

“Let perception be free”

(from *Troisième Millénaire* no.85)

*Troisième Millénaire: If we observe our inner state, love is experienced more as something that is lacking rather than as something that shines of its own accord. And so it is with freedom, I'm speaking of inner freedom.*

EB: Usually when we refer to this idea of freedom, we perceive it to be the opposite of conditioning. However, freedom that refers to a conditioned state is not freedom, just as conditioning that refers to freedom is not totally conditioned. Our mind forces us to choose between two possibilities where there are not two. Is there not a third possibility? In the Indian Tradition, the concept of freedom on the personal level is only symbolic. Every object is subject to the laws of manifestation; everything that appears in space and in time is dependent on these laws. As a body or a psyche, we are subject to the same conditioning as any other object that appears in space and time. On this level there is no individual freedom. Freedom is a symbol that pertains exclusively to the unmanifest. The question must open out into a third possibility, the abandonment of all mental activity. Any conceptual answer would be the equivalent of trying to contain the sea in a glass of water. The answer to such false questions as “is there freedom or conditioning?” or “how long ago did the sterile woman’s son get married?” can only be revealed in the space that is free of thought. Since that which we are is not an object, the whole discussion of freedom and conditioning can only refer to the mundane world. From a traditional point of view, no one can be free or conditioned. In pure listening, free of any expectation, intention or desire for change, conditioning is revealed to be a reflection of freedom, an expression of autonomy.

*Troisième Millénaire: We observe our conditioning from that which is not conditioned. Can this observing be the object of the observing?*

EB: As long as something is observed, there is conditioning. An object that is observed cannot be dissociated from a subject who observes, the observer. The subject cannot be independent of the object. In yoga, in attempting to observe an object, one is not focused on pure observation of the perception, which does not exist, but on diverting the attention from what is observed to the observing itself. For both practical and pedagogical purposes, first something has to be observed, but since the focus is no longer on what is observed, the object will be perceived free of psychological contamination. When the focus is not goal-oriented, it expands naturally. All things expressed inevitably have to die. Seeing from the point of view of the subject cannot exist without an object. When the perceived object dissolves, in that instant, the observer- subject disappears also. Once the subject and object disappear, it is the observing that reigns supreme. Nothing is observed and no one observes. Listening to the body is thus a pretext for familiarising ourselves with allowing perceptions to come to life and die away. Yoga is one of the arts that has arisen from this non-conceptual fore-feeling of freedom. Like all art forms, its practice centres on observing body and psychic conditioning. This approach is often mistakenly perceived as being focused on the body. The heart of yoga is not the body but the listening. One listens to the body in the same way that in Ikebana, one observes the arrangement of the flowers. Traditional art is free of any fantasy about reaching a goal, and action is nothing but a pretext. In yoga too, perceiving the body is merely an opportunity for us to sense our freedom. We could say that focusing on feeling the body is highly practical because it is always available to us, ever within our reach.

*Troisième Millénaire: It is also the most stable. Thought, for instance, fluctuates constantly....*

EB: We will very quickly notice that finding something to be pleasant or disagreeable, hot or cold is no more than a perception. I can feel the tension in a certain part of the body without being tense. Tension, or its absence, appears within me. However, listening to thought is not so instructive. In the perceptual approach to life, thoughts become fewer and fewer and in the end there remains nothing to think about. What we call the body is purely a creation of our imagination; it only exists when we think about it. From a pedagogical point of view, this apparent presence would traditionally be observed from the moment it appears and would be left to play itself out right up until it is finally reabsorbed.

*Troisième Millénaire: When we listen to the body, we become sensitive to the body...*

EB: Our sense of our physical body is determined by emotional repercussions. When we think about our bodies, in actual fact what we feel is a resistance that has built up over time dependent on life circumstances. On awakening in the morning, we don't feel our body but this resistance. We feel the fear of being nothing. We must realise that our body, our partner, our trade, our religion as well as all the convictions and cultural or physiological tendencies are created by fear, as an attempt to avoid ending up in a psychiatric hospital. Awakening in this environment of fear each morning allows us to escape noticing that we do not exist as a person. When we are no longer happy with a car, we buy a new one; when our husband is no longer to our liking, we leave him for another man, etc. We try to create a sense of security by claiming there is a past and a future. The way we see our body is same as the way we see society. This point of view is illustrated by the fact that we believe that we control the body's various parts conjured up by our imagination. Believing in the body is the most extreme example of this sickness. When we start listening to this seemingly apparent security, we notice that it is nothing other than insecurity! The body is nothing but tension. What we understand to be feeling is in reality an expression of our defence mechanisms. We feel our backs when we feel back pain, the solar plexus when a woman cheats on us, the trembling of the stomach and legs when we see an accident. This is what we experience to as our body. Quite a different possibility appears once we stop defending our personality. The outermost sensations, those we generally name heaviness, will diminish, and other sensations more flowing and expansive will come to life. These are also compensations, however more sattvic ones, more subtle ones. The more you feel the body to be vacant, transparent, the more sensation appears as movement. It is constantly evolving, dissolving. By simply becoming aware of the process, this congestion can be burned up. In listening, these feelings can expand unimpeded and die, leaving nothing, neither a body object, nor a subject/object relationship. Then once again, a feeling may arise... this heaviness, resistance in the body is first and foremost an indication that our personality is nothing but a defence. Every morning, we feel the same body, the same dog. The dog is always different, but out of fear of feeling challenged by these constant changes, we recognize the dog: it is just one more attempt to feel secure. Body, wife, dog, car, all are unceasingly new, but dreading the loss of our identity we force ourselves to live with misappropriated memories. We defend our body, our country, we like them or we do not. If we listen passionately to these perceptions, this oh so intensely felt fear is sooner or later revealed to be nothing but a superficial camouflage. Joy is our true nature, not fear. Bringing this obvious fact to light is yoga.

Traditional yoga questions our apparent physical security. Through practice, this mental construction is investigated until it is destroyed. A new body will thus see the light of day, without periphery or centre, spelling the end of identification. What are we when we stop defending? What are we when we cease identifying with a past or a future, when we stop inventing ourselves? What are we before we enter into this pretence? Concepts such as freedom and conditioning can no longer be applied in the same way. The conditioned object, movement by its very nature, points toward our freedom. Experiencing conditioning causes it to die again and again. In this moment, free of all conditioning, conditioned time appears and disappears. The more we allow this movement to flow freely, the more there is a fore-feeling that time exists beyond conditioning.

*Troisième Millénaire: When the body is perceived as fear, with sattvic sensitivity, this fear is metamorphosed. A more subtle, more global feeling appears, accompanied by a feeling of joy, that relates to a love of self beyond ego, a love of what is now.*

EB: Love is recognition of non-differentiation. When we look at something without entering into a psychological relationship with it, we notice that we are also it. Everything perceived is one's own self. When we no longer live in relationship with our surroundings, perceiving is emotion because the body is emotion. We are emotion. The freer this perceiving is of any psychological reference, of personal relationship to it, the more this perceiving is emotion. This emotion is not affectivity. Seeing a tree, a cloud or a work of art is emotion. Purification of the reactivity of body and psyche (not in the moral but rather in the functional sense) results in more than transformation: it awakens our capacity for emotion, which is generally blocked by feelings. We don't want to suffer, to be sad, to be afraid when, in fact, life is emotion. Children play at scaring each other! At night they sleep well. Fear is beautiful, liberating. It is the fear of fear that creates psychological trauma. And so it is with violence, sadness. We do yoga so as not to feel sad any longer, and thirty years later, we are still just as sad. The traditional approach consists of allowing these emotions to have their life. When emotion is given this freedom, it loses its psychological ramifications. Allowed freedom, every emotion is beautiful and reflects joy at all times. Emotion is the heart of life. The personality refuses it and ignores it so as not to feel insecure. When his brother died, Krishnamurti wrote something to this effect: "I felt no reason not to be sad." He allowed the sadness to express itself totally and then it departed. When things like this happen, most of us do everything we can in order not to feel sad. Krishnamurti could have done yoga, become a Buddhist, and suppressed this sadness all his life, but instead he gave it its freedom. This is the traditional key to life.

*Troisième Millénaire: As far as human relationships are concerned there is a desire for unity, for example at the sexual level. However in daily life, this listening is absent and relationships are reduced to relating ego-to-ego. Unity seems impossible.*

EB: Unity cannot be the end result because it is the starting point. If non-separation is not self-evident, we cannot pretend to experience it in our sexual relationships, or in any other domain, for that matter. Our sexuality, just like the management of our bank account, is an expression of this fore-feeling. Most of the time, our sexual relationships are a compensation: the body needing to be touched and to touch another in order to feel better. There is mounting tension, an explosion and then calm. When we are totally relaxed, we are not affected by mounting tension, by the need to touch or to be touched. This need for touch comes from a lack of sensitivity. An awakened body is total contact. Whatever is heard or seen is touched. We don't need to touch something to feel. This does not mean

that we don't touch anything any more. When a dog shows up, we will caress it in a certain way, we will caress our child or our wife in another way, etc. but touching a lover is not more alive with love than touching your mother, a girl or the bark of a tree. Touching an area of the body we delimit as sexual is no more intense than touching a shoulder. Sexual intimacy is freed of its sexual component. The psychological desire to be sexual falls away. Of course, there is no question in a body that is in balance that cycles do appear. At this level, men have a cycle of about thirty-four days, slightly longer than women. During this period if the opportunity arises, sexual capacity and stimulation are stronger than at other times. Other periods will be more favourable to listening to music or to engaging in sports, etc. These periods, biologically determined, may increase, depending on the phase of the moon. At certain times of the year the juxtaposition of planets and biology is particularly intense. Like all objects, the body is subject to cycles. When a man without a partner experiences a period of intensity, even if he feels it fully, nothing is felt to be lacking. Need is always pathological. Sexual need is almost always demanding and a compensation. We use another to satisfy our own needs. If a woman no longer wants us, we turn to a neighbour, hardly even noticing a difference. The word love has no place here. Love is the recognition of non-separation, the perception of oneness.

*Troisième Millénaire: Sexual attraction is often confused with love. We immediately superimpose the word love and give it a romantic flavour...*

EB: This loving state is always genuine, but we lack clarity as to what is happening. Something touches us, pierces our boundaries, our limits. Lacking clarity, we believe we are in love with someone, when in fact we are filled with the emotion of love. Of course we feel this emotion when with another, so it is natural that we attribute it to this person. However, after having fallen in love seven times, we realize that it is the same emotion whatever the object. The state is always the same. Thus we start questioning the situation: do we need a situation so as to re-experience this state within? Maturity dawns sometimes. This loving state is always true, as it is without a cause. On the other hand, marriage is a strategic choice, an economic or moral one that does not necessarily lend itself to the expression of love. Whatever is useful, moral or functional opposes freedom. In the tradition of India, love, sexuality and marriage are thought of as alien one to another and are not usually combined. The idea of couple or relationship is eliminated in listening. Depending on circumstances the possibility remains. We cannot use sexual intimacy as a means of achieving unity as claimed in childish tantric fantasies. Only the premonition of unity will result in a true transformation. In some people, sexuality will quickly become light, strong and free of problems, in others it will remain pathological, a source of frustration and need for a long time. How well it will be integrated into this opening to life depends on our predisposition. Ritualistic sexuality such as found in various currents of Hindu or Buddhist Tantra should not be thought of as sexuality but as sâdhanâ. It pertains only to those whose belief in being someone has already been burned up by the ability to discriminate. The extreme heat of love is as cold as a diamond and unbearable to someone in need. When we no longer fall in love, no longer think of ourselves as being with or without a companion, and there is a natural welcoming of what is, love, which includes all of life's many forms, sees the light of day. The true "I love you" is silent presence, a timeless intensity that includes everything. Blessings on creative consciousness, source of this limitless magic!

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