

moment believed I had come to the wrong place. Life was hard and ecstatic, easy and ordinary, at once. My own sense of freedom flourished. The promises that had once been merely words in Bhagwan's lectures became realities in my life.

Why had I acted out the dream that most people merely think about?

I had always hungered for freedom. Not freedom to buy or freedom to move - I was fortunate enough never to have lacked what I needed in those areas. But freedom on more subtle levels: to act wholeheartedly without regret, to feel fully, to love deeply, to give generously without holding back, to head totally for what I wanted without fear of rejection, to be open and passionate or serene and relaxed whatever the occasion demanded. I wanted to be free of guilt, of jealousy and envy, of wanting things I didn't really need, of holding onto things I could as easily let go of. And I wanted this from within with the full cooperation of the unfettered flow of energy that my body-entity contained. I had been a vulnerable, angry manic depressive who devoured her own pain in a compulsive addiction to writing. But I had also spent much of my life laughing loudly, loving ecstatically and lying serenely in meadows listening to the birds. I wanted more of the joy and less of the weight, more of the peace and less of the pain. And for that I had to be prepared to go more deeply into the valleys of my suffering in order to rise to the mountaintops of bliss available to me.

One day perhaps I may go beyond both. Through the place where meditation is the key to consciousness and consciousness is the key to peace and creativity, I might just reach the nonstop serene blissfulness of Bhagwan himself.

But before I reach there, I will have to have long stopped wanting to. The last barrier, I am told, is the desire to break through the last barrier.

---

Some comments on **Ecstasy and the Psychology of the Buddhas** by Ma Anand Savita.

This reminds me of a lot of other essays I have seen by Bhagwan followers - there is one in the current issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, for example - and I'm beginning to get some critical feelings about them.

It is all very well to talk about one's own personal experience, but at some point I want to know what it means. Simply having and describing an experience is not enough - I want to make sense of my experience.

What Savita is talking about is obviously some kind of mystical experience. But **what** kind of mystical experience? In the current age, we are still so unused to mystical experience that we often think - and you will read it in many books - that there is **just one** mystical experience. You go out of ordinary experience into this higher or deeper reality, and - Bingo! - you're there.

But it seems clear, as soon as we look at the research which has been done on mysticism (Horne 1978), that there is more than one type of mystical experience. A good recent map has been provided by Ken Wilber in his book **The atman project**. (He modifies it in his other books, and in no sense is it final yet, but it is a good starting point). And in terms of his model, what Savita was experiencing was high-subtle mysticism.

At this level one focusses on a guru or other high archetype, and surrenders one's autonomous self to that holy presence. There is an experience of stepping across a line, which is similar in some ways to falling in love: there is that same sense of taking an extreme risk, of launching out into the unknown. This is what Wilber calls the subtle Eros:

*It takes the form of blissful love, direct incestuous union with the Guru and his or her lineage, ishtadeva union, sahasrara bliss-light, and so on.*

It is a very important stage of mystical experience, which is the way in which many people can approach the spiritual realm. Obviously Bhagwan has developed some very effective ancillary experiences to this, so that barriers can be broken down and "karma cleaning" can be carried out.

But Wilber says that the subtle stage is just one staging post along the way. Next comes the causal stage.

*The subtle self is an extraordinarily high-order self, close to Atman, but still not yet Atman. However, so subtle is the substitute self at this stage that it is almost always mistaken for Atman itself - and this makes it probably the most difficult form of the Atman-project to break. The individual will have to give up his subtle incest - his sahasrara bliss and his nad-sound ecstasy - if he is to break this **fusion** and pass into the causal.*

In other words, Savita has to concentrate on Bhagwan until she fuses with Bhagwan and becomes one with Bhagwan. And then she has to give up Bhagwan. This is something which has to be experienced and done at a heart level and a body level, not just at a mental or higher level.

Seen in this way, it can be appreciated how difficult the whole process is. First we have to give up the mental ego and become a real, autonomous, bodymind self; then we have to give up this existential self (what Wilber calls the Centaur) and focus on some spiritual presence outside ourselves (for example Bhagwan, as one possibility), surrendering to it completely and abandoning all thoughts of autonomy and separate existence, until we become one with it; and then we have to go on from there into the realm of Deity proper (what Wilber calls the causal). And even then that is not the end of the road.

However, without going further into the details of this, we have gone far enough to see that the experience which Savita recounts does fit in rather well with this framework. What we can also see is that it can be very confusing to be told this. The confusion arises from the fact that Bhagwan **is** one thing and **talks about** another. What Bhagwan **is**, is a guru, the incarnation of a high archetype, the wise old man. By relating to him we can get all the benefits of strength and insight and ecstasy that we can get from concentrating on such high archetypes. But what he **talks about** is the Ultimate, the deity beyond deity, the final goal which is equally the absence of any goal at all. And sometimes he claims to **be** that, which of course is ridiculous. Sure, he can represent it, or stand for it, or remind us of it, but he can't **be** it, because it is infinite and he isn't. The Infinite doesn't go to hospital.

---

James R. Horne (1978) **Beyond mysticism**. Published for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion by Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Ken Wilber (1980) **The Atman Project: A transpersonal view of human development**. A Quest Book, Theosophical Publishing House.

John Rowan

---