

My Life with an Enlightened Being

The enlightened being is the egoless one who knows me as his own Self. **BY CHARLES SHAHAR**

I DO NOT USE the term “enlightened” lightly. I have a skeptical mind and an analytical bent. I have to be convinced. I have to understand. I have to be sure of something if I am to convey conviction about it. So what makes me so sure that I had met such an enlightened soul? What has put my doubting mind to rest and just as importantly, opened my heart to him?

The idea that there is someone out there to whom we can surrender our ego is a touchy one in Western culture. Our society is based upon a sense of individualism. In fact, we are proud of this trait and seek to cultivate it. But what I have come to know is that in relation to my teacher, I am not surrendering my ego to someone, because there is no “other” to receive it. The enlightened being is the egoless one who knows me as his own Self. In fact, my teacher never asks me to surrender anything. He simply shows me who I am.

My teacher is my Guru. I hesitate to mention this word because there are so many Western concepts associated with this term. In the Hindu tradition, Guru is known as the dispeller of ignorance. My teacher is referred to as a *Satguru*, or true Guru, the one who has attained the Self-realized state. I suppose anyone can refer to themselves as a guru or teacher, but the term *Satguru* refers exclusively to one who has attained peak consciousness or enlightenment.

I will start by saying that my experiences with my teacher have been very deep and my mind can only scratch the surface of their impact. I cannot say that I am close to him in the same way that one is close to their spouse or child. That would suggest that we have interacted as two separate human beings. Our

connection goes way beyond that sphere. But I always feel his presence, and in that sense I feel closer to him than anyone else in my life.

I cannot say he is my friend, although he is certainly my greatest well-wisher. Unlike most friends, he has no need to please me; in fact, when it comes to our interactions, he has no need or desire for any personal gain at all. Essentially, he always reflects something deep and unfathomable, the highest aspect of Consciousness. When I look into his eyes, I see a depth that overwhelms me. I want to avoid his gaze, but at the same time I wish that he would never stop looking at me.

It doesn't matter whether I've been with him for years, or even minutes. Every experience around him feels like an eternity. Time seems to have no relevance in his presence. The sense of individual identity dissolves. I now know that this altered state of consciousness, which I have experienced in his company, is known as *Samadhi* in Hindu philosophy. It is a state of *aanand*, or pure bliss. I have been meditating for over thirty years, alone or in groups, but I have never experienced such a state of beatitude as I have in the company of my teacher.

Sometimes, I would have an “aha” moment or revelation about something that happened during a past interaction with him. What he said would come back to me and my mind would literally pop, as the true depth of his words touched my being. Moreover, the words would pertain perfectly to whatever challenge I was facing at the time. The point is that his words and teachings reflect an absolute truth that transcends space and time. My mind just has to catch up, or expand beyond its limitations, in order to understand them.



His words always bring my attention to another plane. They are never to be taken on a flat level. Even his written words carry power. For instance, I once wrote to him saying that I had decided to open my home to regular meditation gatherings. But I also mentioned that I was used to being solitary and the thought of having people come over made me a little uncomfortable.

He replied in a letter that if I thought there were “other people,” separate from me, I was living an illusion; if I thought I was ever alone, I was also living an illusion. As long as I lived a state of duality, disconnected from the Source Consciousness, I was living a state of deception.

How he would pop or blow my mind was perhaps the most interesting part of my interactions with him. It wasn't something that I would think about while in

his company, because I would not really be thinking much at all. But I would reflect later. For instance, in his letter, he referred to the two conditions with which I identified: being alone and being in the company of others. Both reflected a state of identification with the forms or phenomena of the world. But in his reply, he left nothing for the mind to hang on to. In its place, was the experience of true Self, free from the divisive nature of mind.

Looking at it from a different perspective, the work didn't only begin when I first met him in this lifetime. His students or devotees have known him for many incarnations and have continued their spiritual work with him in the current one. We were all fated to meet him. We were all drawn to be with him. The fact that we have done spiritual work with him previously made us

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more receptive to what he was saying in this lifetime. We were ripe for his teachings.

Being around a Self-realized being speeds up the burning of one's karma. It is true that one can learn some valuable lessons over the course of a lifetime, but nothing can accelerate transformation as rapidly as being in the presence of an enlightened master. He can unravel all those layers of mental conditionings and crystallizations with which we identify, and which keep us bound and unhappy.

Only Guru can do this with such speed and intensity. For instance, as one gets more spiritually refined, the ego becomes subtler, yet it is still very much intact. The person may have spiritual concepts, or perhaps be arrogant and proud regarding her or his spirituality. This is very difficult to overcome, and it takes one with the subtlest perception to expose it, and guide the seeker to a state beyond ego-identification.

But how does the spiritual teacher do all that? The amazing thing is that he can do it remotely, or when you are standing next to him. He can do it with words, or with a look. He can do it in a letter, or while you are watching a video of him and listening to his discourses, or *satsang*.

There is something called *shaktipat* in Hindu philosophy, which refers to a shot of energy that emanates from the master to the student. We can talk about how this infusion triggers the *Kundalini*, or serpent fire, causing it to rise up the etheric spinal cord. As it flows like a fountain over the top of the head, the aspirant experiences a state of deep transcendence.

All of this sounds very mechanical. Suffice it to say that there were times when I noted that my teacher was glancing at me in a way that is difficult to describe. In fact, I couldn't say that it was a physical glance, in the sense that he was clearly staring in my direction. Perhaps he was glancing at me from the corner of his eye. But the next thing I knew, I was in a blasted state. It felt like every atom of my being was being rearranged.

Is it a very deep psychology that we are talking about? I was a clinical psychologist by training, and

I have noted that the changes that psychotherapy provides happen slowly and mostly on the level of feelings and cognitions. In comparison, the changes I have seen in people who have sat for many years in the presence of my teacher have to do more with an inner light that shines more brightly as their awareness evolves.

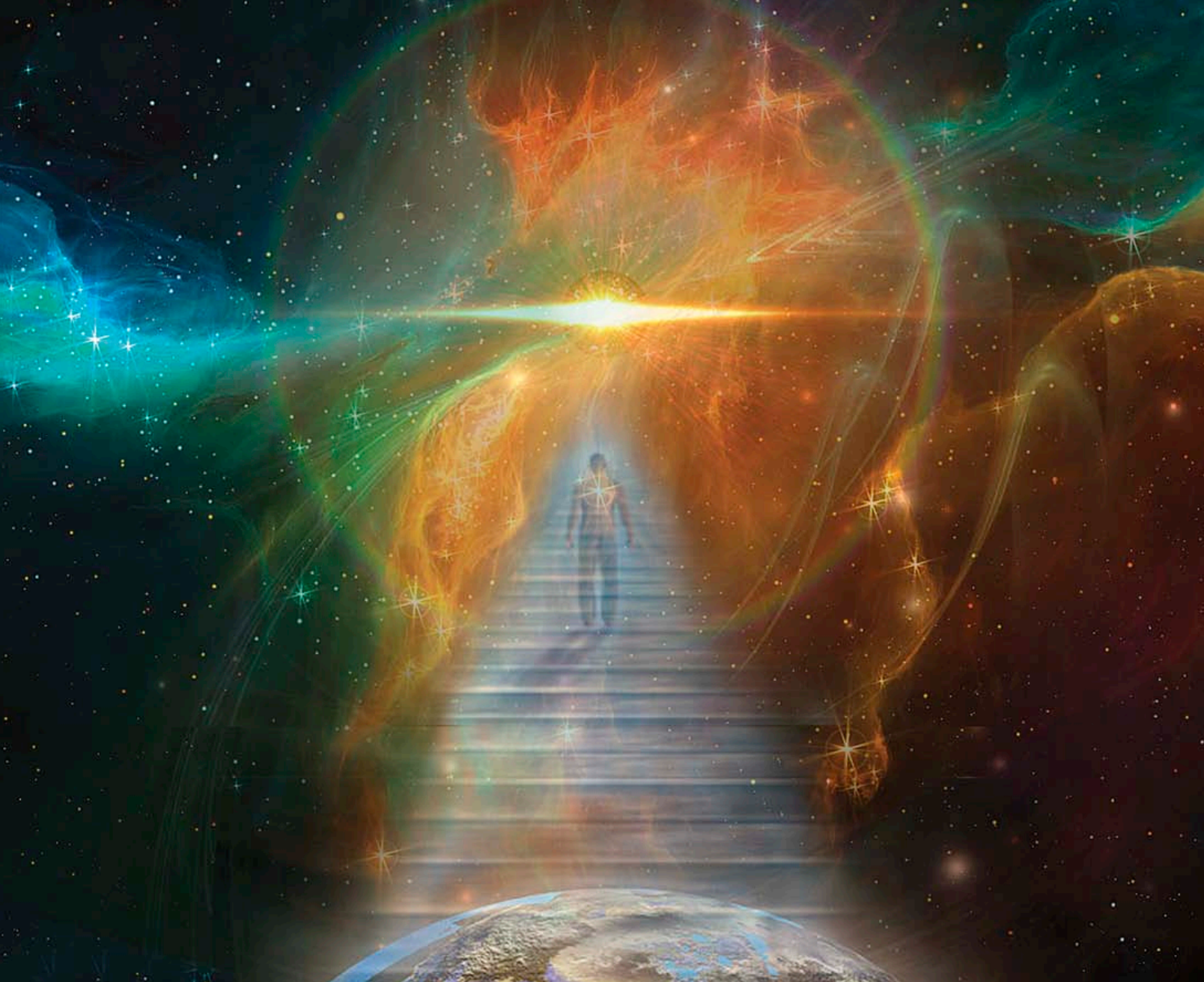
Psychotherapy relates to the human condition: to fears, conflicts and urges. It deals with the changing mind and emotions. Spiritual transformation is beyond the mind and personality and relates more to the essence of the being. Through spiritual practice the awareness becomes more refined and connected to its source.

Yet a transformation in terms of a deeper psychology is also included. For instance, in my early encounters with my teacher I was a very spaced-out individual. I lacked alertness regarding what was going on around me. One day I was invited to travel in a car with my Guru for a short drive through the countryside. At some point he got out and so did I. But I didn't see his hand on the door frame when I slammed the car door shut. Fortunately, his hand wasn't badly hurt. But at that moment, I felt so small and shrivelled up.

He turned to me and said that I should drop the whole thing because no harm was done. But it weighed on me terribly that whole day. My friends were very kind. To lighten my spirit, they jested that the most "difficult" students made the best devotees. In *satsang*, my guru called me to speak, and I spoke about how badly I felt. He then said, "I had told him to drop everything, and he could not even do that."

At that moment something very momentous happened. I dropped many of my *sanskaras*, or deep mental grooves, especially with regards to my parents. Those mental identifications of someone who needed to live up to certain expectations got dissolved. I also became more alert and less fuzzy-headed as a result of this experience.

Everything that happens around him ultimately initiates some form of growth or expansion among his disciples. I also find it remarkable how he is aware of everything that transpires around him. That makes



perfect sense, since he lives in a state of oneness all the time. One person complained that she felt he wasn't giving her enough attention. His reply was, "Just because I am looking at this fellow, how do you know who I am really looking at?"

What is particularly uncanny is that when his words free the person he is speaking to, they also free everyone in the room who is open to them. That is because his knowledge reflects an underlying truth. It is not our mind that responds to such revelations, but rather the guru within us. Hence, he is simply a pure reflection of our own true nature without the filter of ego or mind. He is a direct channel to the Absolute.

It is certainly the power behind the Satguru's presence and actions that creates an opportunity to

have a direct experience of the Divine. However, you also need to be ready. That means you have to work to refine your instrument sufficiently in order to absorb his teachings and receive his vision (or *darshan*). You also need to have a strong and sincere desire for liberation from the illusory realm of birth and death, the field of appearance and disappearance, or *maya*.

In the sublime dance of the Guru and devotee, you have to know who is leading. Is it Guru or is it your ego-mind? The latter won't take you very far. The Guru will guide you to Infinity. 🙏

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