

# Introduction

## Surrender

---

The break of dawn hit me between the eyes as I gazed out over a panorama of fluttering coconut palms and a gathering of brilliantly plumed peacocks lounging on a neighboring thatched roof. Overnight, a brilliant South Indian sky had shed its dusty veil, and emerged in a shimmering dressing gown of blue—adding a subtle touch of symbolism to the scene. The moment was a foundation, a fresh slate destined to hold the unborn imagery of life—infinite details that hovered, poised and ready to emerge on the canvas of the ethers. The vivid sense of *Nowness* it delivered struck a chord within me.

The moment seemed to pause almost tangibly, like the proverbial space between the breaths in which, it is said, the gateway to the Divine can be found. It was an uncanny mirror of the shift simultaneously taking place within *me*—a moment of Now in which I felt all sense of past, present, and future converge into one focal point of inevitability. Who is to say what constitutes a life-changing instant, in a reality that is actually timeless? Tentatively, I glanced around the room, surveying the eclectic assortment of props that sat poised and ready to take up the threads of my own ongoing personal drama.

Like pieces of a puzzle predestined to fit together, all the components of the previous day's scene were still right there, exactly where I'd left them. My beloved laptop sat patiently waiting, with my rough-hewn life's work squirreled away in its microchips. A foot-high stack of thick, spiral-bound volumes of conversations with Oneness, the Divine Presence I'd been communing with since 1998—and many refer to as "God"—sat beside it. It was a priceless mélange of Divine words of wisdom interlaced with my own chronicle of joy and pain. The neatly typed notebooks were, by then, completely scribbled up with a rainbow of marker-pen notations blanketing the margins. The edges were lined with rows of pastel Post-It Notes that looked like strings of Tibetan prayer flags.

My mindset of trepidation to tackle that mountain of writings and transform it into something somebody might want to read someday was also

there, as usual, awaiting my consideration. The bottom line was, I'd been going through the motions of preparing to transform those chronicles into a book because it seemed to be expected of me at some unfathomable higher level—while at the same time, deep inside, I was dragging my heels all the way.

The sheer volume of the Divine teachings I had managed to document over the course of nearly a decade was completely overwhelming—as were the constant predictions about the role I was supposedly destined to play in presenting it all to the world. For, in addition to the published 400-page first volume of spiritual understandings entitled appropriately, *Oneness*, upwards of 3,000 pages of personal Divine guidance had also been transcribed.

In these writings, interwoven with the details of my own spiritual emergence, lay the entire conceptual foundation for the esoteric understandings that had transformed life as I knew it beyond all recognition. Was I really expected to go on record and share all that? Was I actually destined to reveal to the world the gut-wrenching details of an odyssey that documented the dematerialization of my very identity? Why would anybody care? Moreover, who would believe it? Nonetheless, apparently that's what Oneness had in mind. I was horrified. From the onset, I'd presumed that those teachings were for my eyes only.

The prospect of dragging those archives out of the closet and airing them in public was daunting. The scope of the material I'd covered was so vast and so mind-boggling I simply hadn't known where to start. Day after day, I'd conversed with Oneness in exquisite, exalted states of being, and documented word for word the profound guidance I'd received. And then, I'd turn the page. The next day, I'd do it again. There, laid out in year after year of writings, was the essence of the eternal mystery that had continued to confound me—the very answers humankind has searched for since time immemorial. Volumes of it.

All the while, I'd continued to dance the same dance within my own consciousness. For years, I'd tackled the challenges of transformation—and brushed up against the same unmistakable touch of Grace—oblivious to the realization that I had already found what I presumed I was still looking for. During much of that time, it was as though somewhere, stranded in the labyrinths of consciousness, there had been a fugitive aspect of self, poised and ready to jump back in, who simply couldn't believe what had actually happened.

Now, in that life-altering moment, I seemed to be viewing the entire quandary from a respectful distance, with a newfound air of quiet detachment. Slowly, I surveyed the symbolic props scattered before me. The entire montage of imagery held all the components of pure

potentiality. The possibilities were all right there, ready and waiting. As I gazed at the scene, I had the indescribable feeling of something almost palpably shifting gears within me. There was an unmistakable sense of *Now* that pervaded it.

In the space of a heartbeat, all the inner confusion simply vanished. All at once, my nebulous dilemma distilled itself into a clear-cut choice. I was certainly free to pick up the threads of my life exactly where I'd left them the day before—and forge on through my own tenacious reluctance to act out what I was being told was destined to happen. *Or*, I was equally free to surrender and let the resistance go. Let the chips fall where they may.

It was the last piece of the puzzle. Who was it who hesitated, I had to wonder? And I laughed out loud, the kind of full-throttle laughter that had come to herald a moment of consummate surrender—and revelation. Days of reading the profound teachings of Oneness, which had paved the way for that shift, had pushed me to the very edge of the cliff. From there, the only step forward, Oneness once said, was to jump.

The jump was painless, so subtle it was virtually imperceptible. Yet, I knew it had been made. The components of the illusory scene remained the same. All that had changed was how I now *perceived* it. Suddenly, I was looking at the very same scenario with a new set of eyes. Now, I was looking at the components of the inevitable, seeing a very different slant on the projection of a path that revealed itself before me. Once again, I was viewing it as a moment etched in timelessness, revealed through the eyes of Oneness.

Slowly, I began to take the chapters of my own eclectic story apart and re-examine them. As I did, the absolute perfection in the way my own particular journey had been Divinely orchestrated began to crystallize. Ever so gently, the faded postcards tucked away in the archives of memory drifted back into focus—as though retrieved from the mists of a distant dream.

Days, months, and years melted together in a blur of memories, as I continued to delve into a retrospective spiritual journey. Page by page I plunged into the chronicles I'd written, and as I watched the illusory pages of my life re-emerge, I began to remember. How was it possible that my awareness had actually rematerialized in this indescribable place of inner Stillness and serenity from the shattered remains of *that* life of chaos? I wondered. And what had it taken to bring me to the point of surrender where such a transformation could have taken place?

As I continued to explore the compendium of trials and tribulations that had coaxed me to the brink of that moment of truth, I began to see a pattern emerge—signs of a trail that was decidedly off the beaten track. In a sense,

the extent of the transformation that ultimately came to be had come and hit me from behind.

At the onset of what I think of as my spiritual journey, “Self-Realization” wasn’t even remotely in my vocabulary. Yet, for as long as I could remember, I’d considered myself to be a *spiritual* person. What that actually meant, however, was something I’d have been hard-pressed to explain, back then in the mid 1980’s. It was a concept that would go on to evolve and deepen exponentially, over time. Initially, all I’d ever wanted to do was to “serve God”—a God I assumed was out there in the heavens somewhere, beyond comprehension, beyond imagination, and surely separate from what I presumed *myself* to be. “Use me!” I’d cry out in prayer, never dreaming in a million years what I’d eventually be asked to do.

According to consensus wisdom, they say it’s extremely difficult, if not impossible, to have actually made the journey to Oneness with the Divine without coming up through the ranks of a traditional spiritual structure. I was simply unaware of that. Presuming I was flying blind, I’d broken most of the rules the established schools of esoteric thought set out as mandatory for spiritual mastery. I had not been officially initiated by a Guru. I had not been formally schooled in any form of meditation. I was not a practitioner of yoga. I had not really studied or followed any of the world’s traditional religions. I had not been ordained as a minister in any school of spirituality, recognizable or otherwise. And I surely did not hold a degree in theology or philosophy. Essentially, I was a blank slate—precisely the qualification Oneness required.

In terms of the contemporary Western spiritual scene, I’d glossed over the bewildering smorgasbord of transformational offerings, in the early days of my awakening, without actually partaking of much of it. I’d participated, on occasion, in a smattering of the workshops, seminars, and other assorted gatherings that had begun to mushroom up in the spiritual marketplace. I’d attended a few *satsangs* and *channelings*, now and then, out of curiosity. And I’d experienced just enough vivid, hypnotic past-life regressions to convince me, beyond doubt, of the validity of reincarnation. Nevertheless, I’d counted myself as fully present amongst an eclectic generation of seekers who had been herded together under the catch-all umbrella that had been dubbed “New Age.”

Through it all, there’d been a decided absence of a traditional “path”—one that beckoned with a spiritual pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. What was going on in the sanctity of my own consciousness was so extraordinary and so fascinating that there had been no inclination to look for anything else. It seemed like I’d been programmed to be a self-contained, spiritual time capsule that, left to its own devices, was percolating nicely on the abundant spiritual sustenance being provided from within. I’d kept the entire process

cloistered there. Like a record stuck in a groove, I kept myself focused in that inner space, content to be playing the same little tune, oblivious to the spiritual traditions that were setting down ground rules targeted at corralling the awakening masses.

Little did I suspect, but the very skill I'd used instinctively, in the practice of receiving Divine guidance, and fine-tuned since 1987—to completely silence my own mental process and to zero in with the precision of a laser on another level of communication emanating from within—had delivered me right to the threshold of the Divinity harbored within us all, and, ultimately, allowed me to shift into that level of Self-perception. I was largely unaware of the Divinely-guided perfection in what I was actually doing, in terms of my own *spiritual emergence*, and ended up honing my consciousness, essentially in spite of myself.

The skill needed was to be utterly *still*—and absolutely *focused*. So still, I could hear a virtual pin drop within my inner being. So focused, I could perceive the Presence of Oneness, ultimately, as my own. In time, that abstract skill became strengthened to the point that the inner Stillness could be sustained indefinitely. In essence, what I'd trained myself to be able to do was to *meditate*. Left to my own devices, I had simply approached it backwards. I started at the end. I dispensed with the formalities and began my process by listening *through* the Stillness, which I could somehow manifest at will, to perceive the Presence and the Divine guidance of Oneness.

Over time, an elaborate spiritual practice *did* evolve. It was a richly diverse program of spiritual *sadhana*, practices that helped me take the connection with Oneness to *ever expanding* levels of perception. In the years that followed, I would delve deeply into the timeless tradition of Sanskrit Mantra chanting, formal silent meditation, and the indescribable joys of an intensive self-styled practice of prayer and devotion—a tradition known in the East as *bhakti*, the path of the heart.

From the barest beginnings, my orientation with regard to my spiritual life had been an insular one. Over time, I came to understand, through the teachings of Oneness, that there is no right or wrong mode of spiritual practice. Instinctively, I'd simply evolved a devotional program that felt good to me, one that had nothing whatsoever to do with what anyone else was doing or saying. It was that approach of the *personalized path* to Oneness that I was being prepared to teach. It was a path of *liberation* and, no less, of Divine Love.

For me, the Realization of Self as Oneness was not at all the story of a one-shot event others may tell. Each experience of Divine connectedness was exactly as Oneness had described it in the book of teachings, *Oneness*—

like a wave caressing the shore. My own Presence as Oneness emerged from within, into the forefront of my awareness, and was perceived vividly and blissfully within the timeless Now moment of that contact. And then, ever so gently, the perception of that Presence receded back into the embrace of the Ocean of Isness that waits so patiently within the depths of each of us.

Each elusive instance of Divine connectedness became yet another incremental step in what, for me, was an ongoing, evolutionary process of emergence. In my case, there was not the immediacy of a definitive instant which could be dissected out of that history and heralded, like a scientifically quantifiable “Big Bang.” There was more the sense of being dipped into liquid Stillness—and dissolving within it—over and over again. And the intensity of that sense of *immersion* into Oneness had deepened—and the duration of those moments of *dissolution* had expanded—with the passage of time.

So, I wondered, what was I supposed to be telling the world in sharing all this? Perhaps it was the truth of it. It was a story that was stranger than fiction and spanned who knows how many linear lifetimes, with a full-scale casting call of the multi-dimensional aspects of my very own identity in the starring role. It was a comedy of epic proportions as I propelled myself headlong into an unending string of dramas that might have been predictable, if I’d been paying better attention. It was an ongoing tragedy in all the literal ways when one develops a knack for anticipating disappointment—and then creates the optimum conditions for getting to be right about it.

I saw, in reviewing these writings that I actually *had* lived out the training outlined in the book, *Oneness*—and that, in learning these teachings *experientially*, by rote repetition, they’d somehow become permanently etched. I saw that I did, indeed, have a foundation for something worth sharing: something that was poignant and authentic, and at the same time heart-wrenching and quite literally, mind-blowing. Maybe the fact that this had all actually happened to what appeared to be a perfectly normal, middle-aged American woman was the part that made it interesting, and perhaps worth sharing, after all. I prayed that Oneness knew what they were doing in pushing me to write this story and, in a consummate gesture of surrender to the inevitable—I plowed into it.

As the pages turned, I began to see that while Oneness had addressed these teachings to this audience of one, they spoke to a collective that was significantly more far-reaching. Through the vehicle of this worldly identity, Oneness has been able to reach out and define the nature of this wisdom for us all. It became abundantly clear to me that these writings, which felt so sacred—and which I once had been so hesitant to share—were not at all “for my eyes only.”

—Rasha

