the main gospel read by early Christians throughout the land that Jesus inhabited was called the Gospel of the Hebrews also known as the Gospel of the Ebionites. The Gospel of the Hebrews was the testimony closest to the Apostles and there is clear evidence from various fragments of the early church fathers that it was burned and destroyed on the orders of the Trinitarian church. What the Roman Catholics could not tolerate was the fact that the Gospel of the Hebrews described Jesus with great respect and veneration but as a man and a prophet but never as God and it was very clear on this matter. This gospel also clearly stated and confirmed that James was the successor of Jesus and when Jesus resurrected James was the first person to whom Jesus appeared. What really condemned this gospel to the pyre was the view it has on Paul:

Irenaeus Against Heresies, i.26.2. *'But the Ebionites use only that Gospel which is according to Matthew, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, calling him an apostate from the Law.'*

As you can see the Gospel itself has been destroyed however we have a few fragments left from the church fathers who wrote against it!

Epiphanius, Heresy xxix.9.4 (Nazoraeans). *'They have the Gospel according to Matthew quite complete, in Hebrew: for this Gospel is certainly still preserved among them (the Jews) as it was first written in Hebrew letters.'*

iii.27.4. (The Ebionites repudiated Paul) and used only the Gospel according to the Hebrews, making but slight account of the others.

Jerome also writes in Of illustrious men: *'Also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, lately translated by me into Greek and Latin speech, which Origen often uses, tells, after the resurrection of the Saviour: 'Now the Lord, when he had given the linen cloth unto the servant of the priest, went unto James and appeared to him (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour wherein he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen again from among them that sleep)', and again after a little, 'Bring ye, saith the Lord, a table and bread', and immediately it is added, 'He took bread and blessed and brake*

and gave it unto James the Just and said unto him: My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep'. What a beautiful verse and what a crime that the book that contained it has been destroyed!

As also we read in the Hebrew Gospel: *'And never, saith he, by ye joyful, save when ye behold your brother with love.'* Jerome On Ephasians volume 4

On Ezek. xviii.7. And in the Gospel according to the Hebrews which the Nazarenes are accustomed to read, it is placed among the greatest sins 'if a man have grieved the spirit of his brother'.

I am getting a little carried away so I will curtail my desire to keep posting quotations, I strongly recommend that you go to the early Christian writings website and then the page on the Gospel of the Hebrews not to be confused with the book of the Hebrews.

There is just one more quote that I want to share with you in this section because it is so beautiful:

The part of the Lord's prayer which says: *'Give us our daily bread' in the Gospel of the Hebrews reads: "the bread which thou wilt give us in thy kingdom, give us this day'.*

Be Aware! A very dishonest person(s) have copied and pasted the Gospel of Matthew and called it The Gospel of the Hebrews and have been distributing it online. From the exerts we have from the early Church fathers we know that very little has been preserved from this Gospel and that actually it was quite different from the synoptic Gospels as I have already mentioned above.

3) In this section I will attempt to present a view that most Christians will find very difficult to even consider. What I am doing here is to question the basic tenets on which modern Christianity is based and what I am speaking of here is theses verses of Paul:

- 1) God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,^[1] through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. Romans 3:25
- 2) Rom. 11:6, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."
- 3) For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast....Ephesians 2:8

The blood shed by Jesus on the cross satisfies God's need for blood in order to forgive our sins and if we believe this we are automatically saved! Christians insist that this vision along with the doctrine of the trinity is the original teaching of Jesus. However modern research which includes many archaeological findings is now painting a very different picture.

The apostles excommunicated Paul as a heretic. Already in the New Testament we can read from Paul himself that he had numerous clashes with the apostles of Jesus, just do a search

about Paul conflict with the apostles. This is easy to understand. Paul after falling from his horse and hitting his head went to the disciples saying that he had seen a light and heard a voice, the voice of Jesus, and therefore as he was in direct contact with the Messiah and his injunction was that his message needed to change dramatically. Of course the apostles not only refuted his claims but they labelled them as totally opposite to what Jesus had preached. This created a serious rift between the apostles and Paul.

Paul in his antagonism against the apostles went as far as saying this: *'But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! Galatians 1:8* Remember that Paul in his letters writes of himself as 'We', it is called 'plural maiestatis' or in other words 'royal we'. So in his eyes even the future synoptic gospels should carry a curse! Probably by Gospel he also meant any other doctrine then his would carry a curse and this curse is also applicable to an angel from heaven!

This is a very long subject and beyond the scope of this book but if you like to read more about it in detail including **the excommunication of Paul** follow this link:

https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/scrolls_deadsea/deadsea_scrollsideception/scrollsideception13.htm

Before I continue with the quarrel between Paul and the apostles I need to say a few words about the climate of ancient Judea before and around the time of Jesus. In those days Jewish society was broadly speaking divided into two camps. On the one side there were the priests and Pharisees who claimed ownership of the interpretation of the scriptures, including rituals and the application of the Mosaic law and on the other side there was sects like the Essenes and prophetic Jews who were closer to the teachings of the prophets and an application of the law less founded on a literary interpretation of the scriptures and more on a life of virtue, simplicity and charity and we will gradually examine that this was the essence of the teachings of Jesus.

The prophetic and messianic Jews including the Essenes did not believe that your sins are forgiven and you are saved by offering the blood of an innocent creature to God therefore the whole story of someone shading their blood to clean your sins is contrary to their faith. If instead of reading only Paul and Revelations Christians started reading the Gospels they would clearly see that Jesus again and again said that you are saved by following his commandment to live a life of love and mercy.

*'I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain-offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals. I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. **But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**' (Amos 5:21–4)*

Isaiah was no less emphatic: *'What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats ... Trample my courts no more; Bringing offerings is futile; Incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation – I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity ... Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; Cease to do evil, learn to do good; Seek justice, rescue the oppressed; Defend the orphan, plead for the widow.'* (Isa. 1:11–17)

Jesus quotes the above passage in Matthew 9:13 to describe his ministry.

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.
Hosea 6:6

The Essenes and prophetic Jews strongly believed in the coming of the end of times and in the coming of a Messiah who will bring back the Jewish nation to a spiritual life free of the hypocrisy of the priests, a life based on virtue and charity and most importantly on a new covenant with God not based on the laws of men but on the new covenant given by Jesus, a new covenant based on love and virtue. The various books I have recommended previously can illustrate this reality in great detail.

Once we understand this religious and historical climate we can understand and appreciate the words of Jesus much better.

Doing the best with what we got

In the following pages in many instances I will be quoting the Gospels even if they are riddled by what is called 'creative editing' by the Roman Church. The Gospels we have today were only released by the imperial church about 400 years after Christ and we have no previous complete manuscripts. What we have are just snippets from early church fathers and any complete Gospel written before the churches' release has been destroyed. Modern discoveries like the Gnostic Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls highlight the amount of destruction of early texts and the 'creative editing' or corruption of the texts that occurred. But what is most shocking is the systematic destruction of the original Gospels and texts from the apostolic early church in Jerusalem.

I am highlighting this fact because I am aware that some passages in the present Gospels are manufactured but fortunately many scholars have found possible ways to tell them apart. For example examining grammar and emphasis is a good method. Let us look at *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'* Matthew 28:19. This verse is totally out of context with a strictly monotheistic society and particularly with a preacher who was very faithful to the monotheistic Judaic teachings.

Thanks to researchers and scholars like Bart Ehrman who have thoroughly examined up to 5,000 preserved early new testaments written between 400AD and 900AD we know that the original gospels said something more akin to *‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations and tell them all what I have taught you and commanded you’*. We also know for a fact that John 5:7 which says: *‘For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one’* was only added in the sixteenth century.

According to the Biblical historian Dr C. R. Gregory:

The Greek manuscripts of the text of the New Testament were often altered by the scribes, who put into them the readings which were familiar to them, and which they held to be the right readings. *A careful examination shows that corrections and additions happened for centuries to reflect the changing ideologies and dogmas of the Church particularly the transformation of the original Christian belief that the Son is subordinate to the Father into the Trinity that puts a human being as co-equal to God.*

In spite of this reality I trust that we still have enough genuine material to extract the essence of Jesus’s teachings

Fulfilment and the New Covenant

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah." Jeremiah 31:31

Another extremely important point to consider is that Jesus, although he brought a new covenant, was a Jewish prophet and for him to be considered as God himself would have been the highest heresy. Jesus always referred to the Father as superior to him. A phrase like ‘I and the Father are one’ in ancient mystical Judaism always meant ‘I am fully aligned to the will of the Father’.

For Jesus the new covenant he was offering was based, as we have seen above, as honouring the message of the prophets preaching a religion based on virtue and charity rather than on temple rituals and countless laws created by priests intent on consolidating their hold on the people.

His message was that obedience to the Father should come from love of the Father and not from fear, in this way we can truly live an harmonious and virtuous life and, as The Sermon of the Mountain’ in the Gospel of Matthew says, we can take our relationship with the Father to another level.

I will repeat again a previous quotation because it so important in understanding the roots of the new covenant:

‘Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; Cease to do evil, learn to do good; Seek justice, rescue the oppressed; Defend the orphan, plead for the widow.’ (Isa. 1:11–17)

I have come to fulfil the law not to destroy it

Many people deny the new covenant on the bases of probably one of the most cited statements in the Gospels: *'I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it'*. Their believe is that Jesus never meant to reform the Mosaic law but to observe it to the letter. It is very difficult to grasp the meaning of one liners particularly in a religious book and it is even more difficult for literalists hell bent to prove their point. What I mean to say is that for example we can isolate one line of the Gospels where Jesus says 'I and the father are one' and see it as the proof that Jesus claimed to be God but if we read the whole Gospels we can see that over and over again Jesus proclaimed his utter submission to the Father. Jesus offered this oneness also to his disciples

Now we will explore some Gospel verses to have a clear idea of what Jesus meant by 'fulfil'. Even in the English language fulfil does not mean to repeat something for example when you fulfil your B.A. studies by passing the exams you move on to M.A. studies Also keep in mind that Jesus like previous Jewish prophets wanted to take back his people to a more sincere and virtuous form of worship and life conducted free of mindless rituals and laws that were made by men for men and for the benefit of the priesthood.

"Having neglected the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." Mark 7:8

Keep in mind that denying the old laws in Israel at the time could carry a sentence of stoning to death therefore Jesus had a massive challenge in bringing a new covenant in a very hostile environment. Now let us look at a few examples of how he used the word fulfil throughout the Gospels:

'They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.'

Luke 21:24

It is very easy that here Jesus means till the time in which the power of the gentiles will reach their apex and then collapse.

The Gospels are full of verses of Jesus proclaiming that he had fulfilled the old prophecies and that now he could bring the new. They are rather long verses and I do not have the space to cite them in full so I will only copy short snippets, if you are interested in the full text I will write their reference for you to look them up.

Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— ¹to **fulfil** what was said through the prophet Isaiah. Matthew 4:12

"Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is **fulfilled** in your hearing." Luke 4:14

"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. ¹⁴In them is **fulfilled** the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving'. Matthew 13:14

There are many more verses confirming that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah and that the Messiah came to give a new covenant which does not abolish the old law but takes it to a level where we do not hurt others not because we are afraid of the law but because we are filled with love and compassion. In this sense the new covenant of Jesus did not abolish the old law but it took it to a truly divine dimension. Therefore to receive Jesus means to be filled by his love and righteousness.

The New Covenant

He replied [to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law]: "...You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (Mark 7:6-13)

"Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely." (Luke 20:46-47)

Interesting to see how Jesus rebuked the priests that were keeping the people in slavery by fear and by countless laws and dogma yet this is what Christianity evolved into! So now that we can see that Jesus got rid of the superfluous exteriority of priestly Judaism let us have a look at his new covenant.

Mark 2:18 – 2:22 *"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins"*

With the advent of the Messiah the old temple and ritual teachings can no longer apply, he goes even as far as saying that you cannot mix the two. There are Gospel verses where Jesus even breaks the Sabbath, sacrosanct to traditionalist Jews, proclaiming that the Sabbath was created for man but man was not created for the Sabbath.

Jesus went as far as saying that his message of love, virtue and charity now superseded the old covenant and many of the aspects of the law of Moses:

Jesus said to them, *"Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven"* John 6:32

I can, however, accept the opinion that Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to take it to a higher level where our hearts become so pure that we do not hurt others not because we are afraid of the law but because our hearts are filled with love and compassion.

You are saved by following the commandments of Jesus and by incarnating his love in your life, this is the message of the Gospels.

John 15 – 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my **command**, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's **command** and remained in his love

John 12 47 to 50

⁴⁷ "If anyone hears my **words** but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my **words**; the very **words** I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his **command** leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

John 15 7 If you remain in me and my **words** remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

In the following pages you will find many more verses which keep repeating one thing and one thing along: living according to my teachings and you will receive the love of the Father. This is the blood of the new covenant.

So what is the law and command of Jesus? The New Covenant

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
—Matthew 11:25-30

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, *"The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:28

From there then we can see how his message evolves but first let us take heed again of Jesus clear admonition:

"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name

have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock” Matthew 7:15-20

Notice the words ‘have we not prophesied and cast away demons’? Yet Jesus chastised them. Can you see modern day Christians rolling themselves on the floor and shaking their bodies and claiming that the spirit has chosen them to perform miracles? Yet they claim that you are only saved by grace and not by following Jesus command and if you do not agree they judge you into burning in hell for ever yet Jesus asked us not to judge our brother (sister).

John 15 – 9 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. For if you obey my **command**, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's command and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."*

Jesus never and I mean NEVER said believe I am God who has died for your sins and you will be saved, far from it. His emphasis was entirely on a life of love and virtue as the way to the divine, a message clearly an echo of prophetic and mystical Judaism. His path to the kingdom of heaven was compared to a mustard seed which we need to nurture with our actions and devotion and then one day it will flourish unto a tree that will give shelter and nourishment.

Then Jesus asked, *"What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches. Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."* Luke 13-18 to 21

As you can see Jesus stresses the graduality in the spiritual growth towards the Divine and the steps are trodden by an inner state filled with love and a life which follows the command of Jesus. So how do we love the Father above all things and how do we love our neighbour? The Gospels are filled with very clear injunctions and we will look at a few examples:

It is important to understand that Jesus used a symbolic, dramatic and poetic language to drive his message home so certain things he said need to be understood in this context. For example when he said to cut your arm and plug your eye if they lead you to sin of course he did not mean them literally!

Also Paulians say that you can never follow his commands because you are too weak. Two important things need to be said about this. The first is that the Father wants us to strive in order to follow his word but he knows our human limitations so what matters is our sincerity and dedication the rest will be done by the love we receive when we accept his word and that love is wonderful and immeasurable. The second is the word is pure love and when you have that love then you will be filled with spirit so contrary to what Paulians say you need to accept the word as your salvation in order to be filled with joy and inner strength and not what they say that you have to receive the ‘holy spirit’ first before receiving his love.

Let us hear the words of Jesus and his commandments

Here are a few examples of Jesus commands, they are all from the sermon of the mount in the gospel of Matthew, this sermon has most of his commands but you need to read them from your heart and meditate on them. I recommend that you regularly read and meditate on the sermon of the mount which is also called the beatitudes. If you do you will be blessed if your path to realization is through Jesus. By meditating on the word and the Lords prayer you will receive the love and splendour from which these words have come, the peace of the Lord will be with you.

But please remember that confessing your sins is very important and you should try to do it daily. This means be aware of your actions and words and try to perceive when you are hurting unnecessarily and you are going against the universal law that Jesus proclaimed: 'Do unto others what you would like others to do unto you'

⁵³ *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

By poor in spirit he means people who are not arrogant and do not need admiration in order to feel self-esteem. Being children of the Father is their peace and joy of life.

Who judges and is arrogant will be judged and humiliated

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Matthew 7

You will be judged by your words and speech

Matthew 12 35 *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.³⁶ But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.³⁷ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

Forgive and you will be forgiven

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered: "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy seven times." Matthew 18:21

Again Jesus is emphasising the need to release hate from our hearts in order to be close to the divine. Of course he is not literally saying that you have to count seventy seven times but what he is really saying is to always try your best to avoid hurt and confrontation but of course if every attempts fails then take appropriate action.

⁵⁷ *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

⁵⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

I prefer the Latin and Italian translation of this verse which reads: *Happy are those who come with peace in their hearts for they shall be called the children of God*

Again Jesus is emphasising the need to release hate from our hearts in order to be close to the divine.

⁵²³ *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;*²⁴ *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

Turn the other cheek

³⁸ *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*³⁹ *But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

This is quite a symbolic and dramatic phrase and certainly it is not saying not to defend your family and life but it is stressing the fact that too often we react to events with hostility and offence creating unnecessary conflict and pain therefor we need to strive to take, as much as possible, to drama out of events and whenever possible create reconciliation and peace. Remember to have good will in your heart.

These exhortations are present throughout the other parts of the gospel like the story of the good Samaritan, lets us a look at one of them

Generosity and a loving attitude

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried in Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.” Luke 16:19

Please read the good Samaritan as it is a beautiful story it is a bit too long to add here but you can find it in Luke 10 25 to 37

Pray for your enemies

Matthew 5 ⁴³ *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*⁴⁴ *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*⁴⁵ *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

I can appreciate that this might be extremely difficult to apply and many will also feel that this is not right but let us try to understand the love and wisdom in this saying. If our hearts are filled with hostility and hatred it will be poisoned by it but you might say: 'I cannot condone their actions' and you are absolutely right. However if you send them love and wish them to be filled by it and by its righteousness because it is divine love that you are sending then your heart is at peace and you are wishing them to change their ways. But do not forget that if you are in a situation of hostility with someone you need to truly check if the blame is not just on them but what your contribution has been in creating this situation.

The law and commandments of Jesus are extremely clear in the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew. The beatitudes are one of the most beautiful passages in all the history of spirituality and religion and I recommend that you read them and meditate on them deeply if you are interested in the teachings of Jesus. I don't have the space to go through all of them but again I recommend you to read them.

The new covenant saves you and the new covenant are the teaching of Jesus

Matthew 26:27 ²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the ^[a] new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The Essence of the New Covenant

Matthew 7:12 *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

If in all things you can keep this in mind you will have the essence of Jesus teachings enshrined in your heart.

The conflict between Paul and the Apostles, faith without works is an empty vessel

In the New testaments particularly in Paul's epistles the conflict between Paul and the Apostles is clearly illustrated and we can read that at times they became quite heated. In the Dead Sea Scrolls we realise how deep that conflict was and it got to the point where the Apostles called him the spouter of lies and the lawless one. Some Christian scholars try to refute this interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls although there is a major consensus that 'The Just' was James as he is called by this title even in the official Gospels and the 'Spouter of lies who denies the Law' was Paul as he clearly clashed with James about the need to follow Jesus command.

James and the apostles did not oppose Paul because they wanted gentile converts to follow the Torah law to the letter. In the first Council of Jerusalem in 50AD the Apostles decided that the new gentile converts only needed to follow a small set of regulations: *"They should refrain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity"* (Acts 15:29). They clashed because Paul told the Apostles that he had

received a message and vision from Jesus that there was no need to follow his command any longer and that we were saved only believing in his death and resurrection.

Christians before the Paulian takeover of the Church highly regarded the resurrection but not as an act of faith that could guarantee salvation.

What Jesus says about his death and resurrection has no relation whatsoever with Paul

Matthew 16:4 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, *"Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.* (Jesus answered) *"An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."*

John 2:18-22 The Jews then said to Him, *"What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?* Jesus answered them, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* The Jews then said, *"It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"* But He was speaking of the temple of His body. **So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken."**

You can clearly see from these two comprehensive verses that Jesus pointed to his crucifixion and resurrection as a sign and proof of his oneness with the Father and he did not say that if they believed that he was God who died on the cross for their sins they will be saved.

Another very important message that we can see in the death on the cross is Jesus saying about his tormentors: *'Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing'* Luke 23:34 In this testimony of complete love and union with the father we see the ultimate example of bearing the pain and torment in life with a heart that does not succumb to it.

It was Paul who brought to Christians the old Jewish concept that God in order to be appeased needed a blood sacrifice not from the sinner but from a third person. Later when the Church created a man-God then the concept developed into the belief that God sacrificed himself to appease himself!

We have clearly seen that that the blood of Jesus is the essence of the new covenant and his teachings and we are saved by it.

Nowhere in the gospel Jesus says that his dying blood can automatically save us but only his commandments can. Paulian Christians have only one last desperate argument to bolster their human blood based belief and that is

Matthew 20²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

However when I read it in the original Latin bible it reads like this

*sicut Filius hominis non venit ministrari sed ministrare et **dare animam suam** redemptionem pro multis*

I am Italian and I grew up studying Latin and 'dare animam suam' or 'dare l'anima' does not mean in any way shape or form to die for someone but it means to dedicate yourself with passion for a goal and in this case it means to dedicate yourself to free people from ignorance and redeem them from sin.

James versus Paul from the Epistle of James

This a wonderful letter and I recommend that you read it in its entirety as it confirms the teachings of Jesus about cultivating the seed of the Kingdom of God. Let us read a few passages:

1:19 Dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

2:12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Note that he stresses that it is the command or Law of Jesus that gives you freedom and that mercy will be given to you not according to your belief but according to the mercy you have shown towards others.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.

¹⁶ *If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?* ¹⁷ *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

¹⁸ *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."*

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

Paul said we are saved by faith alone and the blood of Jesus but James the leader of the Church clearly rebuked his assertion. It is a crying shame that so many ancient documents were lost and even more destroyed by the Church and the New Testament mostly contains Paul's letters. I would have loved to read more about the teachings of the Apostles. Let us hope that archaeologists will keep finding more and more lost and proscribed documents.

Earlier we mentioned the **Epistle of Peter** to James and in it we read that Peter again reiterated the opposition of the Apostles to Paul using words that are extremely similar to the Dead Sea Scrolls:

This letter is very important because it confirms the feelings of the Apostles towards Paul as an usurper as we will examine after a few pages. Peter echoes word by word what the Dead Sea scrolls tells us about the excommunication of Paul by the Apostles as an heretic who said that we did not need to follow and practice the commandments any longer.

And this I know, not as being a prophet, but as already seeing the beginning of this very evil. For some from among the Gentiles have rejected my legal preaching, attaching themselves to certain lawless and trifling preaching of the man who is my enemy.² And these things some have attempted while I am still alive, to transform my words by certain various interpretations, in order to the dissolution of the law; as though I also myself were of such a mind, but did not freely proclaim it, which God forbid!

In the Dead Sea Scrolls there are many references to Paul as the spouter of lies who wants to dissolve the commandments of the new covenant and I will share this one with you:

"Unlike the Spouter of Lies ("who led the simple astray"), the Righteous Teacher "expounded the Law to his Council and to all who freely pledged themselves to join the Elect of God to keep the law in the Council of the Community, who shall be saved on the Day of Judgment," (Micah Pesher fragment).

So, how did we get here?

After the three major rebellions by the Jews against the Roman Empire (66 to 136AD) the Jews were dispersed throughout the world and their temple destroyed. The remaining Nazarenes also known as Ebionites who had their base in Jerusalem migrated mostly to areas like Egypt in northern Africa. Paul had travelled to Greece and from there to Rome the hub of the empire where he successfully created a Christian colony. This Paulian Christian

sect unaffected by events in the Middle East over time grew into quite a large denomination but keep in mind that there were many other Christian groups like the Nazarenes, the Gnostics, Marcionites etc.

Over time the Paulian sect became the dominant sect in Rome but in the early stages it still considered Jesus as the son of God and subordinate to God. Over many decades proximity to Greco-Roman culture and particularly at a time when the emperor was considered a God many Paulian Christians had adopted the view that Jesus was also God as this would make Christianity even more appealing to the Roman masses. By then the Paulian faction had called itself the Roman Catholic Church.

Around more than two centuries after Christ the Catholics when confronted with questions like: 'When God is in heaven and also on earth as Jesus does it mean that there are two Gods?' To answer questions like this they gradually started developing the concept of the trinity and suddenly God the father stopped being supreme and instead he became one of three separated entities all united in a mythical 'Godhead'. **At this stage Roman Christianity had completely severed its links with Jesus and created instead a hotchpotch of Paulian theology and Roman culture.**

Even within Catholicism not all its adherents became Trinitarians, far from it as a large portion, followers of bishop Arius and called Arians, remained faithful to the traditional Unitarian view that God is one and that Jesus is subordinate to him. In this way they were far closer and faithful to the Judaic teachings of Jesus. It is estimated that at one point the Arians even outnumbered the Trinitarians and it seems that even Constantine on his death bed converted to it. His son Costantius was a devoted Unitarian. The Arians had hundreds of books and the most important was 'The Banquet' by Arius himself however when the Emperor Theodosius and after him Justinian became Trinitarian they destroyed all those texts and countless others. To deny the Trinity and even possessing Unitarian books could cause to **be flayed alive**. The only way till a few years ago that we knew about these books was because many Trinitarian Church writers wrote about them to condemn and disparage them. Fortunately in the last decades we have found some of them because they had been buried and by chance some shepherds stumbled upon them.

After Justinian the Trinitarian faction had taken full control of the Christian Church and the other denominations were persecuted in the most cruel manner, the Inquisition was formed with the task to uproot and eliminate any variant forms of Christianity, just do a search for 'Cathars' and it will give you an idea of what I am talking about.

The Protestant reformation only changed the deck chairs around but it remained deeply rooted in the Trinitarian ideology of the Catholic Church and it was often the cause of similar persecutions.

What does it mean to return to the Nazarene Church of James and Jesus?

It is to receive the love and peace of Jesus Christ by hearing his words, we might not be perfect in following them but Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a seed which grows gradually so every effort will be acknowledged. Jesus said only God is perfectly good and therefore that is not expected of humans only their sincerity and effort.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. John 14:27

I will share what this would mean to me if Christianity became my main path to liberation

The path to salvation lies in following the commands of Jesus; His commands are like the water that nurtures the growth of the seeds that grow unto the Kingdom of God. His commands contain his spirit and they are the living waters.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
—Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus, although a great reformer, would have never blasphemed against his Jewish roots and declared himself to be God. *“We all are Gods”* was an affirmation of our shared divinity. *“Before Abraham was born, I am!”* As we will see later it was an affirmation that his teachings were beyond all traditions and that our spiritual self precedes any tradition and belief system. *“Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven”* was an affirmation that Moses gave you laws based on fear of punishment but Jesus gave you commands born from love and a virtuous life.

“The first will be the last and the last will be the first” Don’t go around saying that you possess the spirit and can heal and chase spirits. Don’t beat your chest proclaiming that your belief and church are the best. Be simple and be humble. Let people recognise that you are a Nazarene by your peace and gentle disposition. Let people recognise that you are Nazarenes by the way you love one another. Be firm, grounded and strong in your love for Christ, that strength will give you peace and you will not need to condemn anyone to hell and overwhelmed anyone with your doctrines. Live like this and people will come to you and say: ‘Can I have some of what you got?’

“For whoever is not against us is for us.” Mark 9:38 If someone is not fighting against the command of Jesus: *“Love one another as I have loved you”* is with Jesus and does not use dogmas to condemn others.

Respect your limits but when you can alleviate somebody’s suffering do so with joy because they allow you to worship the Father and follow his command but do not try to convert them to your belief system. Do not ask for their soul in exchange for assistance, give without asking.

Again let me remind you of this beautiful verse:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. John 14:27

Let people recognise that you are a Nazarene by the peace in your heart and the love in your life because accepting and receiving the word will fill you with love and peace.

Prayer and meditation

When you have a little time to receive the communion of the Lord you can recite the Lord's prayer a few times. Have a look at the mindfulness meditation in the Buddhist section as there is a paragraph how a Christian can adapt it to his path. Breath in and breath out slowly, deep and gently, breathing in say 'Jesus' and breathing out say 'Lord'. You can change the words to suit the moment. So first say the Lord's prayer a few or many times, as it suits you, then pray with the breath and when you feel relaxed and at peace read one or two of the Gospel verses particularly the ones presenting the commands of Jesus. Meditate on them, let them sink in your heart and fill you with the living waters of the Lord's words. You can do this in a group, you can recite together the Lord's prayer, meditate together on the breath and then share together some verses. I would also recommend that you read often the Epistle of James.

The Holy Spirit –

The Holy Spirit is the love of the Father in action. In ancient Judea they regarded serious illnesses like leprosy as a curse from God and the infected people were removed to caves outside the city. The populace shunned them and avoided them at all costs. Jesus instead went to them and reminded them that the last and the forgotten in this world will be the first in the kingdom of heaven and he healed many of them. The power of love that alleviates pain and despair is the Holy Spirit. Therefore we can say that we can reject the concept of the Father and the Son and other religious believes but should not reject the suffering of others and the efforts made to give them comfort and healing.

The power of the spirit does not come from throwing yourself on the floor and shaking, the power of the spirit comes to you as peace, love and compassion for the suffering of others not because you think they are inferior to you but because you see them as your brothers and sisters trapped like you in a difficult world. Now let us also extend this same compassionate heart to all the animals, plants and the whole earth.

May your hearts be filled with compassion, empathy and the peace of the Lord.

The Nazarenes and the diamond

The Nazarene path is the way of the heart as Jesus teaches about love, in other words love the Father above all things but reflect this love to all your brothers and sisters and how you treat others reflects on how truly you love the Father. This reflects very well the Upanishads verse: *'He who sees himself in all creatures and all creatures in himself knows no fear'*

But in order to experience divine love we need to release, as much as possible, our psychological and emotional constrictions and our separation from life and the world. Buddhism offers us a beautiful path of self-awareness which could enhance the Nazarene path. Near death experiences have confirmed that what really matters is not our belief but how our inner self vibrates and relates to others and love is what really matters. For this reason I hope that the Nazarene way will always be as inclusive and respectful of other paths as much as possible as long as they are also endeavouring to release hatred and acquire wisdom and love.

The Gnostics

‘Gnostics do not look to salvation from sin (original or other), but rather from the ignorance of which sin is a consequence. Ignorance -- whereby is meant ignorance of spiritual realities -- is dispelled only by Gnosis, and the decisive revelation of Gnosis is brought by the Messengers of Light, especially by Christ, the Logos of the True God. *It is not by His suffering and death but by His life of teaching and His establishing of mysteries that Christ has performed His work of salvation.*’ From Gnosis.org

Gnosticism was a very large Christian denomination prevalent in northern Africa and the Middle East, once the Trinitarian Roman Church gained full control of the Imperial favour they proceeded to obliterate them and burn all their scriptures. Fortunately very close to the time when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered a farmer in Nag Hammadi, Egypt found a series of scrolls containing some of the main Gnostic Gospels. Without doubt they had been hidden by a Gnostic adherent to save them from the burning fever of the Church and preserve them for future generations.

The Gnostics were known, amongst other things, for their democratic and non-hierarchical structure whilst the Roman sect was creating an elite which gave itself the full and exclusive right of communicating with the divine; bishops gave way to cardinals and popes without whom we could not be saved. Gnostics instead shone hierarchy and whilst Rome even forbade the masses to read the bible in their own language the Gnostics gave full access to the scriptures to everyone. They also had female deacons and often the facilitator of a prayer congregation would be chosen just before the gathering.

Before I proceed I like to point out that Elaine Pagels has written a beautiful book about the Gnostics called ‘The Gnostic Gospels’. If you are interested in the subject this book is a must, it is well written and very easy to follow. There is also an excellent website on the subject at: <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/Pagels-Gnostic-Gospels.html>

Unfortunately, the conspiracy and astral traveling brigade has written quite a few ebooks on Gnosticism completely distorting its message and making into a medium oriented cult with no relation to the Gnostic texts and teachings. Once you recognise them my advice is for you to avoid them.

There were various Gnostics groups and many Gnostic texts but very little was known till recently. The only information we had came from Church letters condemning their ‘heresy’. The discovery at Nag Hammadi has brought back a few of their main books. The most important one is the Gospel of Thomas and some scholars maintain that is probably one of the oldest known Gospels.

Some Gnostic Gospels have been clearly written centuries after Jesus and contain all sorts of teachings which in my view have very little to do with Christ, however the Gospel of Thomas looks very genuine and I agree with those scholars who think that is one of the oldest ones.

We will now examine some of their core beliefs. Some aspects of Gnosticism can sound a bit complex at first so I will avoid esoteric terminology and present this subject using very simple and easily accessible terminology.

1) The word Gnosis means 'knowledge', 'realization' or 'perception'. Here we are not referring to intellectual or bookish knowledge but to a realization of our true nature or Self. The unity of the Son with the Father is a direct inner experience when our being becomes suffused in peace, joy and understanding. Here Jesus saying: 'Me and the Father are one' is not saying: 'I am God and you are not so worship me' instead is saying: 'I have achieved unity with the ultimate reality and you can as well if you follow my command'. When Jesus points to the scripture saying 'We all are Gods' is referring to the realization that we all are divine in nature.

Gnosticism is very close to Vedanta as it does not have a vision of God as a person outside of creation needing obedience and worship and meting out terrible punishments to those who do not submit. Instead they see everything as part of a divine essence, we are like drops in the ocean, a drop yet the ocean, we are like sparks from a fire, sparks yet we are also the fire. However as the Father's (or Mother) manifestation expands further and further from its source it starts to forget its essence and origin therefore we see the birth of egoism, greed, hatred and tremendous suffering.

The Gnostics maintain that Jesus spoke in parables to the crowd but he gave his deepest teachings to those closest to him and that they are the depository of those teachings. We know for sure that in the oldest Jerusalem Christian group, the Nazarenes, taught the esoteric revelations of Jesus.

The earliest surviving written references to the *Gospel of Thomas* are found in the writings of Hippolytus of Rome (c. 222–235) and Origen of Alexandria (c. 233).^[23] Hippolytus wrote in his *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.7.20:

"The Nazarenes speak of a nature which is both hidden and revealed at the same time and which they call the thought-for kingdom of heaven which is in a human being. They transmit a tradition concerning this in the Gospel entitled "According to Thomas," which states expressly, "The one who seeks me will find me in children of seven years and older, for there, hidden, I am revealed."

2) This universe of greed and pain we live in is not created by the Father but by a rebellious being called the Demiurge in Gnostic literature. This creature is not God but a semi God, an usurper who is far more concerned with its own power and glory than with the well-being of its children. No loving father would burn and torture its children for not worshiping him. The

Demiurge because of its imperfect nature can only create beings like us humans who are deeply flawed, capable of cruelty like the Demiurge and with very poorly designed bodies that keep getting sick and malfunctioning. So to the Gnostic 'the Creator' is not worth of worship, to the contrary Jesus came to save us from this maniac and take us back home to our true Father the God of love and mercy.

To the Gnostic the "Yahweh" of the old testament is the Demiurge, totalitarian and vengeful rebelling against the loving 'Father' of Jesus. Marcion wrote one of the many destroyed books called 'The Tripartite', we only have a few excerpts found in some Church fathers books who condemned him. In the Tripartite Marcion illustrates that the "Yahweh" of the Old Testament cannot be the same God as the Father of the New Testament and Jesus clearly says that you cannot bring these two concepts together. Sayings in the Gospel like 'You cannot sow an old cloth over a new one' and 'You cannot mix new wine with old wine' attest to this reality.

For example Marcion points to this passage in the Old Testament: God tells Moses and Aaron that *"The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall keep his garments rent and his head bare, and shall muffle his beard; he shall cry out, Unclean, unclean!"* And yet, when it comes to the Gospel, Jesus not only welcomes the leper into His presence, but even touches the man.

3) Jesus came to free us not to corral us into a church. This section is taken from the Gnostic Gospels of Elaine Paige

The "living Jesus" of these texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not of sin and repentance, like the Jesus of the New Testament. Instead of coming to save us from sin, he comes as a guide who opens access to spiritual understanding. But when the disciple attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal--even identical.

Third, orthodox Christians believe that Jesus is Lord and Son of God in a unique way: he remains forever distinct from the rest of humanity whom he came to save it. Yet the gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* relates that as soon as Thomas recognized him, Jesus said to Thomas that they have both received their being from the same source:

Jesus said, *"I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out.... He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."*

From the above section we can see that Jesus was far more interested in freeing people from ignorance than being worshipped and having followers. His being had awakened to the presence of the Beloved within and his main wish and purpose was to allow others to experience the same joy. Once the realization of oneness occurs then the disciple's aspirations have been fulfilled and the teacher can happily move on. The true fulfilment of the law is to become one with the Father and with the awakening of the heart the law has been fulfilled.

A few more exerts from Thomas

And he said, "Whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death."
His teachings are not to be taken in a literalist manner but if we meditate and open our hearts we can directly perceive the source of Jesus's words, the Beloved.

Jesus said, "If your leaders say to you, 'Look, the (Father's) kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the (Father's) kingdom is within you and it is outside you"
You first see it within and then you discover that there is no inside or outside and the Beloved is all there is.

"When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty."

Look within, look deeply, get rid of hatred and greed and then you will know where you came from, this is the real wealth.

The disciples said to Jesus, *"Tell us, how will our end come?"* Jesus said, *"Have you found the beginning, then, that you are looking for the end? You see, the end will be where the beginning is."*

We all came from one source and we all go back to it therefore when you know where we came from you will know where we will go in the end of times.

Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."
In monistic mysticism this does not mean 'I am God and you are not' so worship me, it is a statement that we all are Gods and even beneath a stone there is God's presence, God is all there is. I have used the word God but you can substitute it with any term that is comfortable to you.

Spiritual Humanism, the holistic path

Often people ask me: 'What are you'? My first impulse is to reply: 'I just am, not this or that, 'I just am' then I realize that I need to take it down a notch and say: 'I am a human being, that is the most important thing, beliefs come later'. However for some people locked inside their cage of identifications there is a need to hear something even more concrete therefore I tell them: 'I am a spiritual humanist' which in my view is the best way to express our 'Universal Oneness' in this world. As there are other schools and paths that also define themselves with this term I add to it the subtitle 'the holistic way' denoting the aim to show the connection between various schools of thought and that which connects them is partly within these different paths but also above them. These paths describe a certain aspect of the Absolute but once we reach closer to the final reality the path and its doctrine becomes less and less important.

Ok, now I am going to describe my take on Spiritual Humanism and what I mean when I use this term. Again I must make very clear that I do not want to convince anybody of it or recruit anyone either. I am only sharing my conclusions and as I have said previously in this book take what you like and drop what you don't like.

- 1) I will not put dogma of any kind above human rights and therefore I will never support torturing, mutilating or killing anyone because they do not agree with my religious or political beliefs. Views about what lies beyond this visible world is a personal opinion and as such it should be respected and there should never be any form of coercion.
- 2) I will never support the oppression of women and consider them chattel neither will I ever think that I have a right to hit them to discipline them. If someone tells me that their God has given them this right then I will reply that I follow the path of the Beloved and that their God is not my God.
- 3) The Old Testament says that disobedient children should be stoned to death. Other 'holy' books tell us that children should always obey their parents and that parents should not spare the rod. As a Spiritual Humanist I believe that most children with behavioural problems are often in conflictual and abusive surroundings and this should be deeply considered when dealing with this situation. Parents and educational institutions have no right to be violent and abusive towards children. Of course a measure of discipline is sometimes required but it should be conducted with care and respect and never with violence. It is also extremely important, now that most schools in the West have dropped their religious curriculum, that we teach children humanistic values of respect and collaboration like, for example, offering their seat in a bus to an older and infirm passenger.
- 4) When debating a follower of an intransigent and cruel God I am happy to define myself as an atheist as I definitely will never follow any kind of being with

characteristics of egotism and cruelty. However when some atheists emphatically assert that there is absolutely nothing after death then I answer that, as they have not died and come back, they are having an intransigent view based on faith. As a Spiritual Humanist I am open to the possibility that, in view of the Near Death Experiences and to the fact that information is saved even in a black hole, some form of memory survives the death of the body.

- 5) Although many people have pseudo-psychic experiences that are only the result of neural excitation I am open to the fact that in deep meditation we can at times have glimpses of our origins. The substratum of our cells, the atoms and sub-particles, were created in the very early moments of the big bang and if we are all made of the same quantum energy therefore I accept the possibility that we could have insights into this reality. Those insights have a lot of peace and joy but are mostly very gentle and subtle and not a subject for boasting and impressing others.
- 6) The source of all life, whether it has some form of self-awareness or not, is unconcerned with your belief but only with the quality of your life, actions and emotions. The father and mother of us all would never torture its children because they do not believe in Father Christmas, matter of fact it would never torture anyone.

Rebirth, Reincarnation

In this chapter I will use these two terms as interchangeable although in some ancient traditions they had different connotations. The Hindus favour the term reincarnation meaning that there is a soul that transmigrates from one body to the next. Buddhists favour the word rebirth meaning that they do not believe in a permanent soul that transmigrates instead there is only a chain of memories and conditionings that moves from body to body.

I am only going to share with you my speculations on the subject of another life and I need to make clear that I do not embrace any dogmas on the subject and I am very happy when people disagree with me on this topic.

There are many beliefs on the subject of what happens after death but I will consider the three main ones: a) There is nothing after death, dust to dust and nothing else. If there is a continuation it is only due to our atoms living our body and going into other life forms. b) There is only one life and there is no second chance, if you disbelieve or commit other crimes you will burn for ever and ever and ever and ever in hell. c) You are on a learning journey and you will keep reincarnating on various planes of existence till you learn to cease creating pain for yourself and others.

For many reasons but particularly in view of near death experiences and in view that information is never lost I like to lean towards a vision of reincarnation. I like the vision that as children of the light we will be given as many chances as needed to return back to our true nature. So let me clarify a couple of important points concerning rebirth.

Punishment

Nature does not take us from suffering situations from one life to another life out of a cruel and spiteful sense of vengeance, quite the contrary. Let me try to give you a very simple example. If I keep slapping people at one stage in my lives I will be constantly slapped in order to learn that being slapped is painful and humiliating and therefore according to the principle of 'Don't do to others what you don't want others to do to you' at one point I will totally release that tendency in me and say sorry for having created hurt in others.

Remember that even after there is the awareness of our hatred and its release we might still suffer for sometimes as we have not fully cleared, as yet, the karmic return. In other words if I have given 100 slaps and when I have received as a karmic consequence 70 slaps I repent and totally change my life I still have 30 slaps coming my way!

When the Belief in Karma Goes Horribly Wrong

I sometimes hear people say such horrible things about the theory of Karma that It makes me think that it is much better to be an atheist or agnostic then to have such insensitive and unpleasant view of others.

The main one is when some people say that the disabled deserve their suffering because they were bad people in a past life. They then look at themselves and they can see that they are strong and healthy and they attribute this to the fact that in a past life they were good people. So the conclusion is that they deserve health and wealth whilst the disabled and the suffering persons deserve their pain. What is horrible in this vision is the contempt and spite they have against the disadvantaged and the fact that they make a harmonious view of reality as a portal for the worse kind of supremacist ideology.

My answer

There are two main dynamics in the cycles of karma: one is that when we are enjoying some merit, giving us strength and well-being, we could also be acquiring a lot of negative and painful energy due to our arrogance and cruelty. The other is that when we are releasing some hurtful actions through suffering and pain if we keep equanimity and compassion in our hearts we are filling our soul with future rewards.

I have often seen in my medical practice many people who were suffering tremendously yet they were filled with so much peace and love and I always felt that they were just paying their last bills to this world and at the same time they were reaching the portal of the Beloved. On the other hand those misguided and arrogant souls who despise the disadvantaged and the suffering are not aware of what is awaiting them around the corner. They are also not aware that many people who are in pain in reality are getting closer and closer to the Gates of Heaven!

Another Fallacy

I often heard, whilst living in India, individuals belonging to the higher classes say that the lower classes should not complain about their status because they are part of an exploited and despised lower class due to their past Karma. So these higher cast people exploit and abuse lower cast people in the conviction that they have a right to do so. However the right approach to Karma is to break its shackles and not to repeat it anymore therefore we should always contribute to break the shackles of suffering and slavery. Therefore it is important in order to escape Karma that we cease exploitation here and now and we should never accept injustice and abuse.

Conclusion

Any theory about the after-life has its flaws and limitations and we could spend all day long picking up holes in them so for me it is just a question of feeling closer to the more elegant, just and compassionate one. And the first price, for me, goes to reincarnation because it tells me that yes there is suffering and sometimes a lot of it but one day we will all be saved and this suffering is not for ever. It tells me that suffering can be a learning lesson and if we can, as far as possible, bear it with equanimity and compassion out of the pain love and peace can emerge and fill our being. Short of rebirth I am comfortable with an atheist idea

that there is no continuation of consciousness after death, deep sleep and eternal rest but what I am not comfortable with is an idea that there is a punishment of eternal torture for a disbeliever and a reward of eternal happiness for a believer.

Whatever our belief is the important thing is that we should never gloat over people's suffering or accept it as righteous. On the other hand whenever possible we should aim to always reduce pain and suffering.

Shirdi Sai Baba



In the photo above you can see an elderly man dressed in what you could almost describe as rags; he is sitting on a bare floor where he lives and sleeps in the company of a few stray dogs that he shelters and feeds.

Sai Baba lived in a dilapidated mosque with a collapsed roof that barely protected him from the rain and every day he went for a walk around the village of Shirdi to beg for a few chapattis and lentils for him and his dogs and some oil to burn his lamps which he kept going all night. Yet he was one of the most important and influential saints who ever lived in India.



It is important not to confuse Shirdi Sai Baba who died in 1918 with the more contemporary Satya Sai Baba who died in 2011.

So why am I writing this chapter? Christians say that Jesus is unique because he died and resurrected and I respect that but I want to show you that these kind of miracles performed by someone claiming to be one with God are not unique to a particular person and although rare they have happened in various parts of the world. Moreover when it comes to Jesus we are viewing events that occurred 2000 years ago and with only the writings of his disciples as testimony; on the other hand with Shirdi Sai Baba when I lived in India in the 70's there were still thousands of people who had witnessed personally his powers and miracles.

Some of you will call miracles trickery and humbug and I totally respect that because they have a good point since this world is full of tricksters and deceivers but when it comes to someone of the integrity of Shirdi Sai Baba and the thousands of people who witnessed his actions I keep an open mind.

So let us start

In the late 1870's a strange looking Fakir arrived in the small village of Shirdi located in central India. A fakir is a person who has dedicated his or her life to a spiritual search with little concern for worldly goods. Accompanied by a few feral dogs he looked quite aloof and a bit strange. At first he went to the local Hindu temple asking for shelter but when the priest asked him what was his religion he refused to answer therefore the priest told him that he could not shelter him, however he could go and stay in a nearby dilapidated mosque. He added that the mosque was in ruins but at least there was enough of the roof left to shelter him from rain and the scorching sun. Sai Baba remained in that place till the end of his life and even when he had tens of thousands of followers he refused to repair it or add any extensions to it and he slept on the bare floor with the only addition of a small blanket.

After arriving in Shirdi Sai Baba went every day to the local market to beg for some food and a little oil to keep his lamps burning even when he had a vast following. After a few weeks of his arrival in Shirdi, although he went daily to the market, he had not spoken to anyone yet and people found him to be an odd fellow. One day the merchants they decided to play a prank on him and when Baba arrived they all refused to give him any oil. These merchants at night they hid behind the bushes surrounding the mosque curious to see what the fakir would do now that he had no oil to light his lamps. To their amazement they saw him take some water and pour it in the empty dishes and light the lamps. The merchants suddenly realised that this was not an eccentric beggar on the contrary he was a mystic with extraordinary powers. Frightened at the possibility of his reprisal they came out of the bushes and prostrating at his feet they begged for his forgiveness. To their relief he smiled at them and said that they had nothing to worry about as he has no intention whatsoever to hurt them in any way. From that moment on a beautiful relationship started between the villagers and Sai Baba that lasted for decades and made the isolated village of Shirdi one of the most known and visited places in India.

Some of his miracles

As I said earlier we are not reading about events that occurred many centuries ago with limited chronicles instead we are reading and hearing narrations about events that occurred less than a century ago and were witnessed by thousands.

- 1) Sai Baba told his devotees that he was going to live his body for three days and three nights and, since in India it was compulsory to cremate or bury a cadaver

within two days of death occurring, they should not allow anyone to cremate him or bury him. By the third day the local police came to the mosque with a doctor and they were adamant that they wanted to remove the body as they had ascertained that he was dead. Baba's disciples true to their promise they stood their ground and almost threatened a riot if the police disturbed his body however they promised that if Baba had not regained consciousness after three days they would surrender the cadaver. By the end of three days and three nights after taking a few deep breaths and opening his eyes to the delight of his devotees Sai Baba returned to this his earth amongst the living. Death and resurrection except that Baba could do it at will!

- 2) This incredible event happened in front a very large crowd when Baba was widely known and lots of people had gathered around his mosque for some celebrations. A father and mother brought with them a ill young child and unfortunately in the midst of the crowds the child became very unwell and died: people around her tried to revive her but it was useless. Sai Baba got up from his sit and with an angry face addressed the dead infant thus: 'How dare you die at my place!' and wait for this: he proceeded to kick her! The little girl promptly stood up feeling well and like if nothing had happened.
- 3) The next story is very sweet. One night Sai and a number of his devotees were sitting as usual close to a fire when a lizard appeared from the bushes, the animal was very excited and kept wiggling and running around. One of the devotees asked Baba why was the lizard acting in this manner. Baba replied that few months before this male lizard was sharing his life with a female he loved very much, unfortunately some farmers whilst harvesting the grain they inadvertently placed the female lizard in a bag filled the grain destined for another location and as a consequence she ended up in a distant village. However the day before the same female was inadvertently thrown in a cart, filled with hay, destined for Shirdi . As she was approaching Shirdi the male sensed her presence approaching and started dancing in excitement. Soon after Baba finished this story a cart filled with hay entered the village and true enough a lizard run out of it speeding towards the male. They both, after an initial dance around each other, run unto the bushes to spend the rest of their lives together.
- 4) Sai Baba never accepted invitations to dine at anyone's home nevertheless an elderly widow tried her luck and invited him to have a meal at her house. To her surprise he accepted it and said that the day after he will visit her at lunch time. The lady in excitement and anticipation spent the whole morning cooking a sumptuous meal however when the lunch hour arrived Baba did not turn up. Suddenly a sick and downbeat dog appeared at her door probably having smelt the food, she was horrified and threw stones at him list he ruined the whole occasion. She kept waiting in anticipation for a while longer but Baba did not turn up. Later in the evening she went to Sai Baba complaining that she had spent all morning

cooking and he never came. Sai Baba replied: 'I did come but you threw stones at me'.

I have only chosen these four stories to share with you but there are tons more, a good book to explore them is 'Sai Satcharita'.

Shirdi Sai Baba clearly claimed divinity however if we understand the context he did so very much within the thought of the mainstream of Hindu thought and other mystic traditions that view the term: 'I and God are one' as a statement that the human in them has fully aligned itself with the essence of the divine.

Let us now have a look at some of his main sayings. teachings and reassurances to his devotees.

Divinity and protection

If I am here do not fear, when you look at me I look at you.

I get angry with none. Will a mother get angry with her children? Will the ocean send back the waters to the several rivers?

All that is seen is my form: ant, fly, prince, and pauper. I am in everything here and everywhere. I fill all space.

Those who think that Baba is only in Shirdi have totally failed to know me.

My tomb shall bless and speak to the needs of my devotees.

I am ever living to help and guide all who come to me, who surrender to me and who seek refuge in me.

I give my devotees whatever they ask, until they ask for what I truly want to give them.
(He is referring to the fact that he gives healing and perform miracles only to create faith and a spiritual need so that he can bestow liberation and divine union)

His commands

Whatever creature comes to you, human or otherwise, treat it with consideration.

Spend money in charity; be generous and munificent but not extravagant.

Do not fight with anyone, nor retaliate, nor slander anyone.

The giver gives, but really he is sowing the seed for later: the gift of a rich harvest.

If you avoid rivalry and dispute, God will protect you. Give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and clothes to the naked. Then God will be pleased.

You are divine as well

When you see with your inner eye. Then you realize that you are God and not different from Him.

There is a wall of separation between oneself and others and between you and me. Destroy this wall!

See the divine in the human being

Universality

All gods are one. There is no difference between a Hindu and a Muslim. Mosque and temple are the same.

Divine in essence yet human

I cannot do anything without God's permission.

To God be the praise. I am only the slave of God.

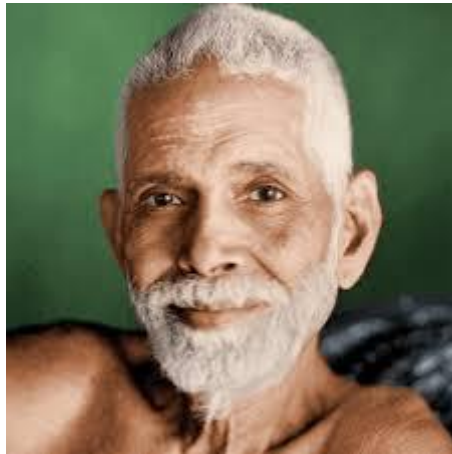
I am not even worth a fly sitting on a heap of dung.

Some of you might find it puzzling that at one point he describes himself as omnipresent and in another as a fly and even less than a fly. In the oneness philosophy and mysticism we are all divine, as part and parcel of one consciousness, yet at the same time we are human and limited. In the oneness with the Absolute there is an absence of an ego and separation, in other words we are saying 'everything is divine' however when we relate to the world as an individual we also understand as a personality that we are limited and fallible.

For example Yogis and Vedantins often do a meditation where breathing in they say inwardly 'Shivo' and breathing out 'Ham' in other words 'I am Shiva'. However it is a way to rest their persona and guide it back to the original silence it came from. Note that I said: 'guide it back where it came from' and not destroy it. **There is nothing to destroy there is a gentle guidance and a return home. The drop merges back into the ocean yet once it realises its origin it can still survive as a unique expression of the Absolute but this time smiling and enjoying the multiplicity within the unity.**

As you can see Sai Baba of Shirdi followed the path of devotion close to the Beloved aspect of the Absolute, we will now take a look to a rather different approach of one of the greatest Indian mystics, Ramana Maharshi. Ramana in a way he manifested the more silent and repose aspect of the Absolute.

Ramana Maharshi



Let what comes come.

Let what goes go.

Find what remains.

Ramana Maharshi (1879- 1950) was born in a village in the state of Tamil Nadu, South India. I am introducing you to his life and teachings as a contraposition to Shirdi Sai Baba, two very different paths that yet can lead to the same goal depending on our inner disposition. As I am writing I am, from time to time, looking at his face on this page and I am touched by the love and peace emanating from his expression.

At the age of 17 one day he was sitting in his room when suddenly he started feeling unwell and he was overwhelmed by the sensation that he was dying but instead of going into a state of panic a question arose in him: 'Who is the one who is dying?' Is it my body? Is it my mind? My emotions? He gradually examined in a state of heightened awareness all these strata in his being going deeper and deeper. Gradually he eliminated all those possibilities till he reached the stage where the question dropped because he realized that there is no separate 'I' or 'me' that is dying and our true Self is unborn therefore cannot die and everything is the Self and its nature is pure bliss and the deepest peace. He now went into a deep state of meditation immersed in joy and tranquillity and to go deeper into it he left home and for a few years he lived beneath the temple of Tiruvannamalai and in caves around the city. For a long time he remained silent immersed in the pure consciousness of the Self.

When he started expressing himself verbally again he was faced with the difficulty of finding the words to give people a glimpse of his experience and also of finding a method to guide them on the path of self-discovery. Over a short period of time he formulated the path of self-enquiry in very simple words.

We identify our sense of self, our 'I', with our body, our circumstances, family, job, country, status which are all transient and illusory. Ramana's invitation was to ask the question 'Who am I' and observe the identifications emerging and realising their ephemerality we discard them and we keep on enquiring. As long as we are observing transient identifications there is a duality between the questioner and what arises however we reach a point where all questions cease because the questioner, the source of light and life, realizes himself as free from forms and labels pure, unborn and filled with peace. It is like if we were a lamp looking in the reflection of its light for its identity. When the light shines on a flower the person thinks 'I am a flower' and when it shines on a puddle the person thinks 'I am a puddle', however when the seeker traces back the origin of the light he/she discovers that he/she is the very source of the light, there is nowhere else to go, duality ceases, time and space disappears.

Ramana was aware that words can be misleading and we can start creating all kinds of projections, fantasies and expectations therefore his true teachings was conducted in pure silence and meditation. Very often visitors would ask him a question and Ramana would not answer verbally, instead he would remain silent and rooted in peace and silence and in this deep meditation and letting go the questioner would find the answer within himself not an intellectual answer but a deep, freeing and profound realization.

But how can you teach something except by being It?

Shunyata

Shunyata was a Danish gardener who went to visit Ramana in 1936 and had a profound awakening whilst there. This is what he wrote:

'Never before had I had been aware such integral Self-Radiance in any human form, such light of Silence. One was being fed just being near him. At the first sight of him, I felt no excitement or even awe, no solemnity or ecstasy, simply a calm recognition, a glad contentment, and gratitude in his Darshan.'

I love the words 'calm recognition', 'glad contentment' and 'gratitude'. This to me describes a true spiritual experience rather than words that point to some kind of explosive and excited event which often reinforce a spiritual ego.

A few stories

- 1) Some weeks before Ramana started to talk again a Brahmin used to sit outside his cave claiming to visitors that he was Ramana's guru in view to be given various offerings. When Ramana resumed talking someone asked him whether the priest was truly his teacher (he wasn't). Ramana calmly replied: 'If he says so then he must be'.
- 2) In the early days after coming out of his trance Ramana lived in a cave outside Tiruvannamalai and to reach it one had to walk through some woods. One late

evening a woman was walking towards the cave to visit Ramana when suddenly to her horror a tiger appeared out of the trees. Of course she was terrified and she prayed loudly to Ramana to rescue her. Lo and behold Ramana appeared and the tiger run away frightened by the apparition. The relieved woman run to the cave and on reaching it she prostrated herself before Ramana thanking him for the miracle. Ramana smiled and said: 'I am very happy that you are safe but I did not do anything, your fear coupled with your faith projected my image therefore you are the source of this miraculous event.

- 3) In India religious people tend to walk in circles around statues of the Gods with various offerings. Some women started doing the same around Ramana in a sign of respect and devotion and this is something that many disciples do around their gurus. Ramana looked a bit distressed when they started doing that and said: 'Please ladies don't do that you are making me dizzy'.
- 4) Ramana was always surrounded by people and his closest disciples begun to worry that this was impacting his health therefore they decided that after lunch nobody should enter Ramana's room for a couple of hours to allow him some rest. The lunch area was outside Ramana's room so people had to live it and then re-enter in order to have their lunch. The day after this order was issued the trustees, after clearing the food hall, passed by the area outside Ramana's room and to their surprise they saw a crowd outside it with Ramana standing with them. 'Mahrishi why are you standing outside your own room with all these people?' Ramana answered: 'Someone told us that we cannot enter this room for two hours after lunch' The trustees answered: 'But Mahrishi we gave that order to give you a break and a chance to rest' But Ramana said: 'There is no high or low here, we, either, all go in or we all stay out'

Ramana was never keen for people to worship him and he was not even very keen to be called a Guru. At first he said that there is no guru and disciple and that the only teacher is the Self however later on he relented somewhat realising that many people needed the reassurance of having someone guiding them but he insisted that it was a transient relationship because the final aim is to transcend all forms of divisions.

Jesus said: "I am not your teacher. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have tended." Gospel of Thomas

I will end this chapter with a few quotes from this wonderful teacher

"Happiness is your nature. It is not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is seeking it outside when it is inside."

"All are gurus to us, the wicked by their evil deeds say 'do not come near me'. the good are always good, therefore all are like gurus to us."

“Peace is your natural state. It is the mind that obstructs the natural state”.

“Whatever is done lovingly, with righteous purity and with peace of mind, is a good action. Everything which is done with the stain of desire and with agitation filling the mind is classified as a bad action”.

“I have not said that a Guru is not necessary. But a Guru need not always be in human form. First a person thinks that he is an inferior and that there is a superior, all-knowing, all powerful God who controls his own and the world's destiny and worships him or does Bhakti. When he reaches a certain stage and becomes fit for enlightenment, the same God whom he was worshipping comes as Guru and leads him on. That Guru comes only to tell him 'That God is within yourself. Dive within and realize'. God, Guru and the Self are the same”.

‘In the centre of the heart-cave the pure Brahman is directly manifest as the Self in the form of I’

‘You already are that which you seek’

A little advice on diet

We have spoken so much about philosophical and spiritual matters and I thought that I would wrap up this book with a little discussion about nutrition because after all it can have so much influence on our well-being. Also I like to remind you that I have qualifications in Osteopathy, Chinese Medicine and Nutrition with decades of teaching students and treating patients so I have a little knowledge on this subject. More importantly after many years of travels in tropical countries and over seven years of stay in India I came back to Europe with some very debilitating tropical syndromes and what has allowed me to almost reach the respectable age of seventy has been mostly nutrition. All this having been said I can only share my experience and present my point of view and you might have a different opinion.

At present the nutritional arena is broadly divided in two camps with a host of eccentric nutritional plans in between.

On one side you have the Eskimo, Atkins and Mercola's diets which are mostly based on animal proteins, fats, some vegetables and the avoidance of carbohydrates. On the other side you have vegetarians, vegans, naturopaths and a very large of the orthodox medical school which is based on sound research and clearly shows that a high consumption of animal protein causes an increase in the possibility of developing cancer.

Both schools cite numerous points to promote their position on the subject but I am not going to do that because I would have to write a small book to examine and explain the many facets of medical research. What I will do is briefly give you my advice and leave it up to you to decide.

I am strongly in favour of a diet based on whole grains, plenty of vegetables, nuts, fruits, beans which contains all the nutrients you need and none of the toxins that a high animal protein and fat diet creates. If you feel the need you can add a little dairy proteins, eggs and fish.

I like this diet because it is non-toxic. It is ethical because it minimizes the horrible suffering of animals and a spiritual person cannot be the cause of an increase in horrible slaughterhouses and the pain and lamentations in them. Excess in animal proteins increases toxicity and disease.

I always knew when people were on this diet, even if they did not tell me, from the stench emanating from their bodies. A stench created by the putrefaction of flesh and fat in their bodies and I am not exaggerating. Also I found the experience of having to use a loo after they had been in it pretty distressful.

On the other hand I find proximity to the body of a person on a mainly plant based life far more pleasant, their fragrance is pleasant and their skin usually clearer and most

importantly their psyche is free from the cries, fear and pain of helpless creatures. Also they do not contribute to the destruction of tropical forests in order to create food for a much higher population created for human consumption.

However I always recommend people who want to restrict all forms of animal consumption to make sure not to be depleted of some essential nutrients. It is important to combine whole grains with various beans to have a full protein and to research some important aspects of supplementation like B12.

Of course it is your body and your life but this is my advice.

Animals are our brother and sisters, not our slaves

Animals are our brother and sisters, not our slaves for toil and fodder for our stomachs. Unfortunately throughout human history we have treated these creatures with the most appalling cruelty in the conviction that animals have no feelings and no consciousness whatsoever. This insensitive and appalling attitude has also been reinforced by some religions that narrate that God or their prophet decreed that the sole purpose of animals is to serve as food and labour with no other purpose. People have no compunction in working them to death or even beat them to death just to release their frustration and satisfy their sadistic tendencies and seldom there have been laws to protect these creatures.

This mindless cruelty can reach abhorrent levels when we have no hesitation in tying up a goose and feeding it to a point when their livers swell and explode and this horrendous torture is perpetrated just for the luxury of creating a 'refined' food called pate de foie. We also have no compunction in boiling animals alive and killing them in similar cruel manners.

It is my conviction and experience that animals, although different to us and belonging to a different natural kingdom, have feelings like us and have various levels of consciousness. After all they have, like us, a central nervous system and a brain capable of creating a sensation of pain and also of creating feelings of love and nurturing.

For this reason I strongly believe that you cannot walk on a spiritual path and be a caring and truly happy human being if you condone and support cruelty to animals.

If you cannot be a vegetarian at least be mindful of how much animal flesh you eat and avoid any flesh produced by extremely painful methods. If you have pets treat them with respect and care as if they were your children and learn how to be receptive to their needs and appreciate the love they so abundantly give you.

The conspiracy behind the conspiracy

I am leaving this section for last because if I had written it at the beginning some of you would have deleted this ebook from their drive with fury and indignation. Even if you strongly disapprove of this section I hope that you still will keep in your heart and memory the parts that you resonated with. In this chapter I am just trying to assist you, if I can, in not falling into a pit of hatred and paranoia which can greatly hinder your spiritual journey. Even if I can succeed in freeing one person from that purgatory I will feel that the effort was worthy. I could write a large book on this subject but I will do all I can to keep it succinct and limited to a few pages.

Some people love conspiracies, the more outlandish the better and it does not matter if they totally misrepresent facts and hurt people. Let me give you an example:

Few years ago I visited a park where a group of conspiracists met regularly to share the latest plots and create new ones on the spur of the moment excited by the thought that within minutes they could post them on social media and catapult them into the world stage creating a feverish excitement amongst their followers. I approached them and I told them this: 'I have studied both medicine and cosmology and I have some amazing things to tell you'. Their interest was aroused and they listened attentively so I proceeded:

'As you know Nasa, a nest of illuminati, has recently sent a probe into space called 'Rosetta'. They say that its purpose is to collect specimen from meteorites but this is only a cover. When your doctor gives you an injection or draws blood from you that is only a pretence, what he is really doing is injecting a miniature transmitter that sends information to the Rosetta spacecraft. This transmission sends data about your thoughts and feelings and then the probe in space can manipulate your mind to think and feel according to the wishes of the Illuminati (which of course are Jews).'

I then left them and as I was walking away I could hear their excited chatter about my news. Two hours later I went back to them and they were still talking about it. 'Guys, I said, don't get too excited about this because I was only kidding!' Their faces dropped in disappointment 'Oh no! We were already posting this on social media as it is such a good story' they retorted. If I had not stopped them this story would have been on Youtube, Twitter, Facebook and loads more within minute and millions of people would have believed it purely 'because they saw it on Youtube'. I am sure that you have heard many times from a conspiracist: 'But I saw it on Youtube therefore it must be true'. This naivety and lack of discrimination has encouraged fear mongers to flood the internet with fake news filled with paranoia, racism and hatred.

Do not misunderstand me, of course, I am aware that not everything is what it seems and some humans can be very corrupted and devious. For example I feel that in the case of the

Kennedy assassination we might never find out the full truth. I am also aware that throughout history the aim of most rulers, whether they were from the East or the West, has been to conquer and manipulate. I am also critical of the big drug companies because they are more interested in creating patentable chemicals than promoting safer natural remedies which are not patentable and the list goes on. However I draw the line when critical examination slides into paranoia and hatred and it becomes fodder for evil minds and next I will illustrate this point.

The alliance of the dark forces

Many conspiracies have originated from the Ku Klux Klan, some from radical Islamist groups, many from neo-Nazi and Hitler apologetic groups and even from the far left and some from just plainly psychopathic individuals, a mind boggling assortment of bed fellows! Their aim is to deny science and to stop the progressive evolution of humanity into a more tolerant and open minded society and any form of spirituality which is not fundamentalist and narrow minded.

The villains according to the conspiracy lobby

The Illuminati – At the centre of every good conspiracy story there is a mysterious and cryptic society that controls everything in this world. Nobody knows who they are, where they are but they have the world in the palm of their hands because of their supernatural power. How do they get this mystical power? At night they perform magical rituals for which they need the fresh blood of a sacrificed child after which they transform themselves into lizards; not sure why into lizards but there you go! And no, I am not making this stuff up as there are books written by conspiracists that describe this practice.

So where does this term come from? Illuminati in Italian and Latin means ‘enlightened’ so these people have a serious problem with enlightened people.

In the fourteenth century the Western world was dominated by an intransigent and despotic religious power and dissenters were burned at the stake and they included free thinkers and scientists who, for example, believed that the earth was rotating around the sun and not vice-versa. Along with them many ‘witches’ encountered the same fate, these poor women were accused of casting the evil eye and amongst other things of flying on broom sticks and they had no chance of survival as they were tortured till they confessed their guilt. During the Spanish inquisition it is estimated that ten thousand people, mostly Jews and Protestants, were burned at the stake however it is also estimated that at least hundred thousand died in squalid cells due to the wounds, inflicted during torture, becoming infected in cells covered by faeces and rats.

Around 1325 a bold and highly learned writer, originally from Florence, called Petrarca published a series of love poems and this infuriated the Catholic Church and they demanded that these sonnets should be burned. However Petrarca was enjoying the protection of

many rulers therefore he continued undisturbed with his work. This event kick started one of the greatest revolutions and transformations of human thought and it was called '**The Renaissance**'. The works of Petrarca were soon followed by the beautiful paintings of Botticelli some of them containing nudes presented in a very elegant and artistic manner and representing ancient Greek myths like the goddess Venus. Beautiful building based on Greco-Roman architecture followed and the work of Brunelleschi, a Florentine man, became famous throughout Europe. This liberated human spirit knew no bounds and some of the greatest artists in the world emerged like Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raffaello and many more. The works of Hellenic philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle became public and widely read. During this period people rebelled against the corruption in the Roman Church and Protestantism was born.

A new term was coined 'Humanism' and unlike today it was not necessarily associated with atheism. The main bases of Renaissance Humanism was the belief that the love of arts, philosophy and science do not need to contradict spirituality and religion and most importantly the Church should respect human rights and the right to question, research and discover new ideas.

The conspiracy lobby hates the Renaissance because its encouragement to free thinking and human rights led later on to the age of enlightenment.

The age of Enlightenment or Illumination

Around 1545 till 1650 there was a religious counter reformation started by the Catholic Church and it was not only aimed at Protestants but also at the movement of emancipation started by the Renaissance. The inquisition gained momentum and there was widespread persecution and suppression. This retrograde event was not found only amongst Catholics but was also reproduced in a different version amongst extreme Protestant movements like Calvinists and Puritanical adherents and saw the emergence of witch hunters, amongst both Christian churches, who tortured and burned women accused of using natural remedies, magical arts or even astrology. Some of these women were simply suffering with psychiatric disorders and were accused of being possessed by the devil.

However this attempt to suppress freedom of thought and the pursuit of knowledge gradually lost support and around 1730 a new wave of philosophers, writers and scientists kick started what is called the **age of enlightenment**. Enlightened in Latin is 'illuminatus' hence the term used by conspiracists 'the Illuminati' or people who are enlightened.

Retrograde Christianity believed that science, arts, philosophy and the pursuit of knowledge were against their doctrine of faith and obedience and that scriptural dogma should not be questioned therefore if the bible said that the earth is flat it is heresy to assert that observations pointed out that it was round. This led to many scientists being persecuted and even burned at the stake. Some scientists, like Galileo, in order to avoid such an horrendous

fate recanted their discoveries but others like Giordano Bruno chose to die rather than to betray their vision. Giordano Bruno was guilty of saying that the earth circled around the sun and that stars were like suns with their own planets. He also rejected the doctrines of eternal damnation and of bread becoming God (transubstantiation).

So in the eighteenth century a new movement started in Europe, first in France, with the likes of writers and thinkers like Voltaire and Rousseau. In Britain the age of enlightenment saw the emergence of great scientists and philosophers like Isaac Newton, Locke and Hume. It was a period of study, discovery and research which became more and more free from religious dogma and persecution. Again, their main ideology was that the human mind can only flourish in a climate of tolerance and freedom and that science and reason need not contradict the pursuit of spirituality and religiosity.

Puritanical and dogmatic people have, to this day, hated the age of enlightenment because it heralded an erosion of their power and this hatred has spilled over into the various present schools of conspiracists.

This hatred has, particularly fanned by extreme born again Christians, reached those people who participated in **the New Age** movement of the 60's. They hate the fact that so many young people started travelling and bringing back information about many cultures and religions and explored new philosophies and dimensions in the expansion of thought,

The Jews, nothing but the Jews

Before I proceed with this section and before you start cursing me calling me a dirty Jew I must let you know that I am hundred percent Latino and I do not receive any money from any Jews. I just simply reject rabid racism and prejudice against any group of people. I am critical of many aspects of Israel's politics and actions, like illegal settlements, but I do not let these feelings extrapolate into hatred for the whole Jewish community.

To a conspiracist the Jews are the cause of every calamity that has befallen the earth and humanity be wars, pestilences, tornados and earthquakes. Whatever misery and pain they have in their hearts they only feel better when they have blamed the Jews.

These conspiracists are convinced that the Jews are not human but possess supernatural powers and they can make people do whatever they want. Why do I say this? Simple! In this planet there are about 7 billion humans, that is 7 thousand million people, now, there are only about 14 million Jews. This makes that every 7 thousand people there are only 14 Jews but these 14 Jews can totally dominate them. They can make them fight two world wars, they can dupe them into believing that the earth is round, they dominate every aspect of their lives including banking, medicine, science, governments, they create Isis and supply 150 thousand men to mascaared as Islamic fighters, they make vaccines to cull the human race, they have created Communism and Nazism, and the list can go for ever. All these conspiracies have succeeded except the one of vaccination to cull the human race because

since the introduction of vaccination the world population has increased from 8 hundred million to 7 thousand million.

What I find also rather sad is that the conspiracy lobby hates science due to the fact that some prominent scientists like Einstein had Jewish origins and they assert that science is a scheme by the Jews to control the world and that all the astronomical observatories in the world are controlled by the Jews to hide the fact that the earth is flat and it is much bigger than the sun and any other star in the sky. They also believe that the sun is much closer to the earth than thought, they also warn us that the flat earth is surrounded by ice and patrolled by illuminati and Jewish planes and every day they shoot down planes that venture too close to the ice boundary so that they do not find out the truth. So thousands of people are killed every day by the Jews but nobody realises it.

A conspiracy is very easy to create and spread virally in this information age and let us look at a few examples of stories that are blown out of all proportion.

Karl Marx as most of you know is one of the greatest political writers who created a political theory for a political system which at one point had conquered one third of the planet. Marx happened to be born in a family that were cousins of the Jewish Rothschild family. From this the conspirators concluded that Marx was working for the Rothschild with the aim to destroy Socialism! So the Jews (again) with the aim to destroy Socialism they created a political system that wiped out capitalism from one third of the world! Also what conspirators ignore is that if Marx had worked for the Rothschild he would have been a wealthy man, instead he lived in extreme poverty most of his life often bordering on starvation.

One of the most revolting conspiracies is that the Jews installed Hitler in power in order to cause the Holocaust so that after the holocaust they could claim the land of Palestine. This story has been spread by the Ku Klux Klan and the Nation of Islam. In the 1920's Germany was in complete chaos and economic collapse and starvation was widespread. Italy a few years before was in the same situation and the ascent of a strong nationalistic party to power had solved the situation by creating a stable economic and social environment, unfortunately power corrupts and we know the end that Mussolini met and why. Therefore in Germany some industrialists decided to give some support to the national socialist party of Hitler in the hope that it could give the much needed stability. One of those supporters was a distant cousin of the Rothschild. Keep in mind that in the twenties Hitler never expressed his true intentions on the fate of the Jews. So from there the story has been grown into this la la land of speculation that the Jews installed Nazism to kill themselves by the millions in order to gain Palestine. It would have been a lot easier to send one million soldiers to the Middle East and conquer Palestine then having six million of them die.

One of the most painful stories that the conspiracy lobby has spread encouraged by its Nazi and Hitler apologist component is to deny the holocaust. This assertion does hurt me

because my area of Italy was occupied by the Nazis during world war two and I was born just a few years after that and everybody over the age of ten witnessed the trains full of people being sent to the concentration camps. We never saw them again. I have met also many people throughout Europe who have also witnessed the same events.

Where did this genocidal hatred come from?

Before I proceed to examine the origins of anti-Semitism let me give you an example of genetic inheritance. In ancient Japan many Samurai kept a breed of dogs called Akita and they used them for hunting but most importantly for dog fights and these warriors felt very proud when their dog won many fights. So over the centuries these dogs developed a genetic trait to hate other dogs. A few years ago a friend of mine bought an Akita puppy only 3 months old who had never been to a park or met other dogs besides its mother. The day after she got him we took him to the park and to our surprise the first thing he did was to attack and try to bite all other dogs in the park. I am saying 'surprised' cause we did not know enough about its history. Even when he grew up, although he was very kind and obedient towards its owner it was impossible to take him outside her house without a muzzle.

When the diaspora or dispersion of the Jews from the land of Israel began in 66AD they dispersed to all the corners of the world, many came to Europe but many also travelled to far lands including China, India and North Africa. In those lands they never encountered many problems and they settled quite happily in harmony with the locals and they integrated quite happily. Also they lived in harmony within the Roman Empire till Christianity became the official religion. After this change of culture and religion their condition changed dramatically. The Church emphasised that the Jews had killed Jesus although the majority of Jews were not involved in this event and many of them sympathised with the message of Jesus. From then on they became known as the Jesus killers and were hated causing their odium and persecution.

In Europe their persecution and hatred reached an incredible ferocity. Whenever there was a draught or any other natural calamity the populace accused the Jews of causing this misfortune because of their presence in their midst and as a consequence they would attack their ghetto and kill them by the thousands. Any event which caused distress like economic hardship or a misfortune in war was immediately blamed on the Jews whom often they accused of doing black magic and sacrificing children so again another mass killing followed.

Many rulers they thought to please God by persecuting the Jews often expelling them from their countries causing them tremendous hardship. In Spain Queen Isabel a devoted Catholic courted divine favour by expelling them and sequestering all their properties leaving them abandoned and in squalor. Therefore many Jews converted to Christianity to avoid destitution but Isabel was convinced that they were lying and instituted the Inquisition directed by Torquemada. The role of the Inquisition and Torquemada was to unmask the

‘marranos’ which could loosely be translated as pigs and Torquemada inaugurated it by torturing a small girl and leaving her no choice but to confess that their family were marranos. They were all burned. Over a period of time ten thousand people were burned at the stake but another hundred thousand died due to the wounds, inflicted by torture, becoming infected in filthy prison cells. This is one of many other events.

This genocidal hatred became ingrained in the mind and genetic make-up of the Christian world and endures to this day enflamed by neo-Nazis and extreme religious groups and is the darling of the conspiracy lobby. For many people when a difficult and unpleasant event occurs the Jews are the ones to blame and if they feel unhappy and frustrated with their lives, rather than to take responsibility, they attribute their unhappiness on the Jews and feeling hatred towards them makes them feel better.

As I said before I could go on forever but I do not want to turn this book into only a treatise on this subject. Of course, be alert, try to distinguish the difference between facts and fake news but the only advice I can give you is not to fall into this black hole of misinformation as you could enter into a world of hateful paranoia which is the antithesis of a peaceful and rational mind.

What I have been trying to communicate throughout this book is that you can feel the peace and joy that the realization of our connection to the whole of life can bring without the superstition and insanity that has caused so much persecution and suffering.

You can be spiritual and appreciate the beauty and excitement of science and free thinking research. Every step in discovering the nature and origins of our universe and the evolution of life can fill you with excitement and make you dance. The religious person wants facts that never change and is frightened by modifications, the spiritual humanist instead knows that to be alive means that you can absorb (new information), you can also eliminate and most importantly grow. What does not change is your dedication to truth, facts and logic. What does not change is the love and peace in your heart and your commitment to grow and nurture these qualities.

Who or what do I really hate? If you are filled with discrimination and recrimination I can advise an effective reflection. From time to time just ask yourself this question: ‘Who do I really hate...Who do I really hate’. With time you might realise that this aversion directed outside has a source against something in your past and something festering within yourself.

Some further words of Advice

Do not curse others

*For with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged;
and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you*
Matthew 7:2

Few years ago I had a friend who had many positive qualities but also, like all of us, had an unpleasant trait and for her it was to shout at people who were in a lower rank than her at work; she would do so with a deep, loud and belittling voice. One evening her boss addressed her in the same way she addressed her subordinates and she was very upset and I do mean very upset about it, she felt hurt and cried about it. That evening her boss ate at a local restaurant and he contracted a mild food poisoning and he was up all night with a belly ache. I met her after a couple of days and she was rejoicing at the news of her boss becoming ill, she boasted: 'God has punished him for upsetting him, he deserved his suffering, anyone who upsets me will suffer like he did'.

Many people believe that anyone who upsets them will meet divine retribution and instant karma is at work; let us suppose that here is some truth in it and that the universe sees their hurt and answers their prayer for vengeance and 'justice' however they are missing a very important point.

Now let us go back to my friend. Two days after she rejoiced in the illness of her boss she was at work and again she flew into a rage against a subordinate for a small mistake she had made. My friend could not empathise with her victim and realise that if she was so hurt when her boss was rude to her in the same way her co-worker was going to feel the same hurt. That night my friend had such a severe stomach pain that she had to be carried to hospital where she remained for two days receiving sedation to soothe her cramps.

If there is the law of Karma remember that it just does not work for others but also for you and when you wish punishment for someone you are wishing the same punishment for you when you commit a similar infraction.

My advice is this:

- 1) Don't do unto others what you don't want others to do unto you. If someone is rude to you, with very little reason, meditate on the possibility that you are also rude to others and knowing the pain it causes resolve to try to act towards others with the same respect that you would expect.
- 2) Just be in tune with the situation as far as possible. When someone either belittles you and or shouts at you see and feel what is the best response and don't react from an humiliated and frustrated stand. In some cases just walk away, in some others smile and reassure your aggressor about your best intentions as it often works

wonders and if it is the case apologize. If your aggressor repeats this behaviour then again, be in touch with your deeper self and relax within and then act accordingly. In some rare cases you might need to shout back and clearly say NO, you will not tolerate their attitude and aggression. You can also clearly tell them that you don't want them anymore in your life and so forth.

- 3) However when you have acted in the best possible way do not carry the rage, anger and desire for vengeance in your heart as it will hurt you and corrode your insides and most importantly do not curse them or even put curses on them, you do not want that blotch on your being.

Use your power with respect and empathy

In my life there is a transformation that I have sadly witnessed many times when I see a person that normally is pleasant and respectful of others transform himself/herself into a monster bellowing flames and this happens when they are suddenly in a position of power over others. They become totally intolerant of the slightest mistake and they see their employees as conspirators and good for nothing who deserve reprimand, suspicion and chastisement. They fill themselves with anger and create hell in their own being and around them and they do not realise that in this kind of atmosphere their subordinates are more prone to make mistakes however often they are not even making a mistake but the angry manager sees it as such.

This kind of scenario can also happen in a family situation when the parent constantly rebukes and chastises their partner and children and can seldom appreciate them and encourage them. They set too high standards and expectations that cannot be met therefore there is a constant atmosphere of recrimination.

Of course you can set some necessary boundaries but try to create them with a sense of loving sympathy and support. Be tolerant and supportive and give people a chance and they will compensate you by giving you their best. **Create heaven within you and around you.**

Is a new dawn emerging?

For the past few years there is a recurring event which fills me with warmth and hope, hope for this troubled planet, its nature and inhabitants. In the last decade I am meeting more and more seekers on the spiritual journey who in different ways are reaching the same destination: a vision of life as a unity, an inherent unity that embraces the whole of creation. Many names are used but they all point to the same thing call it universal oneness, mother nature, the Brahman, Sunya, quantum universe and so forth. The essence of this unity is that we all are made of the same particles that originated at the Big Bang and those particles originate from a quantum field which is our essence. If we don't want to use scientific terms we can say that we all originate from the same energy and we all return to this energy. When through various forms of meditation, contemplation, enquiry and prayer we feel its presence as our innermost source of life we feel joy, contentment and unbounded love.

When we are blessed by this presence we touch a sense of ethics that far outreaches the often cruel and discriminating old religious morality. We drop cruelty and destructive conduct because we see all things in us and us in all things. We not only respect and care for all human beings but we extend our loving sympathy to the animals, the planet and nature in all its forms.

These seekers are not looking for a new prophet, religious leader or cult that will again create division and discrimination, we had had enough of that. This energy is now entering our hearts like a caress showing us the path and of course we will stumble along the way but we will find the path, together, to resume the journey.

Greed, exploitation, political dogma and religious fanaticism seem to have the upper hand in this world but maybe and I say maybe if we heed this call we can support a radical change and I hope that this book will give a small contribution to the unfolding of a new world. Of course there will be still different religions and ideologies but we can focus on what it is that unites us in them and not what divides us.

Bye for now

I hope you have enjoyed this ebook and that you have gained something from it even if just a little something. The main focus of my conversation with you has been to communicate the experience that all of life is interconnected. It is interconnected at the deeper levels which are the foundations of our existence, atoms and sub-particles and even deeper at the level of quantum energy. Many of us like to stop here, some of us like to go a step further and say that this final quantum field is pervaded by pure consciousness, the ultimate 'I am'. Whichever view you have is fine by me but remember that meditating on this interconnection can be an uplifting experience and the source of morality.

I am writing for everyone about a level of realization where divisions, religions, ideologies, dogmas and all other forms of separation fall to give rise to loving kindness and peace. In this space what you believe in is not very important, what is important is that your inner self resonates in the right tonality, so to speak, so that you can vibrate with the eternal and infinite energy, the source of all life.

May your hearts be filled with loving kindness and peace

May our world and entire universe be filled with loving kindness and peace.



The author in his 69th year

By the way Kaju and the persons associated with him in this book are my creation to convey my deeper spiritual feelings and realizations in a easy to follow and narration like manner.

My Youtube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5cc4VGhIZiUecGF04edWgQ?>

My website

<https://newspiritualhumanism.wordpress.com/>