The Goddess in the Marketplace

I stood on the street. In the street. In India, the street is a maelstrom.
I was in the eye of the maelstrom. I was standing on the street in Pune.

I'd been in India for two months, in and out of the Osho International
Meditation Center, the ashram of Osho Rajneesh. I wasn't a member,
not officially a sannyasin, not a follower of that particular teacher.

I'd been writing, painting, playing soccer, meditating, eating, sleeping,
being with my companion, Suryo, who had been a longtime sannyasin.

I enjoyed the life of India, in the streets, in the homes and businesses
of the Indians I met. I was standing in the maelstrom of an Indian street,
MG Road (after Mahatma Gandhi) in the busiest part of central Pune.

A hundred yards away, I saw a woman running lightly, wildly, madly,
through the crowded street. She was a beautiful Indian woman in torn
clothing. Her left breast was exposed. No one was paying any attention.

It felt like I was the only one paying attention. I saw her as if the street
was vacant, except for she and I. In a few seconds, she was running
toward me, then up against me, then away from me, running like water
through watercolors, leaving a streak of blank paper in my mind.

I thought she might be running from abuse, running for her life,
her body beaten, her clothing torn by a husband or angry lover,
her cries unwelcome, ignored in a male-dominant society.

But in that moment, she was a kind of goddess, a female bakti,
a passionate devotee of the divine, alive in the busy street,
in the maelstrom, running to warn, to proclaim, to invite me
to my freedom, my heart, my love of the divine,
to the awareness in my deepest self.

The most striking image of my first months in India, it gave me
a message I couldn't decipher. The indecipherable message
is the one that most clearly resonnates in the heart.

The Train Across India

On the train going across India to the northeast, going toward Lucknow,
in Uttar Pradesh, near Nepal, near the Taj Mahal, near the spiritual cities
of Varanasi and Benares, I was going to see the man called Papaji.

A few weeks earlier, in the ashram in Pune, I saw a picture
of Sri H.W.L. Poonja, Poonjaji (with the honorific "-ji"),
also called Papaji, because he was a big bear of a papa.

I liked his face. It wasn't the face of a special man,
not the face of a guru, but the face of a man, like the face
of an old prize fighter or a truck driver, an earthy face.

I heard the name Poonjaji the first few days I was in Pune.
Since the resident master had 'left his body' many older
sannyasins had begun going to see this other man.

I heard he gave sat-sang in his living room, not in an ashram.
I was unhappy with the pomp and circumstance in the commune.
I liked the way of the man in Lucknow. I decided to go see him.

I was in India. I'd gotten all I could from the ashram,
and I'd never been in the presence of an enlightened master.

As much as I appreciated the books and videos of Osho Rajneesh,
I thought it wasn't the same as sitting in the presence of a living master.

The longtime sannyasins I met in the ashram told of the happiness
of their own experience being with Osho when he was in his body.

One day, I met an older woman who'd been in Lucknow.
She showed me a picture of Poonjaji. I liked the big, smiling face.
I decided to take the train to Lucknow to see this man, face to face.
My companion was busy leading groups in familiar surroundings.

She wasn't interested in 'another' master. She had her master.
She was happy to stay where she was. I was free to go, alone.

Standing in the train station in Pune, ticket in hand,
the station was as busy as all of India seemed to be.

Three other sannyasins were going to Lucknow
at the same time. They were all women. One was
French, and she'd been living in Lucknow.

Another was a young American girl. At 26, she was young by sannyasin standards. Most were in their 30s, 40s, and 50s.

Her name was Dipti, the same name as the grocery store
in the apartment complex where we lived, in Pune.
The third woman was quiet and withdrawn.
The trains were as crowded as the streets.
I didn't feel crowded in the crowds.

The crowding of a beehive seemed similar, without
resentment or aggression, without possessiveness
of the space, unlike the crowding in the West,
which seemed like a battle for ownership.

I heard that, in India, any man could call any place
his home. If a man claimed the side of the road
for his home, no one could dispute it.

Ownership was fluid and communal. I also heard
that new money had been changing the old rules.

Love Pouring Out Toward Itself

I sat in the entryway to the train car, as the train rolled
across India. It was only going forty miles an hour.
That's a good speed for an observer.

The brain can still recognize everything at that speed.
I sat in the step-well of the train car. It felt like I could
step off the train into the living, beating heart of India.

Riding across India, sitting, watching, breathing,
my blood pulsing, with the rolling, rumbling, rattling
train and the passing countryside, I felt as if I could
step into the farms and villages, as easy as breathing.
The spiritual life of the air is my medium, my master.

On the street, amid the crowd, in the traffic that flowed
like currents and cross-currents, my vision saw the life
become translucent, like small green insects became
translucent, like leaves of young plants are translucent.

I stood on the street in India, and its density became nearly
transparent, as the face of all being, as it's said that all
of life is illusion. I loved the illusion and all its forms.

After I'd been in Lucknow for two weeks, I wrote a note
to Papaji which he read aloud in sat-sang. In the letter,
I wrote about "the exquisite transiency" of life.

Along with recognition of the presence of Being Itself,
this transiency was exquisitely beautiful to me. I was in love
with the reality of life, including its appearance and disappearance.

As I saw the countryside passing by the door of the train,
the train passing through the countryside, all of life passing
toward and away from itself within itself, my heart was
full of its beating and the beauty of the world.

As the train approached Lucknow, I got a toothache.
In the first two weeks of two months in Lucknow,
I was nearly struck down by the toothache.

A German, who was the acupuncturist for Papaji,
said my toothache had come to say that I was not the body.

I knew the truth of the toothache, but the exquisite
transiency of a toothache is hard to ignore.

A man said to Papaji, “I am happy to be here, but I have
bad problems with my back. It is very hard for me to sit here.
What can I do? I like to be here with you in sat-sang,
but my back is causing me great pain.”

Papaji looked at the man and said, sympathetically,
“It’s very hard to meditate, when there is pain. There are
doctors who deal with such pain. You should go to a doctor
and take care of that pain, and then come and see me.”

Besides the toothache, I found another distraction
on the train. It was the young American, Dipti.

When we all arrive in Lucknow, we stayed at the same hotel.
On the first night, I stood with the French woman in the room
she was sharing with Dipti, and Dipti changed her clothes
before we all went out to find something to eat.

I was caught, in my own mind, looking at Dipti’s half-naked body.
It was a brief look, but the blood in my heart beat a little stronger.

I knew I was looking at her. I was with a woman for the first
three months in India. Then I was alone, without a companion.

I looked at the women around me, but something was more
compelling than the attraction I felt toward those women.

In the first day I spent with Papaji, listening,
I saw something I’d never seen before.

In a room full of people, in a house on a suburban street,
on the other side of the world, I saw a man, not only speaking
to others about the truth of their true nature, but instead, I saw
being speaking to being, not merely someone speaking
about being to others.

I saw Papaji speaking sometimes as one person
to another, and I saw a new thing I hadn’t seen before.

I saw Being speaking to Being. I saw love pouring out toward itself.
The Being of one man spoke to the Being of all those in the room.

It became clear that enlightenment was nothing more, nothing less,
than the continuous, endless outpouring of love, in its recognition.

In that instant, I felt the sudden disappearance of doubt.
In its absence, I saw that doubt had lingered in my mind,
no matter how clearly I knew there was no reason for my doubt.

That doubt may have been the inherent doubt of being a human
being, common to us all. This is the doubt, in any human, that says,
“I can not be free. I can't know who or what I am, not in the essence
of my being. I can’t be right. I must be wrong.”

But in the air of that moment, in the moment of being
in the presence of Being which recognizes being
as itself, there is no error, there is no doubt.

Doubt evaporated in that moment, as if it had never existed.
It was simply gone. In this moment, we are one with life itself.

One day, after a month in Lucknow, while walking in
the Botanical Gardens, I became aware of my own self,
I simply recognized who I am, and, in that moment,
I was not more spiritual, but more real.

In that moment, an image, a dull, gray presence, slipped
out of my consciousness, slipped down, slid down, melted,
dropped, fell, went into the ground beneath my feet,
and was gone.

Lounging With My Friends

I jumped to my feet. I'd been sitting back,
lounging with my friends. I made friends easily
in Lucknow, unlike those I met in Pune.

In the first weeks in Lucknow, I hung out with
one man from Ireland, and coincidentally, one man
from Seattle. We had dinner together on Hazrat Marg.

The streets in Lucknow were wide avenues or Margs.
I stayed in a former British residence called the Avadh Lodge,
a block off Ashok Marg, half a mile from the Hotel Carlton,
itself a relic of grander times, where many of those
who came to see Papaji, stayed.

Others lived in houses near the house that had been rented
for daily sat-sang. In that house, two connecting rooms were
cleared out every morning by the people who lived there.

It was a large, L shaped space, with a small, raised
platform at the corner, for Papaji to speak from.

Every morning, the rooms were cleared of furniture, and
rows of pillows were arranged for the 150-200 people
who came every day for sat-sang, except on Sunday.

Every morning, I rose, in a small room at the Avadh Lodge,
showered, dressed, ate breakfast, walked to Ashok Marg,
and took a jitney to the crossroads, where I transferred
to another jitney that carried me and others to within
a few blocks of the sat-sang house.

Papaji's neighborhood, Indra Nagar, was near
the zoo park, near the canal, near transportation.

At lunch, we walked a short ways down the road
to one of two houses where lunch was served,
for a nominal fee, by a local family.

Lunch patrons gathered in the front yards of the houses
and chatted. Early on, I sat with Dipti, the American,
the Irishman, Udyana, and Moumin, the man from Seattle.

Sagar, an Israeli woman, was attracted to me,
and I was attracted to her. One night, in the Carlton,
she invited me to her room for a drink. I didn't go.

I was aware of the temptation. She was beautiful
and energetic, but I had become overwhelmed
by the presence of the moment, and I prefered it.

She loaned me a book, a fable she'd been reading.
It influenced me to write a fable, which I read,
days later, to a group on the lawn of the Carlton.

I wanted her nearby as I read, but by that time, she was
flirting with another man. She asked me to join her on
a trip to the Taj Majal, but I declined the invitation.

I'd become wary of her energy. It was erratic and demanding,
like the energy of desire itself. A woman, a friend of hers,
said I was wise to be cautious.

Another woman told me of a trip she'd taken with a woman
friend of hers. Some years before, the two of them had hitchhiked
from India, through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey,
on their way back to Europe. At every point of their journey,
they were treated with kindness, courtesy, and respect.

Sagar had a terrible time in Agra, and, at dinner one night,
in the Hotel Clarks Avadh, in the penthouse dining room,
a man pulled a gun on another man, and Sagar shouted, "NO!"
in such a commanding voice, the dispute was resolved peaceably.

Sagar was the kind of woman who easily attracted me,
but I chose not to become involved.

The presence of being, the awareness of the presence of being,
the moment of Being Itself, of life itself, was too great to be sublimated.

Even though I was a writer, I didn't write anything
about my experience while I was in Lucknow.

In that moment of being, there was nothing to say about it.
It was eight years before I could speak of the experience.

I wanted to describe the indescribable. Papaji said to me, one day,
that no one had ever been able to describe what he alluded to.

“But don’t stop trying,” he said. “You’re a writer. From now on, no more barriers. From now on, write from the source.” He didn’t mean for me to be inspired by the source, but to speak in the voice of the source, to speak as the source, to be the source speaking.

“Can you do this?” he said and looked at me. “Yes,” I said. “When you go to your hotel tonight, I want you to write from the source and give it to me, tomorrow. Can you do that?”

The next morning, before satsang on the patio of the satsang house, I gave him what I had written.

Two days later, I hear Papaji read what I had written. He read it during sat-sang. He read it to a woman who was struggling to be clear in her own realization. He read it as example.

“Listen to this,” he said to the woman, “Maybe this will help. This is what I’ve been trying to say.”

Before he read what I had written, he said, “I don’t know who wrote this. It was written by Anonymous. I found it on my bed this morning. Whoever wrote this, please come and see me after sat-sang.” He read the words that I wrote, words that had my name on them, the name he gave me. Two days before, when I handed him the paper, I said, “Here’s the writing you asked for.”

When I heard the words he read, I recognized them. “Ah, well," I thought, "I’m happy. I don’t care about not being named. I’ll go see Papaji after sat-sang, as he said,”

Some time passed, while Papaji continued to speak with the woman. I was sitting in the back of the room with new friends, a French guy and the acupuncturist, who’d been a police officer in Germany.

I marvelled at Papaji’s brilliance. I wasn’t inclined to argue with his ways or his words. Until that moment.

Be As You Are

I payed $7 a day for a room at the Avadh Lodge, a room that had its own side entrance. The hotel had a curved driveway which led to the covered entry, with a semi-circular lawn inside the curve.

The main door opened to an office and a lounge, then to stairs to the second floor alongside passages to rooms on the ground floor.

The men who worked at the Avadh Lodge spoke passable English, since it had become the business language of India.

I didn't have to learn Hindi or any of the many dialects of India. I didn't have to learn the Indian names for menu items, either, since they were commonly translated in English.

Next to my room was a garage for repairing the old British sedans used as taxis. They were a bit more costly and not nearly as much fun as the bicycle rickshaws which filled the roads, or the motorized rickshaws and jitneys which carried the bulk of local traffic.

Just about everything was cheap by Western standards. I was able to have breakfast brought to my room for less than a dollar, including eggs, bacon, toast, jam, and coffee.

I could leave laundry at the desk and pick it up later, cleaned and ironed, for next to nothing, or so it seemed.

Each day and night, in my room, I was alone. There was no radio or TV. I was in a state of mind, that, in my experience, was close to what I called fear. But it wan't fear.

It resembled fear in the body. It's a state of constant presence, of attention, of awakeness, a state of mind without attachment to thought.

Thoughts come and go, but there is no feeling that any thought warrants being held. I called it an acute numbness, an intense feeling of non-feeling.

The state of non-mind came, not as the result of being taught, or by some practice, or by any influence. I wasn't in a trance, or fear, or compulsion.

I wasn't doing the bidding of any directive, internal or external.
There was no form directing that state of formlessness.

I found a bookstore that carried English language books.
One book I found was "Be As You Are," the book of Poonjaji's
teacher, Ramana Maharshi. Another was a collection of cowboy
stories. Another was a detective novel. Another was a book
of the writings of Paul Gauguin.

Ramana became the grandfather of my formless form, as Papaji
became the father. I embraced surrender as a path to everything.

Ramana spoke of surrender as one of the two paths
to freedom, the other he called self-enquiry.

In a brief letter, one day in sat-sang, I asked Papaji to speak
about the path of surrender, but before he could read my letter,
I raised my hand to speak.

When he spoke to me, my voice stopped in my throat
with tears. I pointed to the note, and Papaji laughed.

In referring to my question about surrender, he gestured toward me
and said, "Well, this is it, isn't it? There is no more. You wrote these
words with your heart and not with your mind, didn't you?"

I nodded. I asked if he could give me a hug. He laughed and
invited me to join him. He embraced me, and I embraced him.
I watched myself make the embrace an embrace of equals,
not of a disciple with his master.

While I was hugging him, my face was buried in his neck.
Papaji was eighty, only slightly older than my father, but the
skin of that old man reminded me of the grandmother I loved
unconditionally during her long life.

I turned to look at all the people in sat-sang, and he said,
"Don't be afraid. They won't hurt you." "I'm not afraid,"
I said, "I love them."

I was beaming at a roomful of faces. I meant to say
that I loved all, in the heart of the love that is the nature
of all beings, the love I saw in Papaji, from the first day,
pouring from him into the room, like a flood, like sunlight.

In my room, I looked at the walls, at the ceiling, high above,
at the occasional cockroach, at the line I strung for clothes,
at the smell of water in the shower, and I looked in the air.

I looked at nothing in particular. I looked at the particular
in nothing. I lay on a narrow bed, in love with nothing
in particular, not even in love with everything.

I lay on the bed, reading, not reading, thinking, not thinking,
sleeping, not sleeping, in the essence of the ocean, where all
the qualities of the ocean are of no interest to the ocean itself.

The room had two recessed windows, beside the door,
two wicker and wood chairs, an enameled white, wooden
table, a bed, a light hanging from a cord, and a shower
that was nearly as large as the room.

The hot water for showers was available once
a day, variably, in the mornings, before eight.

The isolation of the room was betrayed
by the absence of isolation in my heart.

The Heart's Attachments

When I first got to Lucknow, I ran into Dipalm,
the older woman who showed me the photo of Papaji
that convinced me to go to Lucknow.

She was a sweet, soft, gushy woman who had left
disappointed, confused, angry family behind in Baltimore.
She lived in an apartment near the sat-sang house. She tried
to take me under her wing. as I welcomed her friendship.

One day, we met and walked in the zoo-park
near her apartment on the edge of Indra Nagar.

Returning to her apartment, she asked me to lie with her.
I didn't like the idea, but her kindness, her gentleness,
her sweet protestations convinced me that rejection
would be unkind.

I lay at her side, on the bed. She moaned softly, without
any aggression, repeating my name, exaggerated, as a
lament, a dirge, a lullaby, a song of love.

Then, she turned to snuggle against my body. I felt the warmth of another body, but I was unhappy in that bedded solicitude. I waited for a long enough time, and I stood.

Within minutes, I was on the street and breathing a particular air of freedom. It was not the freedom of the heart itself, but the freedom from the heart's attachments to anyone not of one's choosing.

My name is Abhaya

If you think death is an empty void, without human warmth
or joy, if you think death is the end of everything you care about,
go there, now, with all the courage you have, go there, now, alone,
abandoned, loveless, unable to think or feel, unable to know or be.

I learned not to run from fear, but to run to its core. In the center
of my peaceful being, where I see, crowding in, all the thoughts
of fear, the fears that are the armies of the mind, the fears that
maintain, protect, and extend the hegemony of thought over
the stillness of the heart.

In the days before I left the Osho International Meditation Center,
I payed for a horoscope reading from a woman I didn't know,
who was, during his last years, Osho's astrologer. She said
I needed to write a book of the imagination, a book that
could be read by people all over the world.

The other thing she said was that I'd been imprisoned
many times, over many lifetimes, for my spiritual beliefs.

I had no memory of past lives and no conclusion about the truth
of reincarnation, but all my life I carried a constant sense of the threat
of the kind of abuse that can come to one who lives a spiritual life.

I had a sense of abusing, or being abused
by the power of spiritual beliefs.

After a week in Lucknow, I wrote my first sat-sang letter
to Papaji. I asked him how to deal with the fear of being
killed for speaking as he spoke.

He asked me if the fear was inside
or outside. I said it was outside.

He said that when these fears came,
I should feel the energy in the center of the heart,
as Ramana said, just to the right of one's sternum,
not the left, where the physical heart is.

As soon as Papaji said those words, the fear was
of no more concern. Since the fear was no longer
a concern, neither was the remedy.

In the same letter, I asked him if he would give me a name,
in the tradition of other sannyasins. He paused for a moment
and said the name “Abhaya,” which means “fearless.”

He wrote it down and passed it back to me,
so I wouldn’t be mistaken about it.

It seemed a great joke to me, an irony, after telling
him my greatest fear, to hear him name me "Fearless."

On the plane from Katmandu to Hong Kong, returning
to the United States, after five months in India and Nepal,
I slept, and nearly asleep, I dreamed, and nearly dreaming,
I became aware of a truth as it moved from knowledge to reality.

I came awake to realize that love is real, and fear is not real.
These were not new thoughts, but their reality dropped in,
with certainty, effortlessly, conclusively, like food
and water transform the body from starvation.

I realized an immutable reality. To be fearless is to be without fear.
My new name meant ‘without fear,’ I was freed from the unreal.

When I heard him say my new name, I wasn’t sure what I was hearing.
It was the first time I’d spoken to him, the first time he spoke to me.

I was in a state of mindlessness. The name
was less important than the moment it swam in.

The name Abhaya was awkward on my American tongue.
At first, I think it might be Ab-HAY. There was a man
from Peru who had the name Abhay.

Dipalm called me, “A-BYE”. “Ohhh, A-BYE!” she said,
drawing it out, like a mournful wai, like a lamentation.

A Hindi in his bookstore said Abhaya was a good name.
He sounded impressed or, at least, knowledgeable.

He said the final a was silent. He said Abhaya was a prince,
the brother of the man who gave Buddha his first ashram.

In Buddhism, the name meant, “One
on the verge of perfect enlightenment.”

One of the difficulties, one of the freedoms,
I had to confront, let go of, and enjoy was Papaji's
distracting habit of paying no attention to personalities
but to the essence of being in everyone.

He spoke with enveloping love and distracting detachment.
He had a blistering intelligence, a compendious memory and
a mind as vacant as the space that contains the Universe.

He spoke as the self, before the first thought. He looked
at one man, smiled warmly, and said, "Are you still here?"

Acceptance makes no favorite of anyone, and the effect
of that was, in Papaji, his wanting no gathering of followers.

Still, I longed for the embrace that would single me out.
I longed to be called to Papaji's side, to be relieved
of making a life of my own.

I wanted to be directed by another who I could trust
absolutely, to have a master or a god of infinite love,
while keeping a semblance of my self intact.

When I spoke to Papaji, there was no thought of self to hold onto.
I couldn't hold the thought of **I** in the moment of being.

But the thought of **I** sought to regain the ground
that had disappeared from beneath its feet.

Fear of death is a way for the mind to regain
the lost illusion of the ground beneath the feet of **I**.

Without the thoughts that flesh out that fear, the search
for ground is left behind in the flight of being itself.

The Beach in Thailand

In the city, people gather without exclusivity.
The city is inclusive, with exits to the farthest regions
of the reachable universe. Roads lead in and out.

In India, I felt freest and most welcome in the
open air of Mumbai, Pune, Goa, and Lucknow.

Lucknow is a city of Hindi, Urdu, and English.
It's the ancient home of the Nawabs.

No one is certain of the origin of the name
"Lucknow." Papaji laughed, "You are in luck now."

One woman told him a tale of woe. A New Yorker,
wealthy, free to explore her artistry and spirituality,
she'd come to India many times.

Sitting in the room with Papaji, she called his name,
and when he saw her, she began to tell a long tale of
tragedy, misfortune, strife, torment, misery, unhappiness,
death and illness, of broken family and broken hearts.

As long as she spoke, everyone listened. At the center
of the attention she received, sat Papaji, not far from her,
holding her story in the cup of his gaze.

At last, she wound down and fell silent. He continued
to hold her in his attention. She looked to him, and in
the rich silence of the room, in a gentle, curious, and
genuine voice, he said, "And now?"

She listened. She had nothing to say. And then she laughed.
Lightly, surprisingly, then heartily, she laughed.

In the moment of now, her grief, sadness, hurt, anger,
pain, distress, loss, confusion, and longing were over.

Her need was over. Her search was over. And she laughed.
Laughter was a common response to Papaji's lead.

Again and again, he lead people to the end of their own search,
by pointing to the simple fact of their own being, in the moment of
their being, stripped of the thought of past and future, within themselves.

People came for relief from their struggle with pain and suffering,
and he relieved them of their struggle with pain and suffering.

Someone said, “I’m struggling,” and he said,
“Yes, this struggle is very beautiful. It is a beautiful lover.
You say to your lover, ‘Oh, Struggle, please come closer.
Please don’t leave me. Oh, Struggle, you are the most beautiful,
so lovely. I love you so much. Please don’t go away from me.
I love you, oh, Struggle. Let me kiss you.’”

And they might say, "I don’t love struggle.” And he would say,
“Then, why are you holding onto your struggle with such a tight grip.
Let your struggle go free. There areplenty of others who can love
struggle in your place. Struggle doesn’t need you. Let it go.”

Or words to that effect. It’s no use trying to quote Papaji. The truth
is not in the words. All of life, especially the talk of sat-sang, is only
an excuse for separate selves to abandon their differences and enter
the reality that no one has ever left.

He spoke of the waves in the ocean who demand to be separate,
until they are pulled back into the ocean they have never left behind.

A young woman told him of her friend who was brutally murdered,
the year before. She said she loved her friend, and she thought that
to stop grieving was disloyal and disgraceful, that it would
insult her friend's memory.

Papaji listened and sympathized. He didn’t rush past
the recognition of the young woman’s sadness.

He talked about the pain of losing loved ones in this life,
of those who die, those left behind, all over the world,
every year, every day. Then he began to ask about the now.

“How is your friend now? Your friend may have been born
again in a new life. She may be happy, laughing. She may be
a new baby in her mother’s arms. And still you cry.”

He said, “And you do not know what kind of agreement
was made between your friend and the man who killed her.

None of us can know this. None of this can be known.
And you’re still holding onto the death, terror, pain.

Why is this death being re-lived, over and over, in you?
You love your friend, and you can let her go.

The love between you and her is not lost.
You can be true to that love and not to the pain."

The girl was not relieved. She didn't let go of her friend
or her friend's death. Soon, she was gone from sat-sang.

I thought everyone in sat-sang must be experiencing the same
no-mind, shapeless, formless, limitless recognition.

Everyday, two hundred people, more or less,
crowded into a house to hear Papaji speak.

Everyday, in the morning, in the street outside the house,
a long, wide line built up to the front and side gates.

I was amazed to witness line-cutters, wall-climbers,
and crowders, pushing and shoving, running to claim
the coveted cushions closest to the front, closest to
the master, who was only love itself, in a human form.

Gangaji, an American woman, chosen by Papaji to teach
as he taught, said to me, "You think everyone is having
the same experience you are, but they aren't.

Most people who come to see Papaji are thrilled
to be in the company of the Master for a while.

Then they go back home, they have lovely memories of the time
they spent here, and they go on with their lives the same as before."

A man I had known in Pune, a British sannyasin, came to
Lucknow, and his reaction was, "I've heard all this before."

A handsome young German, with his beautiful blond
girlfriend, raised his hand to ask a question.

He said, "Papaji, I love to be here with you, but I want to
know if it is all right with you, for me to go somewhere else.

I don't want to go away, but my friend and I have plans
to go to the beach in Thailand. I want to ask you if it is
all right for us to go there."

Papaji laughed, “Yes, of course. Go to the beach in Thailand. This you can always have. This moment is always with you.

You can wait to embrace this moment. You can wait a hundred lifetimes. It will always be here for you. Go to the beach in Thailand. It’s very beautiful there. Have a good time.”
“Thank you, Papaji, thank you,” the young man said.

“The Beach in Thailand” seemed a perfect expression of all of this life that is not in the recognition of innate being.

Everyday, someone raised his or her hand and said that he or she was leaving to go somewhere else. “Leaving?” Papaji said, “Where can you go and not be 'here'?”

Golden Boy

The train to Lucknow was crowded, the jitneys in Lucknow were
crowded, the streets were teeming with people, including beggars
of all descriptions, Sat-sang was shoulder to shoulder, row upon row.

The adjoining room was occupied, the stairway in the hall, out of the sightline
of the master, became additional seating for rapt listeners, and yet, in all that,
I felt peacefully alone and contentedly a part of the whole, invisible,
even when I was the center of attention.

In my time with Papaji, I became what someone called ‘a golden boy,’
someone to whom the master paid particular attention.

In fact, it was what he asked of everyone, to see
themselves as the golden center of all existence.

Lucky was a word he used to describe those who
came to the realization of the moment in themselves.

Humans were the luckiest creatures. The ones who came
to sat-sang from all over the world, ready, conscious, free
to recognize the truth, were the luckiest of all.

And still, one man disparaged himself.
“I can’t understand,” he said.

“Oh, now you have shit in your mother’s lap,”
Papaji interjected, and some people gasped.

“Don’t worry. It’s all right. Your mother loves you.
She’ll wash you off and hug you and kiss you. Your
mother still loves you. She never stops loving you.”

The man said, “But I don’t understand.” Papaji laughed,
“You did it again. Once again, you shit in your mother’s lap.”

He smiled. It seemed almost impossible to convince
the most lucky beings that their state of being was blessed.

Of course, many people came to see Papaji, both men and women,
but perhaps Gangaji was right, perhaps the challenge he faced
was true, that so few were ready to let go of their self-denial
and live as their true self.

Many who came had been in spiritual practices for many years.
One man said he'd been meditating for twenty years.

Papaji congratulated him on his efforts. Then he said,
"This is enough. Now you can let go of this effort."

When he called me one of the young boys
who came to see him, I was fifty years old.

Papaji himself was an old man, with ailments.
He worked and raised a family, and upon retirement
from his life as an engineer, he became a full-time teacher.

For twenty years, he taught, refusing more than a few
followers, traveling in India and around the world,
refusing generous offers of money and property.

When Osho left his body, many sannyasins came to see
Papaji, until he finally allowed a community to form
around him, but he didn't like the idea of an ashram.

"Ashram, means business, means money," he said, simply.
"My ashram is the sky and the earth. My ashram has no walls."

As long as I was in his presence, I thought
I needed to become the same as he was.

It was an uneasy desire, until I was walking to lunch,
one day, down the middle of a dirt road, and the thought
occurred to me, "I want to be like Kabir and Rumi."
The thought occurred. I smiled. It was a true thought,
a thought that hadn't come from the habit of thinking.

It was a thought that didn't chase after, or run from, other thoughts.
When the thought occurred, I wasn't sure who Kabir and Rumi were.

Even though I was a well-read poet, I hadn't read Kabir or Rumi,
except in passing. I knew of Rumi, but I hadn't read him, extensively.

After nine months back in Seattle, I came across a collection
of Kabir, and it became a trigger for my writing.

I wrote three hundred new poems. I read Kabir and Rumi
like brothers, as common voices of the same heart.

Kabir and Rumi seemed like young boys, like eternity, like
the gasp and the roar of the moment of recognition, like laughter.

Suryo came with me to Papaji's house, on the day
he said I should come for a visit.

Suryo quietly demanded that Papaji see her for who she was,
a goddess, she said. He told her she had the energy of only six
people on the planet. As we left the meeting, she became angry.

She emptied her cache of venom as we walked along the canal
that fed into the River Gompti, that runs through the center
of the city of Lucknow.

She had described to him how her father had stolen her spirit
with his drunken belligerence and sexual aggression.

I got to see the legacy of her father's fight
to remain in control. She fought to be free of it.

I saw a bewildering barrage, as we walked past where
the buzzards cleaned the carcasses of dead, abandoned cattle.

The atmosphere of sat-sang, being in the presence of a master,
seemed to bring out the best and the worst of people's lives.

Whatever their attachments were, they were revealed,
to be abandoned, or to reclaim their control.

It's not surprising to witness the death throes of ego
attachments when they're illuminated by awareness.

The habits of a lifetime, the habits of human history, do not
go gently, when they sense they are being shown the door.

I wanted to be elevated to golden child, even as
I recognized the throne I was already sitting on.

I sat on the stairs in the hall, out of sight of the master,
wanting to be seen and wanting to be invisible, even
though I saw there was no one sitting in my place.

It's the habit and skill of the mind to appropriate
everything that is, even if it's the realm of its origin,
where it cannot go and still remain the same.

Papaji enticed the mind to enter its own demise,
in recognition of its origin, all to its own greater
fulfillment, despite what it might otherwise believe.

Papaji asked those who came to him to ask themselves,
"Who am I?" and trace the question back to its source.

This is a true magician's trick, one that works, even
with all its secrets revealed, even as it is being performed
without any tricks at all. He invited the mind to think its way
to its own disappearance.

This surrender, called self-enquiry, is perfect for the minds
of most people everywhere who cherish their mental
capacities and will not abandon thought easily.

The mind is the keeper of the flame of thought.
Only by calling it to the sun of its own rays,
is it enticed to let go of its intent on illumination.

The mind wants to search the world for truth it can only find
by abandoning the search and returning home, but the mind
won't quit the search by being told to quit searching.

Papaji enlisted the minds of those who came
in search, to retrace their own steps, to discover
their own origin, to re-enter its own source.

The moment of that occurrence
often erupted in laughter.

All around the center of perfect surrender, the particles of thought
fight to regroup and reform themselves to regain their hegemony.

The throne of human consciousness, the crown and royalty
of thought, seeks, by its very nature, to establish sovereignty

At the center of the absolute authority of life itself,
in the reality that engulfs and identifies its very existence.

I wanted to someone to choose me,
when I was already the chooser and the chosen.

I wanted to know what had no teacher, no student,
where there's nothing to be taught and nothing to learn.

I wanted to learn to roar,
when I was already the king of the beasts.
I wanted gifts of gold, when I was already
sitting on blocks of bullion.

I wanted to learn the path to the heart,
when I was the heart, laying a path to itself.

I wanted to be the center of attention,
even when I was already the one who sees.

I wanted to tell everyone what's true
of everyone, the same as it was true for me.

The Begging Bowl

From the top of a tourist attraction, one of the great palaces
of the Maharajas of ancient India, I saw,on the flatland below,
a sea of dark gray, a covering of soot and grime.

It was a city within the city, the home of the poorest
of the poor, with roofs of black, like a pile of garbage bags,
like a tent city erected after a catastrophe that never ended.

It was the shock of Sidhartha's eyes, to turn one's gaze from the splendor
of astounding wealth to the impossible depravity of abject poverty.

On Hazrat Marg, every night, I walked to and from dinner
at one of several clean and attentive restaurants.
I was surrounded by the ebb and flow of the poorest Indians,
crippled, blind, deformed, the children of the poor, the old.

One legless man seemed to fly across the wide avenue,
through the traffic, on his scooter-stool, with a wide grin,
to my side, asking for baksheesh, alms, rupees.

I wasn't even close to being wealthy, except by contrast.
Unable to resolve the debate about giving to the legion
of beggars, I began by recognizing them, smiling, nodding,
greeting them and moving on to my destination.

In return, I saw no recrimination, no hostility, no anger.
There was some agreement between me and the beggars that,
for one moment, the relationship was about being human,
being alive, being in the same moment and not about money.

I wasn't happy with the disparity, but,
in the simple fact of being, I was the same.

After Suryo came to Lucknow, one night, in the street, we were
swarmed by children, showing their practiced, sorrowful faces.

They held their hand out, palms open,
to touch the cloth of our thighs and waists.

I picked up and carried one small boy. I attempted
to break through his familiar mask of misery.

The boy smiled. Water flooded the dry river bed.
We bought ice cream for the boy and his sister.

They were happy and grateful, without saying so, until they
rejoined their group to return to the work that was their lives.

Papaji said, “You are like the King who takes up
the begging bowl. You are the King. What is the need?”

The poverty of India was shocking to my Western eyes.
Still, I was glad I wasn’t a wealthy man.

As much as I might want to eradicate poverty,
the greatest sustainer of poverty is to look away.

I wanted to see the vital center that lives everywhere,
in everyone, in whatever form it masquerades.

Learning to Dance

Inside this presence, I can't look away from my vital center.
This sort of attention first appeared to me when I was a teen.

The sudden attention to the center of reality revealed the unreality
of everything that is defined in thought.Everything that comes
and goes is revealed in the light of what's always true.

Now is, as it is now, in all times called the present,
past, and future. In description, this can seem intricate and
intellectual, obtuse and obscure, but being is only what is.

A boy, in his room, in his bed, just before sleep,
as if being playful in his imagination, looked into
the darkness of his closed eyes at night, in the region
of sleep, and his attachment to thought broke away.

He held no thought. He dropped memories of the day just gone,
and thoughts of the day to come He remained conscious, in a state
like dreamless sleep, only still conscious.

He wasn't trying to do anything. It occurred. It was the curtain
pulled back, before the stage is set. It's the moment everyone is in.
It's simple, common, and ordinary. It has no characteristics to
distinguish it, in any way. It's the moment that belongs to all.

The boy saw his reality unattached to any thought,
undefined by any apparent reality, and in that moment,
the boy was the **I** that has no form.

the glimpse of his true nature became
the recurring recognition of the true self.

When I sat with Papaji, I saw and heard
another man who spoke the same recognition.

I saw another man whose recognition dissolved the doubt
that had been with me ever since I was the boy who played,
in his mind, in the dark, and discovered the awareness
of his being, unbound by thought.

In my mind, thoughts crowded
around the empty awareness of being.

These thoughts warned me and redirected me, as a boy,
to not think in that new way. They told me that such thoughts
were in error, or perhaps, even, blasphemous. My thinking
blamed my thoughts for such thoughtfree awareness.

It occurred to me that I was playing God and I'd be
better off if I didn't mention such thoughts to anyone.
I mentioned them to Papaji, in a two-page letter.

I told him the story of the boy who discovered the true nature
of his awareness and the thinking that tried to explain it away.

When the boy looked not at his thoughts, when the boy was
not acting as a thinker, when the boy was not self-defined
by his thoughts, when the boy was not the self-believing
actor of his thoughts, an opening occurred at the source
that made it instantly clear that the I, and the source of I,
were not separate.

That boy and the source were essentially identical.
To the boy, that implied he was the same as God.

That implication was not acceptable in the 50s,
in a medium-size city in the United States, in the
boy's family, school, church, or community.

The boy had no one to speak to about such an occurrence,
and he had everyone to speak to about everything else.

In the mind of the boy, the thoughts that crowded in around
the silent, still opening, had no alternative and no antidote.

As a boy, everything crowds into the open self, like
a proverbial black hole. As a man, he became a poet.

Poets live at the doorway to the open self, but they
continue to practice interpretations of the world.

Osho said that poets were the luckiest people, because
they have, at the moment of the creation of the poem,
the opportunity to turn and look and see the source.

The problem, Osho said, was that almost nobody does that.
Our attention is caught up in the wonder of the thing created.

When I saw Papaji in the open door of the source,
speaking in and from the source, in the nature of the source,
I saw with the same sight as the boy saw in his bed at night,
and recognition dissolves time and doubt.

To be in the world, but not of the world, does not
relieve anyone of the pervasive influence of the world.

To be in the presence of one who is in the world but not
of the world, has the effect, of letting doubt disappear.

As a shadow can't hold its own existence
in the light, doubt is gone. It no longer exists.

Doubt isn't put on a shelf to be taken down later.
Doubt is not soothed like an injury which returns,
under stress. Doubt no longer exists.

This doubt is not merely the self-doubt of personality,
which persists as long as thoughts occur in a mind in a body.

Doubt attaches to humanity. To be human is to be in doubt.
To be human is to create stories of doubt.

The limitations of being human, to become ill and to die,
to suffer pain and fear, validates the doubt that humans have
in the eternity of their being.

We have created stories of eternity as a separate reality
to be feared and desired, and we've allowed ourselves
to live in doubt and shame.

Papaji said, "Do you doubt that you exist?
What is this existence, that you cannot deny,
that you cannot seek, that you cannot lose?"

As a grown man, a friend invited me to a dance club.
I participated as two hundred people learned a dance
being taught by a skilled and likeable teacher.

I had difficulty learning the steps, until I realized I was trying
to learn a dance step I'd been doing since I was a teenager.

Sitting with Papaji in sat-sang, it became increasingly clear
that I was dancing what I'd always been dancing.

The Buffalo Cows

Parents, society, peer groups, nuclear family, extended family,
role models, even our ideals, impel us to invent or establish ourselves,
then to match or surpass our comparisons, our examples, our origins.

I felt the impact of recognition. I was afraid and fearless. I looked at
the nature of being. I saw the presence in the absence of ordinary details.

I felt human responsibility. I wanted the ability to respond,
but there was no prescription for my response.

There was no plan, no requirement, no booming voice in the sky,
no book of rules and examples, and no connection to the religious
doctrines that abound in the world.

Original form occurs in the midst of formlessness. In echo
of the origin of the Universe from the formless void, there occurs,
in us, a sense of the birth of our form into awareness. We feel compelled
to be responsible, to be full, in the moment of our emptiness.

Whenever we stop following the thinking that seemed to run
on and on in the mind, and we look at our being, before another
thought occurs, two things happen.

We're afraid, and we felt intensely and immediately lost. It is
the edge of doom, the edge of existence, where the personal self
is insignificant, vulnerable, an illusion, weak, absent, dead, empty.

The other sense is that we're the child, the form, the new generation
of this profound, eternal, limitless totality. How can so inadequate
a form fulfill such an unfathomable, indefinable presence?

The answer occurs in the moment of recognition.
How can this form take form out of its formless being?
It does. How does it occur? It occurs.

As we witness the occurrence of life from life itself,
the miracle becomes known. Knowing doesn't produce it.
It produces the knowing.

The response, in the mind and the heart, is the occurrence
that devises religion and poetry in the world, to proclaim
what has already proclaimed itself by its very existence.

As one turns to face the source, the source
is the only occurrence, the only presence.

As one turns toward the world, a human being
in the form of the source, one's consciousness becomes
its fulfillment, and this is the name of the new world.

All of being is the occurrence of Life Itself.
I am the occurrence of life itself.

Papaji said that all thoughts go out from the center. We follow
thoughts to their destination, away from the source, as if they
will help to find who we are, when the only thing that works
is to follow our thoughts and our thinking back to their source.

At the source of any thought, one is the witness of the moment.
One is in the presence of the occurrence of life, as Being
becomes being. This opportunity belongs to all human beings.

Someone asked Papaji about living in the world. How can it
be done? He answered, "If you are driving your car, drive
your car. If you're working at your desk, work at your desk."

"Be as you are," Ramana said. How hard can it be? In my thoughts,
all this was impossible to interpret. It was impossible to know
what to do. How could I do justice to the extraordinary reach
of existence, in my particular life?

The dirt on the streets of Lucknow was ancient dirt. In Lucknow,
a buffalo cow, walking across the road, stopped the frantic traffic.
The cow was sacred.

No one fell to the ground in worship of the cow.
But the traffic stopped, every day, at any time.

Wherever the cow walked, the traffic stopped, and
the dung of the cow was shaped into bricks for houses.

Come Here

Papaji came through a door, stepped up onto a small podium,
two feet above the floor of the room, namasted to the people nearby,
sat cross-legged, closed his eyes, and was silent for ten or twenty minutes.
Then, he looked up, said a few words of peace and welcome, and smiled.

He began speaking, or he read from the pile of notes and letters
at his side, or he answered an insistent question from someone.

After two or three hours, he spoke words of peace and love and left
the room through the same door he entered. The adjoining room was
where he greeted whoever was leaving Lucknow each day.

There, he chatted amiably about hometowns, the cities
of the world, many of which he'd visited, over the years.

Behind him, during sat-sang, was a large picture of Ramana Maharshi.
The front cushions were reserved for newcomers and those leaving that day.

At the back of the room there were chairs for those with back problems.
Dipalm petitioned for a chair but didn't get one. A few people, mostly men,
formed the group that took care of chores, driving the van, making
announcements and appointments.

One man was a sannyasin from Pune, a man known in Seattle as a leader
of groups, who, when he first came to Lucknow, faxed the Osho ashram,
announcing his enlightenment, calling for Osho's Rolls Royce to be
brought to meet him at the train, in preparation for his succession
to the chair of the Master.

In my time in Lucknow, he was in charge of making copies
of tapes of daily sat-sang available to any who requested them.

Several of those who came to be with Papaji became teachers
around the world. One of them said that Papaji was a corrupt master.

It was an accusation that betrayed one's relationship with a master.
Papaji frowned and didn't respond to the mention of the man's name.

One of Papaji's students was called Gangaji, and her return to Lucknow
was greeted by Papaji, and by the gathering, with open arms.

During one week, she gave sat-sang in the afternoons, on the lawn
of the Carlton Hotel, after Papaji's morning sat-sang.

I sat at the fringe of Gangaji's sat-sang. I saw that Papaji
was sun to Gangaji's moon. I heard Gangaji say that,
in order to be free, one must give up all relationships.

As she spoke, I remembered the form of my prayers, where
I prayed to God, a God who had no other name and no form.

I prayed until I became the prayer, until I became the answer
to the prayer, until the prayer disappeared into the answer.

I realized I had a relationship with God, even if the God of my
prayers was nameless and formless, a focal point in eternity.

In the moment of realization, the relationship was gone.
In the moment of it being gone, it opened.

In February, in Lucknow, it was the dry winter of the sub-tropics.
The rainy season, the monsoons, were several months ahead
and many months behind. The ground was dry, and the grass
of the Carlton's lawn was more brown than green.

The money changer came to a small booth at the corner
of the covered walkway on the ground floor of the Carlton,
a once grand hotel with a ballroom, wide verandahs, large rooms
with ceiling fans, wooden wardrobes, tile floors, wicker furniture.

The hotel had a restaurant and a long, front drive for taxis and rickshaws.
The first money changer I met in Lucknow was on the street, outside sat-sang.

I was slightly uncomfortable meeting the money changer, even though I'd
met with them in Pune, but there was always an air of illegality about it.

The money changer, in front of sat-sang, was bold. He stood in the middle
of the road, near the intersection, near the chai servers who came to do
business, before and after sat-sang.

I was told the money changer, outside sat-sang, was Papaji's son.
A man in his fifties, he was affable and businesslike. He gave
a fair price. As always, the price was below the bank's price.

The practice of changing foreign money for rupees was
common and apparently ignored by the authorities.

At the Carlton Hotel, the practice was for one to walk casually to
the small jewelry stand, during certain hours and state your business.

Money was changed, and after a while,
the money changer returned the space to the vendor.

Gangaji was an American woman. Her husband,
a seeker in earnest, had come to Lucknow, first.

Papaji asked him, “Where is your wife?
Please go and get her and bring her to see me.”

She came the next day. Papaji had seemed to intuit her arrival.
She was overwhelmed, as Papaji invited her to herself.

"Come here" was the message I imagined Papaji
speaking, in and by the nature of his presence.

The presence of sat-sang, the presence of Papaji, the presence
of the moment, said to all who were near, "Come here."

Papaji said "Come here," from the open heart. He said "Come here,"
to those in the room. He said "Come here," to the universal I.

There was no relationship in the invitation. As some teachers
seem to say, “Come to me,” Papaji said, "Come here."

Here, in this moment between thoughts. Here, in this center
of the heart. Here, in the center of the truth. Come Here.

It was an open invitation, without cost, made from the source
to the source, from I to I, from the consciousness of nowhere
to the awareness of no one.

With Suhas in Aminabad

On my birthday, I found a pocketwatch for sale in a small shop
on Hazrat Marg. I negotiated the price down to about what
I would pay for a similar watch, years later, in Seattle.

It was the watch I wanted, with an engraved portrait of a ship
on the case. It was the U.S.S. Constitution. It made me smile.

My birthday felt like any other day in Lucknow.
In Lucknow, every day felt like a birthday.

Time has a curious quality in the awareness of the moment,
in the presence of being, immediate and eternal.

Everything has an intensity about it,
and within that intensity, is calm.

To be at peace in the heart, and to be free of the illusion
of control over everything that is. It opens up the heightened
awareness that seems equivalent to the physical life of plants
and animals, quarks and nebulae.

In the minds of locals, the Botanical Gardens may have seemed
a rather nice but ordinary place, but, to me, it was a Garden of Eden.

The same could be said of the corner of Ashok Marg
and the road that ran between the Avadh Lodge and the Carlton,

The same as the incredibly busy hub of traffic at the crossroads
to Indra Nagar, where all the jitneys changed drivers, riders, and routes,

The same as the crowded stalls in the narrow shopping quarter
just off the traffic circle in front of the GPO (the General Post Office),

The same as the rooms of the houses that sold lunch after
sat-sang, the same as the skin of the heart of God.

All is the same as any part of the all. All is the same in the center
of the heart, when there is no obstruction or distraction.

All is the same between the center and the not-center.
All is the same, when the center is seen to be everywhere.

I was inclined, by nature, to be thrilled by the actuality

of everything. Anything is the particular of everything.

To love the sun is to have no particular ray of the sun as
a favorite. To love a ray of the sun is to love the sun itself.

The world wants choices to be made. If gold
is everywhere, what's the price of gold?

How can anyone, who can't distinguish
between this and that, make a profit from love?

During that time, I was committed to one woman.
Osho disparaged marriage, and in the same breath,
exemplified the genuine love of another as a path
to freedom. The question of relationship was crucial.

"You must let go of all relationships,"
Gangaji said, and I knew it was true.
The question and the answer are
balanced on the fulcrum of letting go.

Holding on is the problem. The problem is not
in relationships. This world creates relationships.
All of everything exists in relationship.

Papaji directed attention away from the habit of living
in a world of subject/ object, as in "I love you," when,
in the nature of love itself, there is no I and no you.

In people, the relationship of I and you can override
the love that is the heart of every relationship.

In my first month in Lucknow, Suryo, the you of
my relationship, stayed in Pune, and other women
appeared to me in the relaltionship world of my mind.

The intensity of original love obliterates the attention to
relationship. I loved Papaji, but he wasn't playing that game.

He acted as love itself. I loved anyone who gave positive attention
to me, but in awareness, there is no other to see or be seen by.

One woman, Suhas, from San Francisco, invited me to visit
a family she knew in Aminabad, a shopping district in Lucknow.

She was a woman who, when Papaji called on her to
answer her own question, began laughing and kept
laughing, to the delight of everyone, including Papaji.

She and I took a rickshaw to Aminabad, whereI saw a
domestic drama that belied India's reputation for spirituality.

After a few minutes of greeting and welcome, the man of the house,
in his forties, began shouting about his father, a man in his seventies.

For years, the two hadn't spoken directly to each other.
The woman of the house hid behind a closed door.

In the course of the visit, most of the time was spent in conflict.
The son and father screamed about being courteous to their visitors.
Each one was certain the other was being a bad host.

Given the protective buffer of Suhas, the visit was
nearly as delightful as everything else.

After a week in Lucknow, my toothache went away, and nothing
seemed to be in the way of any particular joy becoming joy itself,
or of joy itself appearing as a million particular joys.

If joy is the constant, then the recognition of joy is the only desire.
The holding of joy is as ridiculous as the holding of love.

Nothing Bad is Happening

In darker times, I often repeated a few words
to make myself feel better, “Nothing bad is happening.”

One evening, in Lucknow, I decided to take a rickshaw
to a 7PM AA meeting, listed in the International Directory.
The rickshaw driver has no difficult finding it.

In Pune, I attended meetings of men in AA, and it became
a group of friends, of Indians of all walks of life, all ages.

One trio discovered they were former high-school classmates,
a Muslim, a Hindu, and a Christian, together again in AA.

I enjoyed the company of academics, military men,
businessmen, students, workers, the unemployed.

In Lucknow, I didn’t attend any meetings.
AA seemed unnecessary and inappropriate.

AA speaks of a higher power and the necessity for dependency
on others. Papaji called for the letting go of all dependencies.

Even so, the traditional function of a guru is one of
higher power and benign dependency. Papaji wasn’t
traditional, in that way, but he came out of that tradition.

One afternoon, a new hotel was dedicated, with a party thrown by
the new owners. Sri Harilal Poonjaji was invited to bless the opening.
He attended in full Hindu dress and performed a traditional ceremony.

Papaji’s uncle was a Hindu saint, well-known and revered.
At the dedication of the new hotel, I saw the form of his training.

When the young H.W.L. Poonja first went to see Ramana Maharshi,
he was a practicing Hindu of considerable experience.

One day, in sat-sang, someone asked him about his love of Krishna,
and Papaji was brought to tears, as he began to speak of his love
for the God of his faith.

That was many years after Ramana asked him, “Why do you concern
yourself with things that come and go? (as his visions of Krishna had done)
Why not pay attention to what doesn’t come and go but is always present?”

Papaji's Advaita faith, the faith of no faith, his self-recognition,
had taken him to the root of his worship, but it hadn't taken
the love in his heart away from him.

He was a man of love. His love of others, including his love
of Krishna, wasn't diminished by his recognition of the truth.

I decided to go to an AA meeting. In dropping the relationship
between myself and God, myself and the other, I lost nothing,
including my affection for the circle of ex-drunks I'd been
a part of for seven years.

It was a city-warm, cool-night's evening, as the rickshaw pulled up
to the arched entrance of a courtyard. In the dirt and grass entryway,
large enough for a car to turn around, I saw a few buildings
that formed a complex of some sort.

I stood looking, for a while, until a man appeared, asking me what I was
looking for. I said I was looking for an AA meeting scheduled for that night.

The man suddenly became animated and asked me to wait. He brought me
a metal folding chair. I sat in the courtyard, off the busy street, and waited.

After a while, the man returned and begged me to wait a little longer.
He said someone was coming. Finally, another man appeared and took me
to a private room in the nearest building, a row of rooms, like a dormitory.

He told me he was a patient, and he was an alcoholic, but the meeting
I was looking for was no longer held there.I became wary. The man
didn't close his door, but I was in a situation I couldn't control.

He said others might come. I wasn't clear what he meant.
I wasn't clear about the nature of the facility or about
the status of the man who was a patient and an alcoholic.

I wasn't sure of the mental stability of the man who stood
near the door, while I stood farther in the room, near the bed.

I realized I was in a room, in a building, in a facility,
in a part of Lucknow, in India, and no on knew I was there.

I stood to leave. I moved to the door, and I stepped outside.
The man asked again that I stay. He said others might come.

What others? Then, another man appeared. The new man apologized for the absence of a meeting and asked if I'd like to speak with some men in the facility.

I began to understand that it was a psychiatric hospital, in which some patients were alcoholics, and they were not there by their own choice.

I wondered if it was a good idea to venture deeper into the facility, perhaps not to emerge, to disappear into a locked psychiatric hospital, in an unfamiliar part of a city on the other side of the world.

The man entreated me to come in and speak to the men. At first, it seemed as if t two men thought I was an alcoholic who was seeking treatment, but as we spoke, they seemed to understand I was a veteran of recovery. I was being asked to share my "experience, strength, and hope," as was the custom in AA.

A prayer occurred to me, "This is all yours," I said, "I'll trust this to be a good thing. I'll jump off this cliff.

I'll do as I've done before. I'll trust that what I do for the good of AA will be for my good, too."

I followed the second man through door after door that locked behind us as we went. They weren't barred doors, but wooden doors between rooms, like in a colonial villa that had been converted to a hospital.

I was introduced to a room of men lying in their beds, sitting on their beds, fully dressed or in robes.

I spoke about the experience of recovery from addiction. I didn't use the language of sat-sang, but I didn't speak contrary to it, either.

I meant to be in the presence of truth, among others, like AA, and as sat-sang is described. The forms weren't entirely dissimilar.

More men came into the room, until it was a group. Then, a third man, an official of some sort, entered and said, "What is this man doing here?"

The second man answered and asked that I be allowed
to stay. The third man wasn't happy. He relented, after
walking in and out of the room a couple of times,
and I continued for another few minutes.

I was thanked by the second man, and the men in the room
showed signs of appreciation. Dry alcoholics were familiar
to me, and the men in their rooms seemed positive without
being demonstrative, typical of sober alcoholics.

I was led out of the hospital, through door after door, until finally,
I was in the courtyard, shaking hands, and then in the street, and then
in a rickshaw, heading back toward the Avadh Lodge, riding through
the movie district, where huge billboards crowded the narrow streets
like a scene in a surreal movie.

At the Avadh Lodge, there had been an electrical failure,
and the hotel was dark. The Indian night was black.

I found my room, and I lit a candle. I walked back out
in the dark and stood, until the stars appeared in my eyes.

The electricity returned to the Avadh Lodge. Someone cheered,
and someone applauded. It was a beautiful night.

Twenty Questions

As a man, I walked easily in the Indian streets. One night, I took
a rickshaw to the Clarks Avadh, a large, western-style hotel and spent
money on a nice dinner. I read the International Herald Tribune
and enjoyed the subdued night life of the hotel dining room.

I decided to walk back the mile or so to my room. Along the road
that paralleled the River Gompti, I became invisible in the dark.

I felt the fear of being in a strange land among strangers. I also
felt the exhilaration of being alive without any attachment whatsoever.

I walked past the open fields where I'd seen cricket games, past
a Mogul temple, past Indians on foot and bicycle, inside and outside
their homes, past the intersection to the Carlton, along the border of
the Botanical Gardens, past the driveways of the middle-class homes,
where guards sat on chairs, paid to sit all night as a prevention of theft.

In all the months in India, I was never robbed, assaulted, threatened,
or bothered. One afternoon in Goa, I saw two men arguing. It was
the only time I saw angry words between Indians in public,
and the argument subsided as quickly as it began.

I knew there were professional thieves and a caste of bandits,
but I didn't feel threatened. Western women were not so safe.

I saw two teenage boys on a bicycle swing their arms at two women
walking, hitting them like boys hit animals with a stick, to show how
brave they were, showing how afraid they were, in the same gesture.

Men in India were free to piss, even shit, beside the road,
wherever they were. Boys, waiting for the schoolbus,
pissed against the nearest wall, oblivious.

Women and girls were prohibited from pissing and shitting in public.
A couple of women did so anyway, pissing, at risk of condemnation.

Dress was proscribed, especially for women. Western women
who exposed the wrong parts of their bodies were condemned,
taken for whores, ridiculed, in the same shock of lust and disgust.

At the same time, and in the same way, most women were
generally not aggressed upon and were treated with deference.

One woman gushed at Papaji, pouring forth a begging,
praising desire to give herself to him as a devotee.

He laughed happily at the tumult of submission and turned her words
to her own self, prompting her to love herself with as much devotion,
to become her own passion, to fall at the feet of her own being.

She begged him to embrace her, and he recommended
she embrace the source of her own being.

A man wrote a plea in grandiose prose, dripping with eagerness
to become Papaji's devoted servant. Papaji turned his worship
inside out. Or outside in.

He feigned confusion over the words in the man's letter. He read
as if he didn't understand the obeisance the man offered.

"What is this word?" Papaji asked a man sitting nearby. "What does
this mean?" he asked, about something else the man has written.

Finally, confused and at a loss, the man listened, as Papaji returned
to the truth of the man himself, in the heart of the man, in the moment,
in the work of self-enquiry. He deflected all worship and praise back
upon the speaker.

One man asks for clarification of yesterday's sat-sang. "I thought
about what you said all night long. Can you help me understand?"

"Understand?" Papaji says, "I didn't ask you to understand.
This is not about understanding. This is not about thinking.
Please, don't try to understand what I am saying."

Or words to that effect. I wasn't in Lucknow to record or to learn
Papaji's words, to become a devotee of the master, to practice
a form of faith, to understand a teacher, or to find out what to do.

Neither was I in India to become Indian. My mind tried
to make sense of everything. That's the nature of the mind.

I listened to Papaji, and my mind tried to understand and predict what
he would say, but in all my time in sat-sang, I never saw him thinking.

The thinking of most people is so predicated on the forms
of thought, it's almost as visible as the motions of the body.

His mind functioned in original ways.
It functioned as true original thought functions.

The example of his unattached thinking, the example of a mind
unaddicted to thought, a mind sober from this life of thought-
drunkenness, a free mind in a world of mental addiction,
in a world stinking drunk on thought, was inspirational
to any mind ready to let go of its obsessiveness.

Toward the end of my drinking, a young woman, a lawyer,
showed me and my friend a pamphlet from AA. Twenty questions
asked the effect of drinking on one's life. My friend changed the word
"drinking" to "thinking,"and we had a good laugh at the result.

> Has your thinking ever caused you difficulty in your relationships?
> Has your thinking ever caused you stress in your family?
> Has your thinking ever caused you problems at work?
> Does your thinking seem out of control?
> Is your thinking getting in the way of your happiness?

We answered yes to all the questions. The young woman was frustrated
in her attempt to draw my attention to my addiction to alcohol, but she
was unwittingly successful, pointing out the deeper addiction.

Seven years from the awakening that freed me from addiction to alcohol,
I experienced the awakening that freed my addiction to thinking.

It wasn't the end of thought. Thoughts come and go, but I'm free
to embrace that which does not come and go. In this freedom,
thought is unattached, cut loose, made free.

This is the way of my life in making poems, but being with Papaji
opened the recognition of the source even more clearly. In his
unmindedness; brilliant, wise, loving and joyful, I was embraced.

Being sober doesn't free anyone from addiction. Freedom
is not in the substance. Freedom is in the freedom.

Miracles in Prison

Occasionally, rarely, and reluctantly, Papaji told stories of his life. The telling was passionate and poignant, as if he was amazed at the simple miracle of life itself.

Still, some stories were miraculous, but I wasn't taken with the miraculous lives of saints. The truth is true in all beings, it doesn't belong only to the great ones.

The miraculous isn't needed to validate the truth, but it does seem useful in getting people to listen to the truth-tellers. I would prefer this not to be so.

The stories that were told about Papaji, and the ones he told of his own life that inspired me, were the ones that would be true for anyone and everyone.

When I came to see Papaji, I didn't know any stories of his life. I knew that people came to be with him in a house, and that he asked no money.

He asked nothing, demanded nothing, offered nothing, no secrets were withheld for the few, no one was elevated in his company.

He asked people why they were still in sat-sang, after they'd been told that the truth is always present, here, and everywhere.

The stories and miracles in his life were good stories, but I wanted the day to be here when the middleman was gone in the love of God and Mankind, of Being and Being Itself, of One and Oneness, of the Self and Eternity.

Still, miracles occur, and I wasn't unfamiliar with them. In my consciousness, everything is miraculous, and miracles don't indicate that the miraculous is anything but commonplace.

It seems that miracles occur at the moment of readiness, that the absence of miracles is an indication that readiness is obscured by will and fear.

In willfulness and fearfulness, there's no room to become conscious of the natural reality. From inside willfulness and fearfulness, the natural reality is called miraculous.

In awareness, I have no bone to pick with anyone. Will and fear are symptoms of the life of separation in which most people live, in the separation from what's called God, in separation from the true self, in separation from the innate and natural truth of all beings, from love itself, from peace and joy.

Separation is the umbrella under which human struggle exists, in all its tragedy and glory.

In awareness, the eternal tends toward itself.
Never leaving itself, the truth remains true to itself.

Miracles are indications of the eternal,
in the midst of the willful, in the midst of fearful denial, in the midst of separation, even as the illusion of separation dominates the world.

This apparent world of separation is nearly all that is, until one sees clearly, until one sees that seeing separation is an error of one's sight.

In the human mind, the habit of seeing everything as a model of separation is an error of human thought.

It's a paranoid delusion,that sells souvenirs, feeds on itself, and supplies the world with engagement, entertainment and self-justification.

Most of those who speak of God, truth, the eternal oneness, are in cahoots with separation, because then they can offer hope for the antidote they can then promote.

They hold out the possibility of freedom from a jail that only exists in temporal reality, that only exists because everyone believes it exists.

The jailers are joined by the those who promise parole, escape, and pardon. Miracles are the stories told, in prison, of the lives of those who are not living in prison.

Until it's realized that no prison exists, these tortures, confinements, freedoms and flights from prison, will be in vogue, and in history, sociology, literature, art, religion, emotion, and thought.

Papaji spoke of there being no prison, to a room full
of those who believed in the concepts of free and not free.

He said that you are neither free, nor not free. You are.
This is the truth. You are. Even the question of freedom
and prison misses the point. But, sometimes, he told stories
of freedom. I imagine those stories appealed to the least free.

And he told the truth. The unvarnished truth rings true
in the ears of those closest to it, andwhat's true
becomes truth in the hearts of the ready.

Ramana was assaulted by followers who
wanted to know what they must do to be free.

"Your freedom is already within you," Ramana said.
"Yes," they say, "but what must we do to be free? What
foods should we eat? What prayers should we say?"

"Say this," Ramana said and stopped
speaking for twenty years.

That's a story, a little miracle I just invented out of the possible
and the probable. It's true, but only if you forget the story.

I Can't Help You, Goodbye!

When I was early into AA, I heard the story of its beginnings, and it became my sense of the essential reality of all spiritual transformation.

In the 1930s, a man named Roland, the drunkard son of a wealthy family from Vermont, was sent to the most famous, best respected psychiatrist in the world, Carl Jung, in Zurich, Switzerland, where he treated Roland for a year, and then Jung admited defeat.

"I've made a mistake with you," he said, "I thought I could help you, but I can't. You're addicted to alcohol, and I can't help you."
Roland was stunned. "What can I do?" he asked.
Jung told Roland he had few choices.

"You can hire someone to watch you 24 hours a day, but you'll probably figure a way to drink, anyway, or you can have yourself committed to a sanitarium and remain there for the rest of your life. Or you will drink and die. Or you will drink and suffer."

That was not good news for Roland.
"Isn't there anything I can do?" he asked.

"Once in a while," Jung said, "very rarely, someone like you will have a spontaneous spiritual experience and lose the desire to drink."

"How can I get that?" Roland said, his spirits lifted.
"Should I go to church? Would that help?"

"It might. It might not. There's no way of knowing." And then, having told Roland that his only cure was a spontaneous spiritual experience, he said good-bye, and Roland left.

Roland sailed back to the United States, and when he got off the boat, he was sober. When he got home to Vermont, he was sober. His parents were amazed and grateful.

He visited a friend in jail. The friend, an inveterate drunk, got sober. The friend visited another friend a stock broker in New York City, another incorrigible drunk.

That man, Bill Wilson, got sober, having a white-light spiritual experience in his hospital room. Bill W. decides to tell his story to other alcoholics and thus, AA was born. Roland was ready, Ebbe was ready, Bill was ready.

To me, the crux of this story is the moment when Jung told Roland what he needed and then said good-bye. Jung could not and did not provide the awakening, or even any tools for it to occur.

Nothing. Only the possibility. He told Roland that his freedom from addiction was in his spirit, and only he could access it.

Papaji told the story of Prince Sidhartha, who, after first witnessing the pain and misery in the world, beyond his sheltered life, left his luxurious life, and after six years of diligent spiritual practices as an ascetic, was at a loss to be free. Then, one day, he fell asleep under a tree, exhausted.

"Then," Papaji said, "something happened.
He paused, smiling, "And nobody knows what."

When Sidhartha awakened, he was transformed.
His awakening had occurred, and the Buddha was born.

Papaji went on to say that the true story of Buddha's awakening isn't told, because you can't make a religion out of that.

It occurred. There was nothing to build a social system on.
But Buddha did that, anyway. He went back to his ascetic friends and, on their demands, laid out a path for awakening, a path that didn't explain the spontaneity of his own awakening, even if it made for a good life.

When one is ready, awakening occurs.
It happens, and nobody knows what.

One of the common elements in these stories is that both men were at a loss, they had nowhere else to turn, their best efforts had gained them nothing, and their readiness was no longer obscured by their attachments.

Readiness is all, and transformation is within.
There's nothing to do and no one to do it. One must do it, in oneself. One must be it, in oneself.

When I was a young poet in San Francisco, during a time of peace and quiet, during a time of stress and upheaval, I dreamed, and in the dream, I was sitting at a table in a white room. Across the room was a white-bearded old man, sitting with some others, dressed in white.

The old man, who looked like an old wise man, gestured toward me, saying, “Can’t anyone see that man is in distress?”

It came as a surprise to me. I didn’t think it was true, or at least I didn't think it was so obviously true.

The old man said to me, “You do your best work when you’re exhausted,” and for many years, I tried to decipher the dream.

I tried to become exhausted. At the end of my drinking, exhausted and empty, I experienced an awakening that filled my being with light and relieved me of the obsession.

Roland and Sidhartha were exhausted and in distress, in different ways, but fundamentally the same. Both were seeking relief from a world of pain and suffering.

Both were disinclined to believe in the ways of the world, their transformation occurred when they least expected it, transformation did not come out of their effort or expectation.

Religion says, “Be free or go to Hell.” AA says, “Be free or go back to Hell.” Late-stage alcoholics don’t need much convincing.

This is a key to readiness. It is to become exhausted with effort, to become exhausted in the ways of the world, but still, there is no formula, no program, no way, for transformation to occur.

Sometimes, it occurs in the least likely. It seems that regardless of the apparent randomness of readiness, ‘to be ready to be ready’ is better than being stuck in unreadiness.

Roland was told to be ready, after a year of effort.
Sidhartha was ready, after six years of effort.

The thrill in the pit of one’s stomach is with the moment that has no precedent, in the realization that nothing can be done to enter this moment. t’s not so easy to get to this nothing doing. Everything else conspires against it.

In AA, it’s said that someone can be too smart for God.
As long as the mind is addicted to thought, the presence of being is called by a name and remains unrecognized and unrecognizable.
The truth is unrecognizable in any form whatsoever.

The Eye of the Tiger

Suryo came to Lucknow the day after my birthday. We moved
into a large suite on the second floor of the Avadh Lodge.
A large room was divided into two rooms by a false wall.

In the front room, I hung the paintings from my time in Pune.
We made the rooms more homey and settled in.

She asked herself why she came to sit at the feet of "another" master.
She had her own master, and she was happy with that relationship.

Even so, she found it inspirational, listening to Gangaji
on the lawn of the Carlton. Here was an American woman,
a contemporary, who spoke the truth.

She was glad she'd come. It was at that time
I wrote the two-page letter that Papaji read.

I was sitting near the back when Papaji said, "This is a long letter,
but I want to read it all, so I will end sat-sang with this letter."

I was stunned to hear my letter read. He asked where Abhaya was.
I raised my hand, and he told me to be careful. He said that after
Buddha was awakened, he was visited, in his dreams, by dancing girls.

"You are vulnerable right now. You will be tempted. Be watchful."
I nodded, without any idea what he was warning. He invited me
to come up, to sit with him. As I sat beside him on the podium,
he introduced me to Gangaji, who was sitting at his feet.

"I want to speak with you," Papaji said, and I said, "I want to
speak with you." I saw how I had, once again, acted as an equal.

"Can you come to my house?" he asked. I said yes.
He turned to a man at his side and said, "Write down
the name of the hotel he is staying at."

That afternoon, after sat-sang, when Suryo and I returned to the hotel,
there were others moving into our room. The manager politely explained
that I was told the room was only available until that day. I remembered
his warning and remembered thinking there was time to solve the problem.

Now, there was no time. The new renters were Papaji people
who'd been away from Lucknow. Our room was their room.

On that day of amazement, I was still amazed. I stood in the
hotel lobby, and I watched my own dismay and confusion.

I watched my own thinking try to come to terms with the abrupt
change in circumstances from beloved invitee to homeless rejectee.

I was unable to make sense of anything. All our belongings
were packed and loaded onto a bicycle rickshaw for the
short trip to the Carlton, in hopes of finding new quarters.

Space was found, not in the main building,
but in a house behind it, on the hotel grounds.

It was a three room apartment, half a duplex,
nicer than our room at the Avadh Lodge.

Days later, Suryo and I went to Papaji's house for my
meeting with him. Later, I wasn't sure how it was that she
accompanied me, but I was always happy to be in her company.
I had no sense of her being an intrusion. As it turns out, a journalist
had been with Papaji, and that kept him from getting his usual nap.

It was early afternoon. We joined him at his dining room table.
There was a cake on the table. Two other men were present.

One was Danish, the other German. One had brought fruit
for Papaji and offered him a professional massage.

Papaji didn't respond to the gifts and the offers,
but he treated the men with courtesy and respect.

One man complained about the student of Papaji's,
teaching all over the world and speaking ill of his teacher.

Papaji didn't say anything in response. Eventually,
the two men left, and he turned to me.

During the chatting and the cake eating, he had seemed
like a loving grandfather, talking casually, eating bits of cake
and drinking tea. Then, he turned to me, sitting as close as
two can sit. His eyes were the milky eyes of an old man.

"Did you do what I asked you to do?" he asked me. I looked
into his eyes and didn't say anything. No words came to me.

“I asked you to go deeper,” he said. I had no answer. “Did you go deeper?” I had no answer. I hadn’t heard his words as instructions.

Then his eyes changed. The milky eyes of an old man changed, and I saw something like broken pieces of glass, jewels, amber shards, no longer an old man’s eyes.

“He showed you the eyes of the tiger,” Gangaji said, later. I thought it was true, in some sense. His eyes were crystalline.

We continued to speak. “What is the secret?” Papaji asked. “Do you know the secret?” he asked.

“There is no secret,” I said, without thinking. Nothing I said came from any previous thought. The words seemed to occur in my voice.

“You’re a writer,” he said, “From now on, no more barriers. From now on, speak from the source. Tonight, in your hotel room, I want you to write something and give it to me, tomorrow. Can you do that?” “Yes,” I said, and the answer had no thought to it.

Then, everything changed, again. Papaji, once again, became a congenial old man, a grandfather, a neighbor, an old friend.

Suryo wanted him to pay attention to her in the way that her father never had. She wanted to be recognized. She wanted to be seen. Papaji laughed and told her she had the energy of only six people in the world.

He stood, as he spoke. He stood behind me. He put his hands on my shoulders. “Sometimes," he told Suryo, "One, or two, or three young men, like this man, come to see me, and I am very happy to see them.”

When we left the house, I was also very happy. I walked in a state of mindlessness, like dreamless sleep, awake, in what’s called happiness or bliss, but it was a current of being that runs beneath the meaning of words, neither emotional nor mental.

In the mind, it’s called peace, and in the emotional heart, it’s called joy. It is the state in this life when what is, simply is, without thought or feeling.

Suryo, on the other hand, was angry. Later, I couldn’t remember what she was angry about. She told Papaji about her father, and perhaps that pain is what she was carrying. By the time we reached the main road, the argument was gone.

The Ways of Respect

One night, on Ashok Marg, walking back toward our room
at the Carlton, we saw something ahead. The city streets were
dimly lit and often pitch dark. Bulbs burned here and there,
a lighted sign, a yard light, an open doorway.

There was little traffic at night, with bicycle rickshaws
appearing and disappearing in the shadows. Something
loomed on the wide, hard-packed dirt street.

Almost suddenly, out of the pitch, came an elephant,
walking toward us. It was fifteen feet high and seemed thirty.
A mahout was riding the elephant like a cowboy on a horse.

We stepped to the side of the road as the great, gray beast
moved past, almost silently, like a ship at sea, an apparition,
an elephant on the street.

Another night, the street behind the Carlton was like a carnival.
It was a wedding. The bride and groom and wedding guests
seemed to be as brightly lit and decorated as the wedding scene.

There was a lot of good-natured drinking and bright colors,
as the celebration continued past midnight.

One afternoon, the hotel sent a man to our rooms to clean.
He had no dust-pan for his broom. He swept the rooms with a
broom of wispy fronds, until there was a pile in one corner of the
front room. He lifted the refuse, the dirt and dust, with his hands.

His skill was wonderful to see. He was graceful and precise.
He cleaned the floor with his fingers and disappeared with a bow.

Another day, there was a message from a young woman who wanted
to speak with me. An Indian girl of sixteen, she came to pay her respects.
She'd seen me at sat-sang, and she spoke in a manner I tried to deflect.

I wondered why she had sought me out. She was calm, clear,
and determined, courteous and deferential. I spoke to her at a table
on the lawn of the Carlton. The honor she showed me was unfamiliar
and mildly disconcerting.

Another day, I got a message that a young man wanted to speak with me.
A boy of seventeen, a painter, brought some drawings for me to appraise.

He admired the paintings I had hanging on the walls. I praised his paintings.
“Oh, no, I am not a painter,” the boy said, “you are a painter.”

These incidents of honor in a foreign country were touching. I was used to being appreciated for my work, but in India,it seemed to be praise for me as an artist, as a being, by nature. It seemed not to be praise for what I had done, as much as it was praise for who I was. That kind of praise is outside of pride. No credit can be taken for being as one is.

Even the attention of Papaji didn’t come as praise for me but for one who was another incidence of being itself. To flatter is to seek some advantage. To praise is to tell the truth.

In the mind of the ego, thaty self-analyzer and self-appraiser, the proud and vulnerable man would like to be flattered and be given advantage.

The being, the true self, the center of the heart flares in the heat of self-recognition, so that lesser considerations are consumed. The personal flickerings of the self are like candlelight to the sun.

It was the habit of my mind to expect bad to follow good, for shadow to follow a man who walks in sunlight, but when the man is absent from his form, there’s nothing to block the light, nothing to make a shadow from.

One day, I realized my tourist visa was about to expire. It became necessary to take the visa to the government offices on Ashok Marg and have it renewed.

When I appeared at the building, a half-finished modern high-rise, the electricity has failed, and water, from somewhere, had flooded the building, running the halls, the stairs, from floor to floor, in near darkness, at the height of the day.

The office, on the third floor, was two rooms piled from floor to ceiling with papers. The man in charge, apparently a lawyer, didn’t seem to want to do anything about my application.

He laughed and joked from behind his paper-strewn desk. He was already with a visitor, a man from Africa. I began to think a bribe might be necessary to speed things along, or to get them accomplished at all.

The lawyer seemed to say that tomorrow would be a good day to work, or the next day.

I didn’t know how to offer a bribe or how to guess at its amount. The lawyer told stories in Hindi and laughed. He looked at me and laughed. He looked at the African and laughed.

After twenty minutes of inexplicable delay and indecision, he picked up my passport and stamped it. He handed it to me and he laughed. I paid the man the amount I was originally led to believe was the correct fee.

I thanked the lawyer and shook hands with him.I shook hands with the African and re-entered the flooded labyrinth. I walked down the stairs and out into the sunny street.

This Masquerade Ball

Papaji spoke from the source. He was approached
by people who spoke from their temporal reality.

The temporal is a stage language, invented from the reality
of the stage. The problems proposed and solved on stage
are stage problems.

Occasionally, some actors allude to the fact of their
illusion, and some wonder what life is like off-stage.

Papaji spoke in his natural tongue, in the language
of his native land,the same language and the same
land as everyone else's.

People came to him who had forgotten or barely
remembered their native tongue. They wanted him
to translate his language into the familiar jargon of their
homelessness. He responded by speaking from the heart.

He was awake, in the middle of the dream that others were
having. He spoke in the same language as everyone else,
from the perspective of what's always true, while those
who came to him spoke from what's only true, sometimes.

There's an aching in "sometimes" to be "always."
There's a gravity in "always" that draws "sometimes" to it.

He didn't have to convince anyone that what he said was true.
The difficulty came in its apparent incomprehensibility.

The Self lives in the self-recognized truth. Self doesn't have
a problem. Self is not lost and confused, is not in denial, is not
practicing a delusion. Delusion is the work of ego and personality.

In sat-sang, there's a peace and joy celebrated in self. Emotions,
thoughts and actions are but a dance of the self, also called soul.

When people speak to each other, it's a way for souls to be
in communion, to celebrate, for being to speak to being.

Most speech, thought, feeling, and action are caught up
in themselves and don't recognize the constant love-fest
of souls and soul, but it occurs, nonetheless.

As people of similar attachments are drawn to each other,
even with their eyes closed and their backs turned, the reality
of soul is the undercurrent, or as Papaji said, the substratum.

I fell in love with Papaji. It was love
recognizing love, speaking in its native tongue.

Because Papaji didn't masquerade as a personality,
his love could be seen for what it was.

Because he didn't return the infatuation of devotees,
it was difficult for their love to continue on that level.

Someone said, "Papaji, I love you!"
He answered, "Yes. You are love itself."

It's confusing to a mind conditioned to think of love as a word
spoken between subject and object, between me and you.

Papaji simply saw and told the truth
about love, the common reality.

The identification that occurs in the world
is in the mind that divides up the indivisible.

The mind of man is clever. The mind
is a creative marketer of believable illusions.

The ability to believe illusions is one of the mind's
greatest talents. Papaji wasn't buying any of it.

A man came to him, one day, and complained, "Papaji,
I'm angry all the time. I can't get rid of my anger. I can't seem
to let go of it. I don't know what to do. What should I do?"

Papaji, a former military man and mining engineer,
a big man, plunged a fist into the man's belly.

The man was bent from the blow, he staggered, righted
himself, and his eyes lit up. The anger had disappeared.
"Thank you, Papaji, thank you." He was all smiles.

In sat-sang, one day, he said everyone was a lion who
believed he was a sheep. "If you are a lion, you must
roar like a lion. Roar!" he said to one man.

The man didn't know what to do. "Roar!" Papaji said,
"Roar, for all of us to hear that you are a lion."

"Rrrrr," the man said, weakly. "No," Papaji said, "Don't squeak
like a mouse. You are a lion. Roar like the lion you are."

"Rrrrrr!" the man said, louder, like an imitation of a shout.
"Roar!" Papaji said. "Rrrrrrrrr," the man roared,
like a lion cub. Papaji laughed.

I knew how to roar. I wanted to roar. I asked myself,
"If I know I'm a lion, and I know how to roar, if roaring
is our native language, should I rip my mask off
at this Masquerade Ball?"

The Flickering Light on the Trees

When I hugged Papaji in sat-sang, my face was buried
in his neck. I remembered the warm, soft, wrinkled skin
of my grandmother, an old woman I lifted from her bed
to her chair, from her chair to her bed.

She was a gentle woman I loved. It was
a memory of love in a moment of love.

Papaji spoke about the true nature of memory.
He said memory acts like a computer that scans
the experiences of a life-time to match whatever
is happening in the present moment.

The mind wants to find a similar instance of experience,
so it will know what to do, so it will know how to handle
the situation, so it will be in control and protected.

In most of my more profound experience with Papaji,
few memories can be recalled. Nothing matches
the experience of no experience.

But, in this instance, there was a difference.
When I was embraced by him, there was the sense
of a meeting between men, between generations,
between a man and all men.

I felt embraced by a father, a grandfather, an elder, a wise
man, wisdom itself, as I was embracing all those things.
My memory could find only the image of my
grandmother, and I recalled it, to my happiness.

Memory is not a call to return to the past, but for the past
to be as useful as it can be in teaching the present.

In the moment of awareness, there is no past to compare it with,
no instruction to guide it and no association to warn it about.

This is the terror and freedom of the moment of self-recognition.
There is no self to be recognized. There is no other within the all.

The all can’t be recalled in snippets. It has no memory bank
of incidents, episodes, events, or circumstances.

A man and woman meet and fall in love by a tree, by a boat,
by water, in sunlight, at night, in winter, in spring, in a town,
in the country, on a corner, at a party, under a lamp, at school,
and whether the love affair is successful or not, these images
become the icons of that love, when they have nothing to do
with its occurrence and recognition.

Papaji meant nothing to the love I felt surging in the heart.
I meant nothing to the love he revealed, blazing in the heart.

These catalysts of love are only catalysts of it being recognized.
If love appears in the heart, and the occasion for it passes,
where does love go? Does love come and go? Papaji spoke
in the language of love that doesn't come and go.

Human language is devoted to the love that rarely comes
and almost always goes. Even more, it's devoted to the
absence of love and the consequences of that.

Papaji often employed the language of romantic love
to demonstrate how ludicrous it is, "Oh, pain, please don't
leave me. You are all I think about. You are my whole life.
I love you more than anything. You are the most beautiful.
Oh sweet, beautiful pain, please stay with me always."

Romantic love, the loves of desire, all the loves of the mind
and the body, are committed to attachments, no matter how
great the pain, no matter how impossible the achievements.

In the temporal world, heartbreak and the pain of loss
are proof of love. When love is the inherent nature
of the heart, what can be broken?

Attachments are made and broken in the mind.
Emotions of the mind are not the love of the heart.

He said some desire was good. If one has a burning
desire to be free, nothing else matters as much.

The need to let go of all attachments, the ability to tell
what's real from what's not real, even the need to clean
one's house, all are subordinate to a burning desire
to be free. The sun burns at night, obscured only
as the earth turns to its other side.

In the heart of the heart, the center of one's being, the sun of life, burns. The sun is the burning desire that seeks itself.

Within the heart of every being is the burning desire to be what it already is, the Sun of Being Itself.

As Papaji spoke in the steady roar of sunlight, those who basked in this light were reminded of the roar within, the fire, the sun of the heart of all being.

His was an open invitation to recognize the source. For most who leave this basking in the sun, the glow fades, and the light would be attributed to Papaji.

Many wished to return to sat-sang. For some, when they were gone from Papaji, and when Papaji was gone from this life, they claim to have sat in his sun, and the memories of Lucknow are held tight.

The sun burns hot and the skin grows cool,
searching somewhere else for what's within.

Papaji seemed to say, "I am in the fire. I am the fire. You are in this fire. You are the fire. You are here."

Some came, and some were content to count the logs and stare at the flickering light on the trees.

Between Nano-Seconds

For the first month of my two months in Lucknow,
Suryo remained in Pune, and I was alone.

In the second month, she came, and we were together.
The aloneness of the first month was sweet.

Every step I took was within the awareness of the self.
A toothache was the only demand that obscured my awareness.

When she came, she wasn't an attachment that demanded
attention. She was content to be in her own consciousness.

One day, she sat with Papaji in sat-sang,
in attention to the moment between thoughts.

Papaji employed a way of questioning
to draw the mind to self-recognition.

He asked that one let go of the last thought
and not pick up the next thought.

He said to take the smallest amount of time, a half
of a half of a half of a second, a nano-second, half a
nano-second, to come into the moment between moments.

It was a mechanical, mental, scientific exercise,
within a pool of acceptance, to direct the mind
away from its activities and into the heart of itself.

Many of those who came to Papaji were meditators
who had practiced, for many years, honing the attention
of their consciousness.

Osho spoke to many about the state of "no-mind."
Many were at ease calling themselves the watcher.

Suryo asked, rhetorically, "Who's watching the watcher?"
Papaji tried to direct the watcher to look within him or herself.

In front of him, Suryo wasn't able to come to the moment
of her self-realization. Later, she told me all that occurred
was a feeling of blackness in her spirit.

The opening to one's essential self, to the heart of the heart,
is obscured by the attachments of the emotional and mental body.

An intense burning desire, from either side of that doorway, may burn
away the attachments of a lifetime, of many lifetimes, but it seems rare.

That intense burning desire is the unlikely path of a saint. For most,
some effort must occur to keep the opening clear, or it's like a shutter,
that blinks open to give brief glimpses of truth, snapshots of heaven,
occasional pictures of freedom.

Everyone has glimpses of the innate truth, in moments of love,
in moments of beauty, in times of shock, times of great exertion,
when the life of the mind and body are momentarily transcended.

But attachments soon crowd the doorway, and the sight of
the truth is defined by the details of remembered circumstances.

No circumstance is responsible for the reality that remains
constant beyond this metaphorical doorway, but the surrounding
circumstance becomes the stuff that blocks it.

I saw, among the seekers in Pune and Lucknow,
as I did in my own life, a tendency to believe one can
leap past the attachments of a lifetime in a glorious instance
of enlightenment, and be free to live an ecstatic, spiritual life.

As long as Suryo was in the ashram in Pune, her attachments
seemed to be lifted. In Lucknow, in the desire to be free, while
being with Papaji, her most tenacious attachments were exposed.

She saw, in front of the entrance to her self, a darkness.
She couldnot step freely through it. After ten years with Osho,
after a lifetime in reaction to hurt and separation, after the dedication
of her heart and her intelligence, she exposed, at the entrance to her self,
the lingering ghost of its denial.

For a day, she sat, in black, in mourning, grief, pain, anger, and sorrow.
By the next day, the dark cloud had lifted, but even years later, she said
she was bound to this world, to live in its three dimensions, even as
she continued to practice the healing of her heart and body, and,
professionally, the healing of the hearts and bodies of others.

I wanted to be with her in the consciousness
of identical awareness, but it didn't occur.

Outside sat-sang, toward the end of our stay in Lucknow,
I stood with her, and Papaji seemed to give his blessing.

He grinned, “She’s good for you. Her fighting is good for you.”
At the time, I didn’t know how to absorb such information.

She and I were together in India, but I was shown, in every way
possible, that the source of love is not to be found in the other.
Papaji showed me he wasn’t the source of love, either.

When I was a young poet, a friend told me I was a poet
of love lost, a poet of the broken heart, a poet of the heart.

Over and over again, I’ve been forced to enter the loss of love,
to discover the love that is never lost, and, therefore, never found.
I stopped looking, in order to see what **is**.

When I came to India, I was not looking. I didn’t come
to Lucknow as a seeker. I said, “I’m in India. This man
called Papaji is in Lucknow. I'll go see this man.”

Commotion in the Street

On the train to Lucknow, in my room at the Avadh Lodge, walking in the morning mist toward Ashok Marg, watching the launderers in the Gompti River dipping, lifting, and slamming their washing against the worn rocks, standing at the junction waiting for a jitney, seeing the faces on the jitney, at the storefronts, at the shacks of small businesses, watching the cattle that cross the road, standing beside the tables covered with Indian dishes in the houses where lunch was sold, sitting in the yard of the lunch house, chatting with Dipti, Moumin, and Udyana.

One day, there was a commotion in the street. A man was entertaining a gathering crowd, with a trained monkey on a leash.

The man spoke harshly to get the monkey to do what he wanted. The Westerners were unhappy with his abuse.

The man was run off by the owner of the lunch house. I wasn't pleased by the harshness of the householder, who, in every way, tried to please the Papaji people.

I saw the vultures circle in the air above a cow's carcass, on the tributary to the Gompti, that ran in a long cut near Papaji's house in Indra Nagar.

I walked in the arboretum, looking at the variety of trees, flowers, and the ruins of an ancient wall. I walked among the rows of flowers, in the bower, by the concert shell. I walked on back roads, off the commercial streets, past children playing by the ditch, beside the road, running with human and animal waste, by the small, roadside shrines to Ganesh, by the poor sleeping against walls, by the shops packed tight in the narrow alleys, by the swaybacked horse, pulling a cart.

I was in a time of love. I loved the places and the people. I loved the many happinesses of life.

I lived in a body, in a time, and in a place of such overwhelming presence, only surrender could embrace it.

In surrender, I found myself to be whole. It was the temptation of the mind to want ot account for this unlimited love.

I walked back and forth between this and that, and nothing could explain this loveless love, greater than any love.

No one, nothing, intervened to claim it. There was nothing in me
to explain its presence. I was neither its giver nor its receiver.

The senses in the body, in the mind, in thought and in feeling,
are chronicled to explain the presence of this presence
and the way of its occurrence.

Surrender is the only word I could find to suit the way of it,
but who is it that surrenders? Who is it that surrenders?

Or is this another language-come-lately? All thought
is after-thought to this being and its awareness.

In this being here, a moment occurs in which surrender
is given and received, in such a way that nothing happens,
and the awareness of everything is transformed from
limited to whole. How does it happen? It happens.

I concluded that "thank you" was the only prayer, but who was it
that prayed? Who thanks, and who is thanked? The words in my mouth
come from a source not of my direction or control. Even the words
of control are beyond control. Who controls the controller?

I sat in a chair, and I noticed that no one was sitting in the chair
where I sat. The appearance of the visual, the feel of the physical,
are unchanged by recognition. I wasn't looking with visual eyes,
but with the eyes that see only what's always true.

In between moments of thought, in between molecules,
is the presence where nothing seems to be. In the surrender
that is the presence of being, with no thought of self,
even the unthought self is embraced.

In the boundless pool of self, where no pool is, whatever occurs,
where nothing occurs, in all its wonder and beauty, where such
names appear like name tags for parts of eternity, for parts of air,
for parts of love, we are.

No Longer Anonymous

And it all came crashing down. And up. And out. And in.
After I was at Papaji's house, after I wrote what he asked for,
after I handed it to him, the next morning.

I was lounging in sat-sang with my friends, drifting on a sea of love,
basking in acceptance, inside, outside, no side, sitting at the back,
listening and looking at nothing, seeing the edges of the self become
edgeless, knowing without questioning, knowing without knowledge.

I felt at peace, letting peace become the feeling in the body
and mind. It's not that I felt peaceful, it's that peace wasn't
overlayed or undercut by other feelings.

When the feelings that obscure innate peace
are not held, peace is the constant.

The mind says, "I am peaceful," but the thought is laughable,
as the wave which discovers and proudly proclaims, "I am ocean."
Yes, it's true, but as soon as "I" is spoken, the truth is misrepresented.

The truth has no separation in it to become I and not-I. The ocean
has no separation to call itself wave. The wave has no separation
to call itself ocean.

The tiger in the zoo is called 'Tiger.' The tiger that breaks free
is called 'wild tiger.' The tiger in the jungle has no name. I had
told Papaji I thought my name should be Noname, not Abhaya.

I heard Papaji speaking to a woman. She was struggling
to stop struggling. He worked with her, in his workless way,
by continuing to be nothing other that he was. She wasn't
ready, but she was willing.

"Here, perhaps, this will help you," Papaji said, "I want to read
something to you. This is what I have been trying to say. I don't know
who wrote this. I found it on my bed, this morning. It was written by
Anonymous. Whoever wrote this, please come see me, after sat-sang."

I heard familiar words. I was happy to hear my words
read by the Master. It seemed curious to hear him say that
what he read was written by Anonymous, that he found it
on his bed. It wasn't true.

I thought nothing of it. I thought of going to see him after sat-sang.
The words were present and far away. They were words given to
the woman. He read them, and then he continued to speak.
Then, he was quiet. It was quiet in sat-sang.

Suddenly, without premeditation, I stood up, in the rows,
in the back, in sat-sang, in the crowded room, among two hundred.

"Papaji!" I said, insistently.
"Yes," said Papaji, "Who is speaking?"

"I'm not Anonymous," I said, "I wrote what you read.
You asked me to write it. It has my name on it."

The words came out of me, even as I listened to them come.
Even as I said those words, it seemed strange to me. I'd been
in AA for seven years, where being anonymous was the accepted way.
I was standing and declaring something contrary to the words of the
Master, contrary to my experience, thought, or expectation.

"What is your name?" Papaji said, in a voice,
both open and certain. "Abhaya," I said.

"Come here," he said, and I began to make my way across the rows
of sitting people, finding a path forward, watching for feet and hands,
putting my hands on people's shoulders.

As I made my way to the front, he continued to ask questions,
as if he didn't know who I was or what I was saying.

"Who are you? What is your name?
Where are you from? What country? What city?"

I answered his questions, confused, perplexed. He responded
to each answer. "Lucky country, lucky city, lucky man," he said,
in a pleasant, disinterested voice. "Here are all your friends,"
he said, motioning to the group.

I passed the row where Suryo sat, and I looked at her, with a shrug
of happy confusion, as if to say, "I don't know what's happening."

Then, when I was in front of him, he said, pointedly,
"Do you think you can do my job better than I can?"

It was an astounding question I didn't know how answer.
"No," I said, "I can only point to the same moon."

I sat in front of him and look up at him. He looked stern
and serious. "I need a sign from you," he said, "I need
you to give me some kind of sign."

I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to say.
I had no thought, no idea, no understanding. I namasted.
I put my hands together, closed my eyes, and bowed my head.

"This is a good sign," he said. He put his hand on top of my head,
and I looked up. He was grinning. He reached for his glasses. I reached
for mine. Both pairs had been put aside on the edge of the podium.

He picked up my glasses and put them on his face. I picked up his
glasses. He discovered the error, and he and I exchanged glasses.

"You can go back to your seat, now," he said. I got up from kneeling,
and I made my way back. As I passed Suryo, she saw my innocent grin.
She said, later, that in that moment, I look ten years younger.

After sat-sang, I didn't go to see Papaji. I was no longer Anonymous.
For the next two weeks, my last days in sat-sang, I didn't speak.

I thought it must be clear to all that I had been a fool. Apparently,
however, few understood what occurred between him and me. Most
thought it was another lovely moment between Papaji and Abhaya.

"Do you think you can do my job better than I can?"
I tried to be his equal, and I had to admit that I wasn't
his equal in the business of being a Master. Papaji
put me in my place. "All well and good," I thought.

I wrote Gangaji and told her about the day. I said the incident
convinced me I had a spiritual ego that Papaji had led to the
guillotine. "Come here, little one. Whack!"

I was humbled in the exchange with Papaji. On the day
we left sat-sang, I joined with Suryo and all the others who
were leaving that day, in the side-room he had called me to.
Papaji chatted with everyone, asking their names and destinations.
When he turned to me, I could only bow and namaste. I couldn't speak.
Papaji put his hand on my cheek, and laughed the light and warm laugh
of a loved one, a loving one, a Papa.

The Same Moon

In the days that followed my challenge
of Papaji, I felt ashamed, and I felt free.

In time, I wondered about my act of defiance. It was true
that I would not be the same kind of teacher Poonjaji was.

I didn't like the slight-of-hand, the legerdemain that seemed
to accompany the manner of teaching used by many masters.

The truth is not in dominating the student
or in the submission of student to master.

At the same time, I was astounded by his mastery.
He was a flood-gate of the acceptance and embrace
of all that's within being. His wisdom was brilliant,
succinct, powerful, simple, and clear. He told the truth.

His mastery took no advantage over others.
He gave of himself, hour upon hour, without demand.
He refused the trappings common to many other masters.
He took no money, he elicited no obedience.

And yet, at eighty, he was a follower of the traditions of
India. He was a teacher in the ancient practice of the guru.
He wasn't weighted with the pomp and circumstance,
of the ashram and the following, of other masters, but his
mastery was not the same as I imagined it might be.

In the moment when he seemed to act out a deception,
I said no. Maybe, it was a harmless deception, but I said no.

It was true, as he said, that in the heart, the words were
written by anonymous. Perhaps there was no deception.

When I gave him the writing, in the morning, next to his van,
maybe he gave it to someone else who put it on his bed,
without my name on it.

None of this matters. He read my words, and I claimed
to be their author. I imagined myself to be a master.

"Do you think you can do my job better than I can?"
he said. "I can only point to the same moon," I said.

There's no rivalry, no succession, no dominance,
no submission, except, in the moment of meeting,

Poonjaji roared, and I bowed before him.
I tried to judge this one thing that he had done.

I loved and accepted his mastery, except in this one
instance. And even then, there was finally acceptance.

Nothing is Written

How can I speak from the source? How can I write from the source?
If you are reading this, you're the I of this book. I am the author.

I say you are the reader, but as you read, you're not a you, you're an I.
This book becomes the book of the I who reads it. I is the reader.
I is the author of all that comes within the awareness of I.

During the writing of this book, Papaji was no longer in his body.
The title of Papaji's last book was "Nothing Ever Happened."
Everything that truly is, is in this moment.

Suryo and I took the train to Gorakhpur, and we rented a jeep
for the ride through the mountains to Katmandu. There were six
passengers and two drivers.

We rode a harrowing, tightrope highway through the mountains
on what felt like the brink of certain death, to the capital of Nepal.

In the last week in Lucknow, I became frighteningly ill.
I lost thirty pounds in India. Back home in the States, friends
were concerned about my health. The illness seemed appropriate
to the awareness that gained its rightful place. I am not the body,
with or without a toothache, with or without diarrhea.

The challenge laid down by Papaji was, "No more barriers.
From now on, speak from the source." He was the only one
I have ever witnessed who spoke from the source.

Even Papaji lapsed into secondary speak, the language
of human thought, the I/you language of subject/object.

The language of human thought and human discourse
doesn't recognize that it's from the source. It recognizes
that it can be about the source, and then it becomes false.

The first thought, Papaji said, is I. I say, "As soon as I say I,
I begin to misrepresent myself." Is there any way for the truth
to be the one speaking, so human discourse doesn't lose itself
in separation and deception?

Is the illusion of human identity, the illusion that being human
is being separate from the source, so intoxicating that it can never
be forsaken?

Has the experience of this illusion been so fulfilling that there's no need to return to the truth?

All it takes for a lion to roar, is for the lion to open its mouth and be what it is. A language that doesn't admit the truth has filled our minds.

The way to see with lion eyes is to see with the eyes of the true self. The true self is available to everyone, it has never left its home.

Papaji said one could live a blissful life with the gods, without ever coming to this leaping off point.

This is the reality that comes to those who are ready for it to be their reality. Rest under a tree. There is nothing I can do for you. Goodbye.