

TATHATA
An autobiography



Kedarnath Swami

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To 'ṛta'
I dedicate

**tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya**

**upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah
Bhagavad Gita 4/34**

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Prologue

This psycho-metaphysical autobiography - as the physical data have been mentioned in it only abstractly, is a brief synoptic record of a pilgrim's spiritual journey.

The original record comprises a full 48 diaries; here is presented the gist covering the series. It had been rather a 'compulsion' with the traveller to note down whatever crossed his mind on the way. The purpose of this compulsion was not clear then, until the pilgrim came into the holy presence of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi who in response to a statement said to continue to take notes. With this divine sanction the meaning and purpose, slowly, became clear.

Details in terms of time, place, and persons have intentionally been avoided. For, otherwise the bulk would have been heavy – only involving a grossness of individuality which is but to be wiped out. Besides, the pilgrim wished the autobiography to be of 'Tathata's' of 'one and all' – if only one discovered.

The journey, as it is, had been one of 'ups' and 'downs'. The pilgrim had been just one of you and had to face the darkest nights of the soul. He, however, was blessed by the Night that proved to be one of Crucifixion for the ego. This has been duly mentioned in proper sequence.

It seems unnecessary to say that if there had not been an unseen Hand of Grace 'in front' to pull and 'behind' to push, the pilgrim could have given up. The pilgrim can but prostrate for eternity before this inconceivable Divine Compassion.

Keeping the Grace supreme, the importance of one's own efforts cannot at all be neglected or overlooked. It is the effort that 'matures' and thus 'prepares' one for Grace to be received. One must not be done with it through whatever state of hopelessness the pilgrim soul might have been passing, the soul must not compromise 'at the cost of the Goal'.

The pilgrim takes this opportunity to pay his sincere tribute to all his Teachers and Guides and Masters – seen or unseen, with whose kind mercy he could find his way and proceed. The Soul offers its humble obeisance to one and all.

Om Peace

Kedarnath Swami

1/The Birth

‘I’ ‘appeared’ on the screen.

2/Education

‘I’ was caught by the process of ‘learning’.

3/The World

‘I’ lived in the world of ‘self’ and ‘not-self’.

4/Awakening

‘I’, somehow, discovered - ‘I’ was ‘imprisoned’: felt something ‘Real’ was missing.

5/The Aspirant

The search for ‘Reality’ started. Now, ‘I’ was the ‘seeker’ of truth.

6/The Guru and the Disciple

Grace descended and accepted me as his disciple.
Now, 'I' was the 'disciple'.

7/The Instruction and The Meditation

The Grace graciously taught me the first lesson – ‘Tattwamasi’ (That Thou art) and explained it to me.

Inquiry followed the instruction and my perception hitherto was drastically changed.

Now ‘I’ was not of the world of duality. It was stepping over the border-line. It had become of That; it was That - although That was not perfectly clear.

‘I’ started living with ‘That’.

*

First, in my journey, occurred the Bliss (Ananda); it appeared suddenly. It happened thus:

I was reading a letter which said, there is nothing but I..... I see I..... I hear I..... I touch I..... I eat I..... I smell I..... And it occurred!

Outer consciousness totally left me; the inner was filled with ‘Bliss’ – not in words or feeling, but in actual ‘experience’.

The inner experience manifested outer symptoms also. The vision was intoxicated and there was a peculiar sensation of ecstasy in the throat and in the brain . These symptoms continued for years together though the inner experience had left.

The experience was so fresh, so novel, and so decisive that I did not care even to consult my Guru to confirm whether it was Self-realisation. I took it to be so.

Years passed with the sweet memory and with an inner sense of satisfaction.

‘I’ lived with memory. ‘I’ was ‘memory’.

8/ Who was SHE?

After five years, another ‘experience’ occurred and that too suddenly without any desire or expectation. It was of a quite different character.

It happened thus:

A Sadhu was going to have darshan of some great divine personage who at that time was staying near by his ashram. He casually asked me if I also would like to go with him. I nodded and followed him. Soon we reached to another ashram and entered into a big hall. There I found many brahmacharinis reciting Chandi in the presence of a divine being called Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi. This was my first darshan of Her.

Following the religious custom I offered at Her Holy feet a garland of flowers which She took and returned to me as prasadam to put around my neck. I did and sat near Her. And the ‘experience’ occurred.

I totally lost my consciousness. I became unaware of everything, in-and-out. It was not sleep, nor a fainting fit. It was just ‘blankness’, not unconsciousness but just not knowing anything—even not to me, myself. Including myself I had become empty. There was not even the ‘Bliss’ in this experience, nor any other kind of pleasant sensation. It was as if everything disappeared including myself. In simple words ‘I’ was ‘not’.

For how long I stayed in this state of nothingness I don’t know, perhaps one hour or so. When I returned to my normal consciousness I found that everyone had left and there was nobody there. I prostrated and came back.

*

.....then came the next phase - a phase of doubt and darkness, of agony and anxiety, of disappointments and hopelessness; but also a phase of meeting with and being helped by various luminaries leading finally to Emancipation.

*

My Guru had explained to me the nature of That. It was Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, and Non-duality. I had experienced the Bliss; now attention was focused upon Consciousness.

The teaching was that Consciousness had two aspects viz, the ‘Transcendental’ and the ‘Immanent’; and that the goal was to realise the Transcendental, for in it rested my perfection.

I reflected and meditated.

The universe seemed to enter in ‘me’.

It entered. ‘I’ became the meaning of the universe.

I recalled the teaching; analysed, and found – it was the Immanent; but the Transcendental was left. I continued meditation.

The universe ‘as universe’ disappeared; I-Alone existed. I Was only I. I was non-dual. I could but conceive and perceive only myself, in and out. In actual experience there were no ‘in and out’ – there was only I. I was consciousness and consciousness was me. There was no duality.

Consciousness had replaced Bliss. It was an experience totally of a new kind and quality. I was the central truth of my consciousness and the consciousness was the central truth of myself. I became so prominent and so non-dual as to negate and realise all as but I.

Simultaneously emerged a state which supplied the silent and unaffected substratum. *It* was there-inactive but quite alive. I took it to be the Transcendental.

‘I’ was satisfied.

Now, I was living not with memory but with perception - immediate and non-dual. It was both Transcendental as well as Immanent. The unaffected inner silence answered the transcendental; and non-dual I, the Immanent. The self-luminous had been illuminating itself. The Inactive was I ‘in action’; and again, the action was Non-action. Both explained each other-the Active explained the Inactive, and the Inactive the Active.

Bliss was negated by this present transcendental-immanent-non-dual-I-consciousness. But what of it! The Present satisfied me. It was peace greater than bliss. I did not care about the past and also did not expect the future. Meditation had led and qualified me to live with the Present.

‘I’ lived with the Present.

9/The Poverty

Eyes somehow began to see into something ‘beyond’- something which violently bewildered me. I found someone questioning my ‘non-dual-I’ and my ‘unaffected peace and silence’! Who could it be, can one imagine who was questioning the Transcendental? But it was so, and it was such that one could not overlook and ignore it. Who was it? Let me answer straight away. It was the ‘Being-unknown’. The known presents no question; and if it does, there is always an answer to it. This sensation of the ‘Unknown’ terribly confused me and asked me to revise the whole thing since birth to meditation. I looked into the past but the past had nothing to offer; it was simply not relevant to the solution. I looked forward to the future, but I found it attacking me. I could not think. Even so, one cannot simply take some sleeping pill and go off to sleep when an enemy has knocked at the door. One has to do something in order to save one’s life. But, again, if the enemy is too powerful to be faced, what then? ‘I’ was praying to the Almighty. ‘I’ was a devotee. Devotion cannot be overlooked.

*

To elaborate and explain the Poverty:

It was the immaturity of perception and analysis that made me take the Transcendence and Immanence of the mind or intellect as the Transcendence and Immanence of the soul. My experience (!) of non-dual-I was not the perception of really Non-dual-Self, and my ‘realisation’ (!) of silent and unaffected consciousness or awareness was not the revelation of the truly Transcendental. The perception, thus, was confined to consciousness still ‘individual’. Individuality, so to say, persisted. Naturally, there could be a ‘question’ and there could be ‘poverty’. Such are the ‘tricks’ of the ego. Who can match this deceitful game of the ego? Only the Grace, a Master and/or a Scripture.

10/The Problem of Existence and the Master

The All-Merciful listened.

I was taken up, guided by an unseen Hand - it was all mysterious, to a Presence which was Perfect and beyond all comprehension. It - though in person, seemed even beyond the Impersonal.

Heavens! It cared for me; and sent me to a Master who could answer the question of my Being- or at least prepare it for the answer.

The question was - what is Existence? What is Being?

The Being was asking - Who am I?

The attention, now, shifted from consciousness to Existence.

To return to the question: it was a question, I felt, my hitherto consciousness could not answer. It could rest with its spurious non-dual I but could not successfully confront the question of Being. It could no more enjoy the non-dual I, for this itself had become a question, a problem. It could conceive existence but could not perceive it. It remained confined to mind-made non-duality - silent and verbal.

The question may seem strange and somewhat superfluous. One may reasonably argue - how can we question the Existence - is it not our 'is-ness'?

That is truly so, but what is that 'is-ness'? the question had appeared. I had to find the answer at any cost.

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I approached the Master.

He listened patiently to the story of my 'being'- its aspirations and achievements, its successes and failures, its realisation and what remained to be realised; and quietly whispered: "All this is ignorance."

'I' was shocked.

*

A month with the Master:

It was a month of severe attack upon 'me'. The Master had been persistently reflecting the Rudra-aspect of Truth, He was there only to 'destroy'. Before the aspirant could reiterate He scolded: "Leave aside your That..... your 'Bliss' your 'Non-dual-consciousness' Don't talk of goals and means..... It is nonsense! Listen to the 'Truth' if you can!"

Perhaps, the One was asking me to 'investigate'. Enough of meditation; now 'inquiry'- The Master seemed to suggest this. It appealed to me. Meditation had answered my search for 'Bliss' and 'Consciousness'; but it had failed to solve the problem of 'Being'.

I was closer to the Master. There was a 'rapport' happening.

But the ego will not spare me.

The Master seemed to condemn my aspiration, my seeking as he did not care the least about my 'goal' and 'means'. His voice seemed hard, commanding and uncompromising. That was not all; he persistently declared- "I am a Surgeon. I operate on egos. Enter my operating theatre if thou hast courage."

'I' had entered but had been feeling feverish.

"-and listen! I don't allow drugs or hypnosis in my theatre"- the Surgeon added.

Oh!

An operation without anaesthetic was hard to bear, and that was what I had been experiencing. The Surgeon appeared to me a cruel being. My non-dual-I (shiveringly) detected that it had confronted the Non-Being,

It trembled with fear; and returned.

*

With what ease we ask for the 'Highest'- and when it comes, again, with what ease we become indifferent! But I was then the object of this very immaturity!

It was easy to long for and demand the Ultimate but when faced with it, one could only return to the old shelter.

I had been constantly asking..... and refusing! One would, perhaps fairly call it insanity. But it was there. 'I' was helpless.

I could but pray again, to God - the All-merciful.

One needs 'Grace' at every step of the journey – I could directly perceive that.

*

A week with the Authority:

The Grace favoured.

The phobia and the obstinacy of ego had made me come back from the Surgeon's theatre. But the Grace would not let me be lost- it held me fast.

The 'Authority' had dismissed all my immature preconceptions and pre-perceptions. It had smashed all the safe havens 'I' could resort to – past and future. Nothing was 'mine' – *a priori* or *a posteriori*, was left in 'me' and I was facing myself.

'I' was again, with the present, but now with a question, with an investigation and with a thirst. There was no goal 'to be reached', nor was there seeking 'to owe' something. Not that 'I' was the goal and I was to owe 'myself' - that illusion had gone. With this illusion one could only reach the so-called 'transcendental-immanent non-dual I-consciousness'. It was the limit of 'I', but it did not solve the problem. How could it? The very I-consciousness was the limitation - though superior to gross ego-consciousness, it was still a confinement. 'I' was confined to itself.

And such a glorious confinement it is that if the Being did not question, I-consciousness could remain with it, not knowing, as long as it wished.

Who can know the age of 'I'? Bondage can be realised and questioned but one cannot predict how long will it continue or when will it cease. I-consciousness or ego-consciousness - they differ only in quality and not in essence. Both are confinement- the latter, the grosser; the former the more subtle.

The silence or peace never adequately questioned and successfully answered is also a darkness, an inertia. One when 'awakened' could not sleep with it. It could not be enjoyed, nor one could live with it. The serenity of mind was not the silence of the soul, I discovered.

Investigation was replacing meditation, and unlearning, the learning.

Again, the very validity of 'experience' or 'perception' may be questioned. No experience could be 'real' and no perception could be 'valid', as they always required an 'experiencer', 'a perceiver', and the experiencer or the perceiver, in turn, was confined to I-consciousness which itself was confinement. How could, then, any experience or any perception be desirable?

Investigation thus was snatching from 'I' the 'desire' 'to experience'. It was the immaturity of perception that took every supernal sensation as the experience of the 'highest'- investigation showed.

Both learning and meditation withdrew, having failed.

How could an effort, limited as it was , reveal the Unlimited, the Limitless, the Infinite?

I was, again, feeling poor and depressed. I could not even commit suicide.

Investigation was asking:

- not to learn - learning was a confinement;
- not to meditate - meditation was a protective device;
- not to desire - desire was a bondage;
- not to make effort - effort was a conditioning.

Then?

Investigation stopped.

'I' was with a 'thirst'.

The aspirant was now mature enough to listen to the Truth, the Master had challenged. Devotion, discrimination and dispassion had eradicated every egoistic impurity. It was now there not to learn or meditate or understand, but only to unlearn and realise. It was left alone with a 'sole' quest.

On the other hand, the Master had walked the path; had 'eye to see', and a compassionate Heart which could release Grace.

The disciple, not the seeker, humbly entered the theatre and meekly prostrated before the Master.

The surgeon was pleased to see that the patient had returned. ‘Carthasis’ was complete. ‘Rapport’ had succeeded.

‘I stood naked questioning: what is Being? What is Existence? Who am I?’

The Master smiled - for the first time. I could understand everything He taught, but not this. It carried with it a sense of mystery.

But it was not my concern. To appraise a Master is stupidity. I re-stated my problem with a little more emphasis- What is Being? What is Existence? Who am I?

The Master hammered:

“Being is Non-being; Existence is Non-existence; thou art not - how can thee question?”

The stroke was on the heart. The patient felt breathing last.

*

To enumerate:

Not that I had never listened about the unreality of ‘ego’. Prior to this listening it had been a constant issue in my mind and I had read much literature on the subject. But it had failed to produce the desired result. The reading remained confined to an intellectual understanding of it.

This is what happens with most of us. What can be the reason?

Perhaps, immaturity; or that the Time has not come.

In this case, however, the Time had come.

11/Revelation

The Grace descended-
‘I’ died

12/The Event

Let us pause for a while: for the scene is over; the cycle has been completed; and from now on we are to deal with the ‘Soul’.

But before we proceed further, let us retrospect and see, actually what happened and how?

The Event:

It was a day before the ‘event’. I felt an airy sensation of fear while entering my cell. I felt as if some very dreadful Presence had entered my room and stood in a corner.

It was there. I could do nothing. I ‘somehow’ passed the dark night. My apprehension made it darker.

The next day I hurriedly approached the Master. I found him (to my misfortune!) quite indifferent as if he had no concern for me. In despair, I returned.

The day passed.

I was, again, experiencing the fearful night and the terrible presence which still stood in a corner. (one could recall Kali, the awesome Mother).

I wanted to escape but could not. The Moment had come. I sensed helplessly that the Death has approached me.

I, with tears in my eyes, recalled all my friends, my well-wishers, my devotees, my guides, my teachers, my Master, and the Earth - my Mother. I recalled the Worlds, the Souls, and gods, and prostrated before them all - again and again, as it was going to be my final prostration. The soul bowed and begged them all -sentient or insentient, to pardon her for offending any of them in any way.

The Death was kind to allow the soul to offer her gratitude to ‘One and all’.

This she did; and surrendered.

*

Now, I have opened a page of my diary and am reading:

“..... The Event has passed. The disciple has died. A Master has emerged.

“..... A Mystery has been revealed. Someone is weeping. There is a flood of tears (in one’s eyes.)

“..... And there is entering one’s heart a compassion which cannot be measured.

“And.....”

I turn over the page and read on:

“Oh! Wonder of Wonders!

“Perfection has become solidified.

“My Goodness! Immortality is crossing the sky and the perfection pours down!

“And who is it who with such a heavenly rhythm and sweetness is singing:

“That is Perfection. This is Perfection. Perfection emanates Perfection. Perfection, even when taken away, remains Perfection”.

13/The Analysis

The Revelation was –“I died.” What does this mean?

The revelation did not lead to ‘unconsciousness’; nor was it ‘ego-consciousness’- transcendent or immanent, hitherto conceived and perceived. Nor was there any ‘positive’ bliss or peace or silence, so far experienced. There was also not a sense of ‘being’ in any form - in the form of ‘I-Am’ or in the form of ‘I-Am-Not’ - verbal or conceptual or silent.

There was not even a sensation of ‘iti’ (assertion) or ‘neti’ (negation) in it, but it was also not ‘It’, for it was ‘immediate’. But, again, its immediacy did not involve ‘individuality’. And as such one could not accurately declare - it was ‘my’ experience’ or that the Truth was revealed to ‘me’.

The most the mind can recall is a feeling of death and surrender to it ‘prior to the event’; and ‘posterior to the event’ - a current of compassion with a simultaneous sensation of perfection finding its outward manifestation in tears and a feeling of the emergence of a Master.

In between what is - cannot be conceived. It is, to quote an Upanishadic text, as it exactly explains the Revelation within the limits of speech, “Beyond the known and Above the unknown.”

This is exactly what had happened. Nothing figurative has been included in this revelation and its analysis.

In the end, it seems important to add a few more facts which the revelation reveals regarding the occurrence.

We have said that the revelation was ‘immediate’ but the immediacy of revelation did not involve ‘individuality’ or ‘I-consciousness’. To say then, that one could be ‘conscious’ or ‘aware’ of one’s death, that is one could consciously die - or, in other words, that one could directly perceive the ‘I’ or ‘ego’ disappearing or dying- the perceiver standing apart witnessing the occurrence, would be a philosophical inaccuracy, it would not be an ‘exact’ explanation of the occurrence.

The ‘I’ is there to know or to be aware of all ‘experiences’; when that very ‘I’ dies, who can know its death? And again, how can it be called an ‘experience’ in the absence of an ‘experiencer’? To imagine and accept I-consciousness that can witness its own death is not only logical inconsistency but also perceptual fallacy.

Another significant fact which the whole journey goes to demonstrate is that ‘ego’ does not surrender to Truth rather - it proved to be a hindrance; for, when it ceased, the “Truth revealed itself as self-revealed or self-luminous. It stood Alone ‘beyond’ and ‘above’ the trinity of ‘Knower’, ‘Knowledge’, and the ‘Known’. The question or a query of an ‘ultimate knower’ which ‘knew’ or ‘illumined’ even the Truth is irrelevant and superfluous.

14/The Scripture

We have explained the how? And also the what?- in the above text.

To summarise:

The one:

- who was born,
- who learnt,
- who lived in the world,
- who awakened,
- who searched,
- who found a Guru,
- who was instructed,
- who meditated,
- who faced poverty,
- who prayed,
- who investigated,
- who feared,
- who prostrated, surrendered and died;

And remained One, the Eternal.

So does the Scriptures tell us:

“veiled by my Maya, not knowing myself, I am involved in the world from time immemorial. Then accepting the discipleship of a Master I know myself and thus though liberated, I become liberated- again and again”

(Tripura Rahasya 20/46)

The scriptures explain the journey of the Pilgrim and hint at the reality. Both cosmology and ethics enumerate and enunciate the way, and the metaphysics forms and elaborates the conclusions. The Great Vedic dictum-“Aham Brahmasmi” (I am Brahman-The Absolute) is a revealed Truth.

*

Now, a question may be asked: the journey is intelligible, but what causes ‘I’ or ‘ego’ to appear on the screen?

In answer, the Seers and Sages have this to say:

“No Jiva (ego) is ever born, for, there is no cause. This is the highest Truth - that nothing is born”.
(Mandukya Karika, 3/48)

It may again be asked that if it is so, then, how can we explain the further journey?

They, again, have this to declare:

“There is no dissolution, nor birth, none in bondage and none the aspirant. There is no seeker of liberation and none liberated. This is the Supreme Truth”.

(Ibid 2/32)

15/The Screen

The Screen was left as the Screen.

*

The Pilgrim could have put a full-stop with the Screen, for it was the End and there was no more ‘journey’; but it would have done an injustice to his heart which still ‘cried out’ for something. What could that ‘Something’ be?

16/Ma Anandamayi

Ma Anandamayi was the end of ‘my’ journey. In Her I had found my Arunachal.
In Her my birth and in Her my death.
For me she was the Most High, the Absolute, the Ultimate, the Pleroma, the Ain, the Ain Soph, the
Ain Soph Aur.
In Her I had discovered The Emptiness.
In Her I had found The Tao.
All and Nothing , One and Many
are nothing but Her two moods to play.

Om Peace
||Om Jai Guru || Jai Ma||

Message of Tathata to those who read this autobiography
Glory to those who live and fight for Freedom.
Struggle is their life; and
Victory is their reward.
|| Om Jai Guru || Om Jai Ma ||

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