

## Freeing the Spirit for a True Exploration of Reality



*"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."*

— Albert Einstein

As our series of Beyond Traditions articles draws to an end, it is important to reflect upon their purpose and value. One of the main reasons for writing these articles was educational. Many seekers lack essential knowledge about human spiritual traditions, and thus a higher perspective on how the science of enlightenment has developed throughout history. To understand the spiritual dimension is not easy and has taken many generations of thinkers, monks, and masters to develop the conceptual and practical tools that form the foundation of our evolution into self-actualization. Without their efforts and sacrifices, spirituality would have never have transcended religion, which is its infantile form. True spirituality is not religion but the process of awakening of our higher potential, the potential to attain divinity through our own existence. It is not about the worship of gods and idols, but about realizing the hidden dimension of pure subjectivity.

Despite its importance, many seekers are not interested in having a broader view of the science of meditation and awakening. Why not? How can a person who aspires to follow the path to self-realization lack a basic knowledge of past sages and masters, such as Patanjali, Hui Neng, Dogen, or Ramana Maharishi? It is like wanting to study physics without knowing who Newton or Bohr is. Or how can someone who takes the study of meditation seriously not know the meaning of



‘shikantaza’? An adept of Vipassana, for instance, who perceives meditation as mindfulness, self-observation, and detachment from relative consciousness, could argue that Zen concepts are neither relevant nor useful to him. But shikantaza is not just one of many alternative meditation techniques that are essentially similar – be it vipassana, transcendental meditation, yoga, and so on. It is a profound concept that points to the very nature of our being. It skillfully reconciles the need for inner work with the principle of sudden insight into our awakened nature. Not to know about this concept, not to contemplate its meaning, is an expression of spiritual illiteracy and the complete absence of the spirit of exploration.

Obviously, one does not have to study all spiritual traditions. But one does have to have a basic knowledge of them in order to understand different options and gain a higher perspective on the subject of illumination. Because the spiritual path can be very confusing, one needs to check the various solutions given by sages of the past. Not to do so is to ignore the constant doubt that sits at the root of each seeker’s being – the doubt about what is real and what is illusory, what is true and what is false, the doubt of the doubt itself.

### *The Correct Context for the Critique of Past Traditions*

The second reason for writing these articles was to offer a critique of past spiritual traditions and to demonstrate their limitations. People who read these critiques may disagree with them. They may consider the practice of mindfulness to be essential, or think that Advaita is in fact the highest and purest of teachings. Everybody is entitled to their opinion, but it is important to note that these articles were primarily directed towards students of this teaching; they assume the reader has an adequate level knowledge of what this teaching presents. Without a proper knowledge of this teaching, these critiques of past traditions and contemporary teachers cannot really be grasped, for any critique needs to be seen in the context of an alternative understanding.

In the minds of some seekers, to express a critical perspective on the spiritual understanding of well-known, higher teachers, such as Ramana Maharishi or Nisargadatta Maharaj, is inconceivable, because these sages are for them like Jesus is to a devoted Christian – perfect, infallible, and, by nature, beyond reproach. Such seekers cannot address or verify this kind of critique directly, because their spiritual experience is very limited, and their intelligence cannot yet grasp the subtle concepts relating to our spiritual evolution. Consequently, some may come to assume that it comes from a



place of disrespect or even arrogance. But what is truly arrogant is to live in a construct of beliefs and superficial idealizations, and to confuse this with reality. Many people respect Einstein, and it is clear that he elevated our knowledge of physics to the next level, but no one assumes that he has discovered all the answers. If we did, science would simply stop evolving.

To walk the inner path should not be confused with becoming a religious follower, a 'believer'. Everything that is not experientially realized from within is just a mental conviction, an assumption. For instance, Ramana Maharishi was a beautiful being, but to blindly believe that his understanding of the path and of human evolution was complete is naïve and simple-minded. J. Krishnamurti spoke about the trap of authority; authority is often a tyranny in disguise. If the absolute authority of Ramana is defended fanatically to the extent that even the most basic concepts of Advaita are left unchallenged, this is nothing short of an insult to who he was as a spiritual being.

The majority of both seekers and teachers are not open to question their views, based on their attachment to their respective traditions and conditioned understanding of reality. The reasons behind that resistance are fear of change, uncertainty about what is really true, and the absence of the spirit of exploration. Why would someone resist critique if the path they were following did not offer them a true way out from the state of fragmentation and suffering? It is truly puzzling. Logically, such critique should be received with open arms as a chance of finding a way out of pain. But it appears that human psychology is simply too convoluted to apply common sense. Critique of various spiritual paths in our fake world is not in accord with 'politically correct' humility, and is being judged as supercilious or intolerant. But in reality, it is not a matter of humility or arrogance, but of reflecting truth. The essence of this critique is true compassion. How can sincere seekers find true peace and free their spirit to serve the supreme goal of becoming whole if they are the prisoners of past authority and dogmatism? We can be tolerant of Advaita, and it is the choice of each individual to follow the vision of spirituality that pleases him. But non-duality is also simply a false and potentially dangerous vision of the path that will sooner or later ruin the spiritual integrity of anyone who succumbs to it. It is fine to begin with, but for the soul, it will end in the degeneration of the very essence of who she is.

In many ways, to read these articles without truly studying this teaching we offer is to miss the point: their main intention is not to criticize but to point to a higher understanding. For instance, to read our analyses of the limitations of Mahamudra and yet not know what pure me, conscious me, and the observer are, what the meaning of surrender to I am is, and what the vertical dimension



of consciousness is would be counterproductive. Such a reader may only be able to see the negative side of the article, and naturally either resist the critique or create a superficial judgment about Mahamudra. But to judge Mahamudra outside of a higher context is nothing short of arrogance; it is a very valuable path, and we need to be grateful for its contributions.

When a new understanding is born, there is almost always resistance from the collective mind. That understanding is either being condemned, judged, or simply ignored. Our teaching can be easily misinterpreted as being ‘too complicated’ by those who have never dived into the intricacies of inner evolution, meditation, and consciousness. But anyone who is actively attending our retreats and immersing themselves experientially in our teaching will very soon begin to recognize how natural our path is, and how, with profound simplicity, it directly reflects the reality of human awakening and soul-actualization. Reality is complex, and the science of awakening contains a basic level of complexity. But would a student of medicine give up his studies because the human body is too complicated?

The fact that seekers cannot embrace a complex vision of the path is a reflection of what they have become accustomed to – a vision of awakening that has been simplified to the level of absurdity. Anything that requires them to use their intelligence and to go beyond their conditioned views seems over-complicated. Often, instead of reflecting honestly and seeing that their intelligence is not yet sharp enough, or that their spiritual sensitivity is undeveloped, or that they are currently simply too immature to grasp this understanding, or that their experience itself is still too limited, seekers would rather point the finger and condemn that which eludes their understanding. This is the shadow and hypocrisy of an insincere ego, which has a tendency to exhibit its ugliest expressions among spiritual seekers. Finally, we have a teaching that explains with extraordinary clarity the uncharted territories of human evolution, giving true seekers the answers they had stopped believing they would ever receive. And yet, how many have the greatness of mind and heart to truly receive it for what it is – a gift, a salvation from confusion?

### *Challenging Mediocrity in Spirituality*

When observing various human traditions (and not only spiritual traditions) we can identify a common tendency: that while they were often revolutionary at the time of their conception, they began to resist further internal changes once they became widely accepted. In spirituality, this was



often caused by the fact that teachings were being transferred generation after generation into the hands of followers, who either lost the essence of the teaching or didn't have the capacity to develop it further. When a teaching stops evolving, this is the beginning of its decline. In this sense, many traditions of enlightenment come to resemble religions, and, indeed, many develop into religions eventually. When a spiritual path can be defined as a religion, this is the end of it.

It is interesting that there is less and less resistance in humanity to higher levels of understanding in the spheres of science and technology. There was a great deal of resistance in the past, when scientific discovery threatened people's religious beliefs. Nowadays, however, humanity generally sees the evolution of science as a sign of progress and a way to improve their standard of living. Still, people remain emotionally identified with their spiritual beliefs and dogmas. To challenge their faith or religious convictions, such as challenging the doctrine of non-duality (and indeed, non-duality has become a type of spiritual dogma), is to as if threaten their very existence, their false security. Such challenges trigger the wound of inner doubt, for deep down no one really knows anything for certain, anything at all.

In many of our articles, we have used the term 'mediocrity'. Mediocrity is a low quality of the human spirit that is in conflict with and contradiction to our evolutionary purpose and never-ending growth into a higher truth. Those who succumb to mediocrity resist change and fully identify with past structures of understanding, those which constitute their very security. Their nature is to follow. Be they devotees or teachers, they are resolved to be followers, whether it be of a certain sect or a spiritual paradigm. Mediocre seekers are not interested in investigating or discovering the new horizons of truth. In fact, they are not interested in truth at all.

Why have the vast majority of seekers and teachers lost the spirit of exploration, the spirit of questioning, the spirit of adventuring through the spiritual dimension? What has gone wrong? This question can only arise from a clear acknowledgment of the fact that mediocrity forms the current paradigm of spirituality in our world. In fact, if one cannot acknowledge this fact, there is no point in reading this article any further. Similarly, if one cannot see that past traditions – no matter how profound and valuable they might be – do not give us a complete understanding of our noble evolution into wholeness, there is no point in investigating our teaching. It is like a person who cannot identify that his consciousness is incomplete and fragmented – he is simply not yet ready to seek true transformation.



So, why has the spirit of investigation and exploration of truth died? Let's take the example of typical, contemporary non-dual teachers. There is something extremely generic, some essential sameness in all these teachers. They have different names and give different labels to their teachings, but upon examination, one can see that they are as if the same person, cloned from Buddhism or shallow Advaita, living according to a banal, simplistic, and non-imaginative view of reality. Anyone can intuitively identify that non-duality is incorrect, that it defies the principles of basic common sense. But the mind has a way of manipulating its perceptions, so that those perceptions will fit into its belief system.

Non-dual teachers abide upon the concept of 'one consciousness'. One consciousness is our true nature, that which we are all meant to realize. Let's assume that such a teacher has awakened to his deeper consciousness, has experienced a real opening to consciousness that has become permanent. He now attempts to interpret it according to his non-dual conditioning. The first thing he has to do is to somehow deny the presence of his ego, or fully detach himself from this sense of me and the mind. There are many ways to achieve this, but they all require a fundamental dishonesty. One can talk about 'living beyond ego', but it is inherently hypocritical and relies on self-denial. In reality, these teachers cherish their ego, and ironically their identity is even more entrenched in it by virtue of the fact that their impersonal interpretation of consciousness prevents them from embodying their higher individuality. Their identity will forever be stuck in the observer.

### Spirit of Exploration: An Honest Enquiry into Consciousness

Now, let's assume that he awakens pure consciousness, and then honestly begins to investigate his state, trying to see how things really are, rather than how they are supposed to be. That investigation might go like this:

*"I have clearly arrived at consciousness beyond the mind. However, I see that I still have a sense of me. This sense of me is not only observing my consciousness; it is present even if consciousness is non-active. This sense of me has an inherent desire to be happy and to prolong its existence; this is its motivation to live. In addition, there is the space of consciousness untouched by the coming and going of thoughts. And yet Ramana said that there is no ego in enlightenment! Does it mean that there is something wrong with me? Or was Ramana wrong? Can I really question a man who was such a great authority on the subject of self-realization?"*



*If I am honest, if I put aside my preconceived notions, I must admit that there is still me, even though I am also clearly experiencing my pure nature. So, who am I? Am I pure consciousness, or am I that inherent sense of me? Are they really different? They appear to be very different, and yet they co-exist. What is their relationship? They are different but interdependent. For example, if me pays attention to the space of consciousness, the very experience of consciousness changes – it becomes stronger and deeper. What does it mean?”*

The explorer then continues to investigate his consciousness more deeply:

*“If the consciousness I have realized is eternal and absolute, why does it have a different flavor in meditation with eyes closed and in activity with eyes open? It is not supposed to change, because it is the unchanging absolute reality. Can the experience of consciousness really be separated from the individual who is recognizing it? Who is really experiencing this consciousness? If consciousness is experiencing consciousness without me, how is it possible that I can affect it by my own presence? Perhaps that opening into consciousness and me are two sides of the same reality? This could explain why, after my initial awakening, my consciousness still has to evolve into completion through the cooperation of me. I can see that I must honestly acknowledge my me. Indeed, the only one who can negate the existence of me, is me itself. It is to deny the very place upon which I am standing.”*

As he continues his exploration further, more of his internal reality becomes illuminated with clarity:

*“So now that I can experience myself clearly as pure consciousness, what happens when I embrace that sense of me from a deeper place? I can recognize that this me is no longer the same; it has changed. It is no longer looking, thinking, or observing – it has a clear presence of its own, and, just like consciousness, it also exists beyond the mind. So, which part of that overall consciousness is really who I am? That which embodies consciousness is not really impersonal – it is obviously me.<sup>1</sup> And yet, there is also a part of the same me which is closer to thoughts and to my human consciousness, closer to the attention that links itself with the world. This me is also beyond thinking, and it possesses a sense of being.<sup>2</sup> How do these two*

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<sup>1</sup> This is the realization of pure me

<sup>2</sup> This is the realization of conscious me



*layers of my consciousness co-exist, and which one can be said to constitute the true center of my existence?”*

This is just an example of how an honest seeker or teacher conducts his investigation into the nature of awakening. If he continues his investigation, he will be led to discover the vertical dimension of consciousness and the states of realization beyond consciousness – the spiritual heart and being. In addition, he will journey into the matter of transforming his relationship with this human self, so that he can reach completion on the human level through an intelligent engagement in his human desires and psychological or emotional needs.

If a seeker does not have the courage to stand alone and use his critical mind, to challenge the authority of the past, he will fail to even begin this exploratory process. Indeed, this seems to be what is happening currently. No one is questioning their view of reality, but instead is following the dogma of non-duality like an ignorant sheep. There will come a time when the vision of non-duality will be seen as a dark age of spirituality, as the epitome of self-denial. On some level, it is not dissimilar to fanatical Christian monks and nuns who practiced self-mortification in the ignorant belief that by punishing themselves they would come closer to god. But currently, self-denial is a kind of spiritual ‘fashion’, and hypocrisy is a way of life for those who teach in the name of self-realization.

The absence of investigation and refusal to question the basic conceptual blocks of spiritual understanding is a human tragedy. The dishonesty of teachers expresses a fundamental lack of compassion for seekers, who will strive their whole lives to actualize a paradigm of enlightenment that is impossible to achieve. So, again, why is this happening? Is it just human nature? It is if we are realistic about what human nature is: conformist, weak, dishonest, and unoriginal. Through our evolution and awakening, we are meant to transcend our lower nature. But it needs to be clear that awakening an expanded consciousness beyond the mind will not automatically bring about this change. The spirit within has to awaken. Only the force of the soul and surrender to our higher intelligence can activate our true honesty and devotion to the light of truth.

## Conclusion





Writing these Beyond Tradition articles has been a journey in time, a journey into investigating the human effort to understand the subtle dimensions of the inner world, meditation, and consciousness across the ages. Many generations of teachers and thinkers devoted their entire existence to clarify the great matter of human enlightenment. And even though many of these traditions have gifted us with extraordinary revelations, our spiritual understanding of reality is still very inadequate. Why? The human race is simply spiritually very un-evolved. Not long ago, we were hunting and gathering, and now we are only just making our first steps into the realm of pure subjectivity. All of our discoveries and attempts to unravel the great puzzle of self-realization have happened through our complete devotion to truth, and through the many sacrifices of the most evolved and unique individuals among us. That investigation has to continue, because we have just passed the threshold of the inner realm, beyond which lies the great unknown, the inconceivable.

The majority of humans cannot even imagine that there is consciousness beyond the mind. To speak to them about various dimensions of awakening is to speak a foreign language, never heard before. And yet, there are a small number of more mature and sincere seekers who have grown in their desperation to gain a higher level of clarity, for their very existence and evolution depend on it. Where can they go to receive this clarity? It is the responsibility of those who teach in the name of enlightenment and who have access to their pure nature to meet the longing of these seekers with a higher vision and higher understanding of the spiritual realm. Unless teachers begin to evolve themselves, there is no hope for seekers – everybody is, and will remain, lost.

We hope that these articles can serve as a true source of inspiration for those who are on the spiritual quest, to push the consciousness of humanity into a higher future. We will not meet that future by imitating past traditions or remaining subservient to the authority of past masters. We will meet it only by becoming free from the constraints of the past, so that the actualization of our ultimate destiny can be put in motion in the space of courage, aloneness, and universal independence. This is where the wisdom, purpose, and will of our creator can be finally met as the truth of our divine individuality.

Blessings,

Anadi

*For a full glossary of terminology please visit our website [www.anaditeaching.com/glossary](http://www.anaditeaching.com/glossary)*

