

SLEEPING GODS

*When the "I" speaks of the "I", it speaks of nothing.
But when the "I" speaks of the Whole of which it knows itself one, it speaks of all things.*

unattributed

*Let all things speak to you of the wonder and care of the creative minds that are a part of
the whole universe.
Become mindful of the upholding love that makes your being possible.
Become mindful of the search and the struggles that exist in others.
Become mindful that beyond the weeping of the lesser self, there is a great and beautiful
universe.*

unattributed

In the previous gathering we discussed the evolution of Consciousness.
Continuing on:

When Consciousness steps from the animation of *animal forms* to that of *human form*, it moves into a world that is as different as day is from night. Until that point, Consciousness has acted like an observer riding in a vehicle (the animal body) governed almost entirely by the primal impulses of *instinct*.

Animal instincts do exist within the human complex (after all, human bodies *are* animal bodies), but along with them are the mental tools necessary for the generation of one's *own* instincts. How so? *Humankind can think creatively*. In fact, at least part of the reason for this stage of experience in the physical world is to allow Consciousness to learn to deal responsibly with the creative energies of *thought* (literally the creative

energies of God) and with the associated *freedom of choice* that goes with that power—*all within the context of existence in matter.*

How does this all happen? An educated guess suggests the following human-Consciousness evolution:

By the time nature developed the animal-form we associate with human to the point where it could be used as a vehicle, the Consciousnesses that were ready to animate those forms began to overshadow them just as they had done with lesser animal forms.¹ At first, each responded to life primarily through the genetically inherited instincts provided by their human-animal vehicles, but they did more than that. The Consciousnesses animating those forms also began to use the mechanism of *thought* to create an inner world over-and-above instinct. In doing so, each Awareness created within its composite self a kind of advanced psychological complex wrapped up in what could loosely be called *an extended personality.*

This personality was not the Consciousness Itself; it was more like a temporary facade erected on the outskirts of Its awareness. But while in a body, Consciousness poured Its attention through that personal edifice so completely that It came to associate Itself with the *mental and emotional world It had created* (i.e., the psychological complex) and the *body form It had inherited.* In turn, because the *personal complex* was created from the stuff of thought, that contrived complex began to take on a life of its own.

In other words, what we've called Consciousness became a parent—a Higher Self supporting a self-created child.² That *child-self* was to grow with experience in succeeding lifetimes to such an extent that we now see only a small part of its overall complex emerging during a particular life. Nevertheless, it is that bit that we normally identify with when we use a word like "me."

This situation took an enormous period to develop. As things stand now, we see life—we *live* life—through this "personal" child-self. It (we) experiences, chooses, and deals with the consequences of choice . . . sometimes acting like a true child with wildly

¹ In fact, it is probable that in preparing for the jump from animal-type experience to man-type experience, some of those Consciousnesses actually animated the animal predecessors to the human form.

² This is important. It means there are two major Awarenesses within every human—the Higher-self (the parent) and the lesser-self (the child). The Higher-self grows by acting as parent to the child; the child grows by virtue of the experience afforded it while in-body on the physical level.

escalating wants and desires, sometimes acting like a responsible adult. To the extent that the child's world is often built around principles that have no lasting quality in a cosmic sense (what it is today is not what it will be tomorrow), the *child* is not *real*. It is definitely interested in itself—its security and welfare—often becoming involved in the accumulation of power or wealth, or the maintenance of beauty or relationships it feels it needs in a particular lifetime (all things that are substanceless in the sense that they can be here now, then gone in a wink). Yet as unreal as its constantly changing, constantly fleeting world is, this *personal self* (what we call "I") maintains a fierce belief in the illusion of itself as *a reality*.

This cumulative illusion of substance-where-there-is-none . . . a Being, separate from the rest of life, that sees itself as the center of all that is important . . . exists for all but the most advanced humans. The *personal-self complex* has to appear solid and real if it is to take itself seriously in this great cosmic play. It must be allowed to make choices in constructing the mental and emotional environment it uses to affect the world, because only in that way will the consequences of its choices make any difference to it . . . and dealing with the consequences of its actions is very important.

Real and imagined needs begin simply enough, then tend to grow by leaps and bounds. If wants and desires get out of hand, they become a major part of its world. The child's efforts to satisfy those self-oriented ends ultimately brings pain . . . a sure sign that something is amiss in the way it is dealing with the world.

Having free will, the child can ignore the signs or acknowledge them depending upon how awake it has become. But sooner or later the realization will dawn that it has built within itself attitudes that are not particularly useful or constructive, and it will have to tear down the old thoughtforms and rebuild anew using the creativity inherent within its ability to think. Of course, it can fight this need to change for eons, but there will come a time when it decides the world it has created for itself is not right. When that time comes, it will effect change.

I've simplified the scenario considerably. Rarely do events follow in such a plop, plop manner. Nevertheless, there will come a time when the child's attitudes and actions will begin to build and maintain qualities within itself that have reality *above and beyond*. Its choices will ring with strength and loving compassion and its presence will be a blessing to all who come near. Humanity doesn't come across Beings at this level often,

so it is not surprising that when such an individual is identified words like *saint* are used to describe the quality of the Being. Yet in all cases, the extraordinary power such a Being wields is not found in Its affiliation with a particular church or mosque or synagogue, it is in the Being's resonance with the tenor and motivation of the One Self. It is a *child-self* that is becoming *real*.

Put in a different way, after many lifetimes, the child finally grows from a purely self-focused, instinctual entity to a Being that fully and completely cares beyond itself. When that happens, we find a curious situation. The overshadowing Consciousness has learned about existence within matter from first hand experience, just as was expected. But in the process, It has succeeded in parenting what began as an empty facade, a personality complex totally devoid of any redeeming qualities in a spiritual sense, into an Awareness that has life and a *basis in reality*. Consciousness has created and nurtured from nothing something worth keeping, quite literally an extension of itself . . . a *new Being*. And in doing so, God grows greater.

From a human perspective, the culmination of this feat is embodied in the enlightenment attained by those who are called in India *Buddhas*.³ When that state is earned, the walls that had separated the personal complex from the Whole dissolve away forever (at least from the standpoint of human time) and the illusion of separateness is no more. It is said that when that rare event takes place, when a human has grown to the point where It can strip the veils from Itself and exist in the world as a fully enlightened Being, a thrill of joy sweeps through the universe. The great devas of the forests, the creatures of the land and sea, even the Artificers that plan, support and maintain the evolution of lesser Consciousnesses like ourselves, they all feel the moment. It is a time when one of God's children has returned home.⁴

³ As was mentioned earlier, most Westerners incorrectly associate the word *Buddha* with a single, historic individual, Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha was, indeed, a Buddha, but he was not the *only* Buddha.

⁴ The question arises, "Where does this grown up child- self go at the end of this evolution?" After all, there were *two* Beings involved in this process—the parent and the evolving child. The answer: At some point in the future the new grown-up will become parent to a new child and the process will continue on.

We started with the assumption that completely inexperienced Consciousnesses existed at the beginning of this solar evolution and awaited appropriate vehicles through which to experience and grow in the context of *existence in matter*. That was not entirely true. There certainly was consciousness at that level, but there were also Beings that had evolved in earlier evolutions—that had been child-selves, had grown just as you and I are growing, and had developed to the point where they were ready to experience in matter as parents to new child selves. In other words, things were considerably more complex than I have made them out to be.

There is a concept within the East called *karma* that fits into all of this, and although we will discuss it more later, a word seems appropriate now.

In simplified form, the Karmic Law essentially states that action will ultimately lead to consequences that are appropriate given the tenor and general motivation prompting the action. In practice, there are two versions of interpretation in popular use these days.

The version currently accepted by a fair portion of the Hindu population is something of an *eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth* version. If you're good you'll get a reward; if you're bad, God will punish you.⁵ It isn't unusual to find people who hold this view saying things like, "Oh, well, if something horrible happens to you it is due to *bad karma*. You must have done something awful in your last life."

The second view is typically found amongst Buddhists. It maintains that when you do something that isn't good, you are basically signaling the universe that you just don't understand how a human ought to be dealing with life. Karma, in conjunction with the Higher Self, draws experience to you (the child- self) that is appropriate given your state of ignorance and from which you will hopefully begin to learn. One consequence: a karmic response that brings physical or emotional pain is not seen as a punishment. It is seen as an opportunity to awaken.⁶ Another consequence: Experiencing an uncomfortable event doesn't necessarily mean someone has previously done something bad. It could simply be the testing of an individual's resolve on some basic principle or the prodding needed to awaken an individual into a deeper understanding of life.

In other words, the idea of Karma from the Buddhist's point of view is that of a teacher. It is even called "the teaching Law." It is not a punishment. It is not an unloving God that says, "You've been bad so I'm going to make your life miserable." It's

⁵ I have had Hindu students tell me that this is not the way they were taught about karma. In fact, that is not surprising. Though accepted by many Hindus today, the view I've outlined above is probably considerably twisted from its original form. There are still Hindus who hold the older view—that view (I'll state it shortly) is now more closely associated with the Buddhist version of karma.

⁶ They say that if you want to get a donkey to cooperate you have to kick it first to get its attention. People are the same way. You might be a raving ass, but if everything is nice and warm and pleasant in your life and you're happy, why bother changing? From this view, the belief is that if you so act karma will sooner or later bring you experience that, if need be, will get your attention through pain. If you are at all awake, the pain will motivate you to think more deeply about how you are dealing with life.

exactly the opposite. It is a mechanism within a loving, benevolent universe that says, "Here is experience that will hopefully allow you to better understand what you ought to be."⁷

Reincarnation also fits into this scheme. The word says exactly what it means. Incarnation is defined as *being born into a body*; re-incarnation is the possibility of being born into a body more than once at different points in time.

Hinduism's views about reincarnation parallel the modern-day Hindu views about karma. The belief is that if you accumulate *bad karma*, you will reincarnate into a lesser position in life. This is part of the idea behind the caste system. If you are a warrior and you abused your power, you are liable to come back next time in a lesser caste (and if you are good you will come back at a higher station, possibly at the priest level). The belief further maintains that if you have been really bad, you could come back as a non-human life-form like a donkey or even an insect.

Given the assumptions we have already made about God (i.e., that God is interested in the growth of Its parts), the Buddhists suggest what is to many be a more appealing version of reincarnation. The pressures and experiences that Consciousnesses at the human level need if they are to grow and unfold into spiritually responsible Beings are available only within the human domain. It would make no sense for an errant Consciousness, even one that has acted in ways that are particularly bad, to reincarnate into the body of a lower animal form.⁸ From the Buddhist perspective, "Once human, always human."

⁷ The idea of Karma is a lot more complicated than I've made it out to be. Understand that! We will talk more about it later.

⁸ Actually, there is one exception. The Sanskrit word *Aviche* alludes to what the Vedantan tradition maintains is the deepest of the hells. It is a state of complete isolation. If the personal complex of a Consciousness has so completely in-turned on itself that it has cut all ties with its Higher self—the Consciousness that created it—and if the child's actions so completely concrete this selfishness into itself that nature deems it a total loss, then that Consciousness will be stripped of what it has accumulated in the way of growth as an *Awareness in matter* and it will have to begin over again either in the mineral or plant kingdom (depending upon how extreme the situation). This is not a punishment; it is simply that nature can do only so much to cleanse a Being that has moved in negative ways. Once the Being has dug a hole into the *dark side* that is so deep it cannot possibly extricate itself on its own, nature steps in and cleanses in the only way that will give the Consciousness involved a chance in the future. Nevertheless, *Aviche* is a state of complete isolation—a being totally alone with itself for what seems an eternity—a complete hell if there ever was one. Adolf Hitler is definitely in *Aviche*.

There is a lot more to say about the idea of reincarnation; we will get to that later. For now, you need to realize that when I use of the word "reincarnation" I'm using it in the Buddhist sense.

It is now time to set the stage for a look at the teachings of the Buddha. To do so, we will begin with a true story:

I went to San Marino High School. When I was a senior, there was a kid named Mike Benson who was a sophomore. I didn't know him very well, but he was a good looking fellow, very intelligent, very athletic, very popular . . . an all around fine guy. He had a sister who was a sophomore. She was bright, popular, and absolutely beautiful.

Their parents were pillars of San Marino society, such as it is. Papa was a millionaire businessman with a pleasant smile and lots of friends and connections. Mama was artistic, athletic, even more beautiful than Mike's sister, ran her own business, and was constantly involved in civic-minded projects. They all lived in a big San Marino house; life couldn't have been rosier for them all.

I left for college. When I got back for Christmas vacation I was talking with friends when one of the guys said, "Did you hear about the Bensons?"

I said, "No." My friend proceeded to tell me this story.

It seems that about two months after I left for college, the family ran into some trouble. It happened on a Friday. Things began normally—everyone was up early in the morning to prepare for the day. The family had breakfast together; dad took off for the office at 7:45 am; Mike left soon after for school. The only thing that was unusual was that the daughter had some kind of appointment in the city of Newport Beach that day and afterward she and her mom intended to see friends in San Clemente Beach. As such, the two jumped into the young girl's new Volkswagen Beetle at 9:00 am and made for the coast.

All was well until Mr. Benson received a phone call around 3:30 pm from the Laguna Beach police department. The officer on the line was very matter of fact: "Mr. Benson?" he said. "I'm sorry to inform you that the VW bug your wife and daughter were driving was pushed over the center line of Pacific Coast Highway by a gust of wind and

It is possible that this exception was the circumstance from which the Hindus generated their view about Beings reincarnating as lower life forms if they'd been destructive in life.

crashed headlong into a large truck going the other way. Your wife and daughter are both dead."

That morning, Mr. Benson's world was the picture of contentment and success. By evening, it had completely crumbled down around him.

We are obviously looking at a man who was in an enormous amount of psychological pain at the time. So having set the stage, let's consider the teachings of the Buddha. After all, it was the Buddha who saw to the heart of suffering and sorrow, and who came to see the path to the cessation of suffering and sorrow.

The Buddha's "Four Truths" were:

- 1.) To exist as a separate personality predestines suffering and sorrow.
- 2.) The greatest cause of misery is the desire to possess and the desire to preserve things possessed.
- 3.) Freedom from suffering is obtained by the slaying out of all desire, save the desire for right action.
- 4.) The way of liberation and to the cessation of all opposites is the Noble Eight-Fold Path, the way of immortality.

In light of the Bensons' story, most people who read the Four Truths come away thinking the Buddha was one cold character. Why? Because it looks as though the Buddha's teachings were saying that the only way Mr. Benson could have been spared the pain of his loved one's deaths was to have never loved in the first place.

Although this is not an uncommon interpretation of the Buddha's teachings, even amongst Buddhists, *that was not his message*. He never maintained that the path to the cessation of suffering and sorrow was to extricate oneself from life, or that one should shun interaction with other humans. These are complete misinterpretations.

So what *was* the Buddha really saying?

We will talk about that next time!