

The Dhammapada: The Way of the Buddha, Vol 1

Chapter #2

Chapter title: An empty chair

22 June 1979 am in Buddha Hall

The first question:

Question 1

BELOVED MASTER,

AN EMPTY CHAIR

A SILENT HALL

AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHA --

HOW ELOQUENT!

HOW RARE!

Yes, Subhuti, that's the only way to introduce the Buddha to you. Silence is the only language he can be expressed in. Words are too profane, too inadequate, too limited. Only an empty space...utterly silent...can represent the being of a buddha.

There is a temple in Japan, absolutely empty, not even a statue of the Buddha in the temple, and it is known as a temple dedicated to Buddha. When visitors come and they ask, "Where is the Buddha? The temple is dedicated to him..." the priest laughs and he says, "This empty space, this silence -- this is Buddha!"

Stones cannot represent him, statues cannot represent him. Buddha is not a stone, not a statue. Buddha is not a form -- Buddha is a formless fragrance. Hence, it was not just accidental that ten days' silence preceded these talks on Buddha. That silence was the only possible preface.

Subhuti, you are right: "An empty chair..." Yes, only an empty chair can represent him. This chair is empty, and this man talking to you is empty. It is an empty space pouring itself into you. There is nobody within, just a silence.

Because you cannot understand silence, it has to be translated into language. It is because of your limitation that I have to speak; otherwise there is no need. Truth cannot be said, has never been said, will never be said. All scriptures talk about truth, go on talking about it, about and about, but no scripture has yet been capable of expressing it - - neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran -- because it is impossible in the very nature of things to express it.

It cannot be said -- it can only be shown. It cannot be logically proved, but love can prove it. Where logic fails, love succeeds. Where language fails, silence succeeds.

I cannot prove it, but the absence of the 'I' within me can become an absolute proof for it. If you want to understand Buddha, really, you will have to come closer and closer to this silence that I am, you will have to become more and more intimate, available, vulnerable, to this nobody who is talking to you.

I am not a person. The person died long ago. It is a presence -- an absence and a presence. I am absent as a person, as an individual; I am present as a vehicle, a passage, a hollow bamboo. It can become a flute -- only the hollow bamboo can become a flute.

I have given myself to the whole. Now whatsoever the will of the whole...if he wants to speak through me, I am available; if he does not want to speak through me, I am available. His will is the only will now. I have no will of my own.

That's why many times you will find contradictions in my statements -- because I cannot change anything. God is contradictory because God is a paradox. He contains the polar opposites: he is darkness and light, summer and winter, life and death. Sometimes he speaks as life and sometimes as death, and sometimes he comes as summer and sometimes as winter...what can I do?

If I interfere, I will misrepresent. If I try to be consistent then I will be false. I can be true only if I will remain available to all the contradictions that God contains.

This chair, Subhuti, is certainly empty. And the day you are able to see this chair empty, this body empty, this being empty, you will have seen me, you will have contacted me. That is the real moment when the disciple meets the master. It is a dissolution, a disappearance...the dewdrop slipping into the ocean, or the ocean slipping into the dewdrop. It is the same! -- the master disappearing into the disciple and the disciple disappearing into the master. And then there prevails a profound silence.

It is not a dialogue! That's where Eastern religions, particularly Buddhism, have reached higher pinnacles than Christianity, Judaism, Islam -- because Islam, Judaism, Christianity, remain clinging somehow to the idea of a dialogue. But a dialogue presupposes duality, twoness. Islam, Christianity, Judaism, are religions of prayer. Prayer presupposes that there is a God separate from you, that you can address him.

Hence Martin Buber's book became very famous -- I AND THOU. That is the essence of prayer. But 'I' and 'thou'...a duality is needed for a dialogue. And howsoever beautiful the dialogue may be, it is still a division, a split; it is not yet union. The river has not entered into the ocean. Maybe it has come very close, just on the verge, but it is holding back.

Buddhism is not the religion of prayer, it is the religion of meditation. And that's the difference between prayer and meditation: prayer is a dialogue, meditation is a silence. Prayer has to be addressed to somebody -- real, unreal, but it has to be addressed to somebody. Meditation is not an address at all; one has simply to fall into silence, one has simply to disappear into nothingness. When one is not, meditation is.

And Buddha is meditation -- that is his flavor. These ten days we remained silent, we remained in meditation. The real thing has been said. Those who have not heard the real thing, now for them I will be speaking.

The meditation that prevailed for ten days was with a difference -- and that is the difference between Buddha's and my approach -- a little difference, but of tremendous import. And that has to be understood by you, because I am not a mere commentator on Buddha. I am not only echoing him, I am not simply a mirror to reflect him; I am a response, not a reflection. I am not a scholar, I am not going to make a scholarly analysis of his statements -- I am a poet!

I have seen the same nothingness that he has seen, and, certainly, I have seen it in my own way. Buddha has his own way, I have my own way -- of seeing, of being. Both ways reach the same peak, but the ways are different. My way has a little difference -- little, but of profound import, remember.

These ten days were not only of silent meditation -- these ten days were of music, silence, and meditation. Music is my contribution to it. Buddha would not have allowed it. On that point we would have quarreled. He would not have allowed music; he would have said that music is a disturbance. He would have insisted on pure silence, he would have said that is enough. But that is where we agree to disagree.

To me, music and meditation are two aspects of the same phenomenon. And without music, meditation lacks something; without music, meditation is a little dull, unalive. Without meditation, music is simply noise -- harmonious, but noise. Without meditation, music is an entertainment. And without music, meditation becomes more and more negative, tends to be death-oriented.

Hence my insistence that music and meditation should go together. That adds a new dimension -- to both. Both are enriched by it.

Remember three M's just as you remember three R's. The first M is mathematics; mathematics is the purest science. The second M is music; music is pure art. And the third M is meditation; meditation is pure religion. Where all these three meet, you attain the trinity.

My approach is scientific. Even if I make illogical statements, I make them very very logically. Even if I assert paradoxes, they are asserted in a logical way. Whatsoever I am saying has a mathematics behind it, a method, a certain scientific approach. I am not an unscientific person. My science serves my religion; the science is not the end but it is a beautiful beginning.

And my approach is artistic, aesthetic. I cannot help you unless this energy field becomes musical. Music is pure art. And if it is joined with mathematics, it becomes a tremendously powerful instrument to penetrate into your interiority. Of course, it will not be complete unless meditation is the highest peak, the purest religion.

And we are trying to create the ultimate synthesis. This is my trinity: mathematics, music, meditation. This is my trimurti -- three faces of God. You can attain to God through one face, but then your experience of God will not be so rich as it will be when you attain two faces. But it will still lack something unless you attain all the three faces. When you know God as a trinity, when you have come through all the three dimensions, your experience, your nirvana, your enlightenment, will be the richest.

Buddha insists on meditation alone; that is one face of God. Mohammed insists on prayer, music, singing; hence the Koran has the quality of music in it. No other scripture has so much music in it as the Koran. The very word koran simply means "Recite! Sing!" That was the first revelation to Mohammed. Something from the beyond called forth and said, "Recite! Recite! Sing!"

Islam is another face of God. And there are religions which have approached God through the third M: mathematics. Jainism is the purest representative of the third approach. Mahavira speaks like Albert Einstein. It is not an accident that Mahavira was

the first person in human history to talk about the theory of relativity. After twenty-five centuries, Albert Einstein was able to prove it scientifically, but Mahavira saw it in his vision.

If you read Mahavira, his statements are absolutely logical, mathematical. Jaina scriptures have no juice in them -- dry, arithmetical. That is another face of God. And only three kinds of religion have existed in the world: the religions of mathematics, represented by Jainism; the religions of music, represented by Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism; and the religions of meditation, represented by Buddhism, Taoism. My effort here is to give you a total religion, which contains all the three M's in it. It is a very ambitious adventure. It has never been tried before; hence I am going to be opposed as nobody has ever been opposed before. You are moving with a dangerous person, but the journey is going to be of tremendous beauty. Dangers, hazards don't make a journey ugly; on the contrary, they make it tremendously beautiful. All the dangers that you will have to face with me are going to give you a thrill. The journey is not going to be dull, it is going to be very alive. We are going to move towards God in such a multidimensional way that each moment of the journey is going to be precious.

I started these Buddha lectures with a ten-day silence deliberately. It was a device to start with silence -- Buddha would have been very happy. He must have shrugged his shoulders a little bit because of the music, but what can I do? It can't be helped.

My religion has to be a religion of dance, love, laughter. It has to be life-oriented, it has to be life-affirmative. It has to be a love affair with life. It is not a renunciation but a rejoicing.

The second question:

Question 2

BELOVED MASTER,

IT IS ABOUT THIS FEELING THAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE, AND AS SOON AS I FEEL IT, IT SEEMS SO FAR AWAY -- BUT WHAT IS THIS "IT"?

Deva Prashantam, it is one of the perennial problems encountered by every seeker of truth. You cannot grasp truth -- if you try, it will be far far away. You cannot possess truth -- if you try, you will find your hands utterly empty. Truth cannot be possessed because it is not a thing. On the contrary, you have to be courageous enough to be possessed by truth -- because it is a love affair.

Allow yourself to be possessed by it and you will know what it is. But you have been doing just the contrary: you have been trying to have a grip on it. That's what mind always longs for, desires. That's what mind calls "understanding." Unless the mind is capable of catching hold of something, the mind is not satisfied.

But truth is mercurial: if you try to hold it in your hands, the firmer the grip, the more elusive it will become, and the farthest -- so far away that you will stop believing in it, trusting in it...so far away that you will not be able to see that it exists at all.

Truth comes; it cannot be brought. Truth happens; you cannot do anything about it -- because the doer is the problem, the hindrance, the obstacle. The doer is the ego. And if

you somehow manage and don't allow the doer to interfere, it comes by the back door -- as the one who experiences, as an observer, as an experiencer. It is the same ego again, in new garments.

That's why when you feel it, it is lost -- the doer has come now as a feeler. The doer has to be dissolved totally; it has not to be allowed back in some subtle way, in some secret way.

Let the truth be! Don't be in a hurry to understand it or to feel it -- just let it be there. You need not do anything about it. If you can remain in such a state of nondoing, of no-effort, of no-ego, you will understand, you will feel, you will know, you will have it. It can only be had indirectly, not directly.

Prashantam, that's where you are missing it. And that's where everybody misses it. Yes, there are moments when suddenly it is so close by...you would like to grab it. The very desire to grab comes out of greed, the very desire to grab comes out of fear. The very desire to grab is a mind desire. And as the mind enters in, truth goes out.

Can't you simply be silent, not doing anything at all -- not on the intellectual level, not on the physical level, not on the emotional level -- doing nothing at all, just being there, utterly quiet? And then you will be possessed by it. And the only way to know it is to be possessed by it.

You say, "It is about this feeling that it has always been there...."

Yes, it has always been there. It is our very being. It is the stuff we are made of. Truth is not something separate from you: you are truth. It is your very consciousness, the very ground of your being. You need not go anywhere else to seek and search, to Kashi or to Kaaba. Not even a single step is needed.

Lao Tzu says: You can find it sitting in your own house, no need to go anywhere -- because it is already there! When you go on a search, when you move into seeking, you go farther away from it. Each search takes you away from the truth that is already there. And there are moments when you feel it, that it has always been there -- moments of joy, love, beauty. Moments when suddenly the world stops: a beautiful sunset...and you are gripped by it. Remember I am saying you are gripped by it, possessed by it, not that you possess it. How can you possess a sunset? The sunset possesses you, fills you; every nook and corner of your being is overflowing with the beauty of it.

And then one knows, deep down in the depths of one's being, it has always been there. Not even the words are needed; one simply knows without words -- one feels.

Or, when you are in love...or when you listen to beautiful poetry...or the songs of the birds...or just the wind blowing through the pine trees...or the sound of water... Whenever you allow yourself to be possessed you will find, suddenly, out of nowhere, truth has appeared, God has appeared, dhamma has appeared. You have touched something intangible, you have seen something invisible. You have been in contact with something eternal...aes dhammo sanantano -- the eternal law, the inexhaustible law.

Whenever you are in a state of harmony, everything humming, functioning in harmony, whenever you are in accord...and these moments happen to everybody. These moments have nothing to do with churches and the temples and the mosques. In fact, it is very rare to find a person becoming enlightened in a church or in a mosque, in a temple.

Buddha became enlightened under a tree, watching the last morning star disappearing in the sky; not in a temple, not in a church -- under a tree, watching a star. Must have become possessed. And the disappearing star, slowly slowly disappearing...going, going, gone. One moment before it was there, and now it is no longer there. And in that moment, suddenly something in him, the last citadel of the ego, disappeared too. Just like the disappearing morning star, his ego disappeared too.

The sky was empty, and he was empty. And whenever two things are empty, they become one -- because two empty things cannot be demarcated. By what will you demarcate emptiness? Two nothings cannot be kept separate; two nothings become one nothing. The star disappeared there, and the sky was empty, and the ego disappeared inside and the sky was empty inside too...and suddenly the inner and the outer were gone. It was only one sky.

That moment Buddha became enlightened. That moment he came to know dhamma, the logos, the tao, God, the cosmic principle of life.

Mahavira became enlightened, not in a temple -- not even in a Jaina temple! There were Jaina temples in Mahavira's time. Mahavira was the twenty-fourth tirthankara of the Jainas -- the twenty-fourth great master. Twenty-three masters had preceded him. There were Jaina temples, but he didn't become enlightened in a Jaina temple -- the Jainas should note the fact. He became enlightened in the forest. Just sitting there, doing nothing, and suddenly it came. It comes like a flood.

Mohammed became enlightened on a mountain. And so is the case with everybody: Lao Tzu, Zarathustra, Kabir, Nanak...not a single person has ever become enlightened in a temple, church or mosque. Why do you go there?

Go early in the morning to see the sunrise. Sit in the middle of the night watching the sky full of stars. Go, befriend trees and rocks. Go, lie down by the side of the river and listen to its sound. And you will be coming closer and closer to the real temple of God. Nature is his real temple. And there, be possessed -- don't try to possess. The effort to possess is worldly; the desire to be possessed is divine.

Prashantam, next time it happens, don't try to do anything about it. No need to understand, no need to observe, no need to examine, no need to analyze -- let it be there! Be possessed by it! Dance it! Sing it! And be totally one with it. That is the only way to know it.

You ask me, "It is about this feeling that it has always been there" -- the feeling is absolutely true -- "and as soon as I feel it, it seems so far away." Because with the feeling, the 'I' comes in -- and the 'I' is the distance between you and truth. The bigger the 'I', the bigger the distance, the smaller the 'I', the smaller the distance. No 'I', no distance.

And you ask me, "...but what is this 'it'?"

I cannot say it. It is now. Be possessed! It is here. Be possessed! It is not in my words but in the gaps. It is not in my statements but in the intervals. Read it between the lines.

But remember one thing very very significant: that you have to be possessed by it to understand it. And we are very much afraid of being possessed -- it seems as if we are

losing control, it seems as if we are dissolving. "Who knows where it will land us? Who knows whether I will be able to come back from it or not?"

All these fears arise and you shrink back. And that is the moment you create the distance. The distance is your creation. Otherwise, it is always here, it is always now. Don't create the distance, don't bring fear in.

In all the languages of the world there are words for religious people like 'God-fearing' - ugly words, absolute lies, because a religious person is not a God-fearing person at all. A religious person is a God-loving person, not a God-fearing person. But the priest depends on fear, he exploits your fear, and he creates fear in you. His whole business depends on whether you are afraid.

Drop your fears. There is no need to be afraid of God. God simply means the totality, the whole, that which is. We are part of it! How can the part be afraid of the whole? The whole cares for the part, the whole loves the part, because the whole will not be the whole without the part. It cannot be indifferent to the part.

Knowing this, one trusts. Knowing this, one allows the whole to possess. Knowing this, one drops all fears, one surrenders. And only in surrender it is, only in trust it is.

I can indicate towards it, but I cannot explain it to you. And it is already happening to you, Prashantam. You are blessed. Just stop your ways of creating distance between you and it. And that can be easily done: just take a little risk, a step into the unknown.... Fear will be there -- in spite of it, go into the unknown. Let the fear be there -- still go into the unknown. Only by going into the unknown will the fear disappear, because you will come to know there is nothing to fear.

And once you are enchanted by the unknown, then there is no end to this pilgrimage -- it is an eternal journey, never-ending, always ongoing; it is inexhaustible. *aes dhammo sanantano* -- it is eternal and inexhaustible....

The third question:

Question 3

BELOVED MASTER,

WHAT IS YOUR HOBBY?

Anando, I have none. I don't need any. A hobby is needed to keep you occupied. When you are tired of your ordinary occupation -- and naturally one gets tired of earning bread and butter -- when you are tired of your ordinary occupation there are only two alternatives. Either be unoccupied...which creates great fear in you, because to be unoccupied means to be with oneself, to be utterly alone with oneself. It is to face one's own abysmal depth -- it frightens, it scares. It means to face one's life and one's death, it means to face one's own interiority -- which is infinite, so vast you cannot comprehend it. And the very vastness frightens. A great trembling arises in you.

The one alternative is: meditate when you are unoccupied with your ordinary business. The other alternative is: get occupied again in some foolish activity, and call it a hobby.

A few people collect postage stamps -- now, see the stupidity of it -- and they call it a hobby. And all hobbies are like that. These are ways and means to keep escaping from yourself.

I am utterly blissful with myself. To be alone, to be, without doing anything, is such a profound experience that if once you have tasted it you will drop all these stupid activities called hobbies. Hobbies are pseudo occupations. When real occupations are not there, you get into pseudo occupations. Now, see the foolishness of it. Six days of the week you are waiting for Sunday -- so that you can relax, so that you can rest, so that you can be with yourself. You are tired of the world; the world is too much with you. You are tired of people, you are tired of everything. And you are hoping Sunday will come soon, and when Sunday comes you are again occupied -- now it is your hobby. You cannot remain unoccupied; that is your problem.

And it often happens that a person is more tired after Sunday than after any other day, because of so many hobbies, and going for a picnic, and driving, and doing a thousand and one things for which you have been waiting for six days. And you were thinking you were going to rest?

You cannot rest! You don't know how to rest. You cannot relax -- you don't know how to relax. Even in the name of relaxation you will get into some work, some kind of work; even in the name of rest you will start some kind of work. Simply because you are not paid for it, does it become rest? You will play cards or chess. You are not paid for it, that's true, but that doesn't make much difference; it is only unpaid work.

Rather than searching for hobbies, use the opportunities. Whenever you are capable of having a time empty, utterly unoccupied, with yourself, remain...remain in it, don't move out of it. Don't start collecting stamps.

Two old Jewish men were sitting on a park bench. "Well, what do you do now that you are retired?" asked one.

"I have a hobby: I raise pigeons," replied the other.

"Pigeons? Where do you keep them? You live in a condominium!"

"I keep them in a closet."

"In your closet? Don't they shit on your shoes and on your clothes?"

"No," said the man. "I keep them in a box."

"In a box? How do they breathe?"

"Breathe? They don't breathe," said the man, "they are dead."

"Dead?" exclaimed the friend, shocked. "You keep dead pigeons?"

"What the hell, it is only a hobby!"

The fourth question:

Question 4

BELOVED MASTER,

THIS MORNING WHEN YOU ADDRESSED US "MY BELOVED BODHISATTVAS," IT FELT AT THAT MOMENT AS THOUGH IT WERE ACTUALLY TRUE. BUT LATER

ON, EVEN A POSSIBILITY THAT WE ONE DAY WILL BECOME BODHISATTVAS SEEMED LIKE A DREAM....

Sheela, it is a truth -- that's why when uttered with trust, with love, it immediately strikes something deep in your heart, it rings a bell. But it is because of my trust that it rings a bell. I say again: You are bodhisattvas -- buddhas in essence, in seed, in potentiality.

When I say it, I mean it. When I say it, I say it because it is so. And in that moment you are so in tune with me that it appears absolutely true; no proof is needed, no argument is needed.

I need not argue for the truths that I utter. In fact, no truth ever needs any argument; it is simple, but it immediately rings a bell. The only thing needed is that it should come from the heart, then it reaches your heart.

I am not talking from my head. I am pouring my being into your being. It is a meeting of energies. It is a meeting of souls. Hence, when you are with me, it appears absolutely true -- you cannot doubt it, it is impossible. But when you are alone and I am not there, doubts arise. Your old mind comes back, with a vengeance, and says, "Sheela, you, and a bodhisattva? And what about your love with Veetrag? -- and you, a bodhisattva? And what about your jealousies, and what about your anger, and what about all that you are? You a bodhisattva? He must have been joking; he tricked you!" Great doubts arise because they are always there in your mind.

It is like you come with me, we go along, we walk side by side for the time being. I have a light in my hand, but because of my light, your path is also lighted. Then the moment comes when we part -- we have to part; a crossroad has come, our paths separate. I move in one direction, you move in another. Suddenly you are in darkness and you are very much puzzled: "What happened to the light?"

That light was not yours. Of course, your path was lighted, but the light was not yours. So when you are with me, there is a light surrounding you. In that light, things are very clear. When you are not with me suddenly there is darkness, and in that darkness you will doubt everything that you had trusted, and in that darkness you will doubt even the possibility of light. You will doubt even the reality of the light that you had lived just a few moments before. Your mind will say, "You must have been dreaming. You must have been hallucinating. What light? Where is the light? If it was there, where has it gone?"

And this will happen again and again. This has a deep significance to be understood. When you are with me, here, listening to me, sitting by my side, the situation can remain the same even when you are not physically with me. You will have to go a little deeper in your love, so that even if physically you are far away, spiritually you are not. Then the trust will continue. Then doubts will not dare to come in.

Right now doubts come in because you have a certain love for me but it is not yet total. There are spaces within your being you have not allowed access to me yet. And this is not only so with Sheela, it is so with many of you. You are keeping a few corners still hidden, separate, private, of your own. You have not opened your heart totally, you are

not utterly naked. And if you are hiding something, then whatsoever you are hiding will remain a distance between me and you.

So when you are here, under my impact, when you are here physically with me, my presence can put your mind aside. But when you are not physically with me, your mind will come back -- you have not put it aside! Learn a lesson: when you go away from me, when you cannot see me, try to still be with me. Imbibe the spirit of closeness, intimacy -- then even death cannot separate us. Then there is no question of space and time. Then you are with me forever. And the trust will persist, and the trust will continue; it will become a constant factor in you. The only thing that will be constant will be your trust. Everything else will change, but not the trust.

You will have found the center of your being. And that finding is arriving home.

The last question:

Question 5

BELOVED MASTER,

THERE IS SO MUCH NONSENSE ABOUT YOUR TEACHINGS AND THE ACTIVITIES OF YOUR ASHRAM IN THE PRESS RECENTLY. IT SOMEHOW INFURIATES ME BECAUSE IT SEEMS SO FAR FROM THE ACTUAL FACTS. LETTERS IN RESPONSE TO THE CONTRARY ARE NOT BEING PUBLISHED. NOW, I KNOW THIS MUST MAKE NO DIFFERENCE WHATSOEVER TO YOU. IS THIS THEN WHAT JESUS MEANS WHEN HE SAYS TO TURN THE OTHER CHEEK?

Zareen, it is as it should be. A man like me cannot remain unopposed. A man like me is bound to divide people into two categories: those who are with me and those who are not with me.

Just the other day, an old friend wrote a letter to me suggesting.... Right now there are only two kinds of people: those who are devotees, who are utterly in love with me, and those who are enemies, full of hatred for me. He wants to create a third category of people who are neither devotees nor enemies, but impartial thinkers.

His idea looks logical, but it is not possible. It has never happened, and it is not going to happen. It cannot happen. In fact, he himself is finding it difficult to become a sannyasin. He has been an old friend and he feels it a little difficult to surrender now as a disciple. He cannot be a devotee and he cannot be an enemy either. He knows me, he loves me; he has been a friend of long standing. So it is really his problem.

He cannot surrender because of his ego that he was a friend to me, a colleague. He cannot be against me because he feels for me. Now he is in a jam, so he wants to find a way out; he wants to create a third force -- people who are neither for nor against but impartial. Those people will be impotent. And I am not interested in impartial people. I am not interested in the third force at all, for a certain reason: because they will be utterly cold. I am far more interested in people who have a very strong hatred for me -- they are at least hot, and hot people are good people. They can be transformed; they are not ice-cold.

Those who are hotly in hate with me sooner or later will have become devotees -- because you cannot live in hate long. It hurts you. By hating me you cannot love me. Zareen, you are right, it doesn't matter at all to me. If the whole world hates me, it doesn't matter, it makes no difference. I remain in my absolute bliss.

My bliss cannot be affected by people's hatred, opposition. But think of those people who are living in hatred -- they are torturing themselves, they are hurting themselves, they are wounding themselves. How long can they go on doing it? Sooner or later their wounds would like to heal. And sooner or later, their very heated antagonism itself will turn into a passionate love.

I am reminded, Zareen, of a beautiful story:

A Sufi mystic wrote a book on the Koran. It was opposed by all the authorities, by the official religion. They banned it, they made it a crime to read it. It was sacrilegious, they thought, dangerous, because he was interpreting the Koran in such a way as nobody had ever interpreted it. He was going against the tradition.

He called his chief disciple, gave him the book, and told him to go to the chief priest and present the book to him -- and watch everything. "Whatsoever happens, you have to report it correctly. So be very alert: whatsoever happens...when you give the book as a present, how he reacts, what he does, what he says, remember accurately because you have to report the whole scene. And let me tell you," the master told him, "that this is a kind of test for you. It is not only the question of giving the book to the chief priest and coming back; the whole point is reporting everything as it happens."

The man went, very alert, very cautious. Entering into the house of the chief priest, he made himself very alert, shook his body, because everything had to be observed minutely. Then he went in.

As he presented the book to the chief priest and told the name of his master, the priest threw the book out of the house, onto the road, and said, "Why didn't you tell me before that this is from that dangerous man? I would not even have touched it. I will have to wash my hands now. It is a sin to touch his book!"

The wife of the chief priest was sitting by his side. She said, "You are being unnecessarily hard on the poor man. He has not done any harm to you. Even if you wanted to throw the book, you could have thrown it later on. And I don't see the point in throwing it because you have a big library -- thousands of books are there; this book can also be kept in the library. If you don't want to read it, there is no need to read it. But you could have done at least one thing: you could have thrown it afterwards, washed your hands, taken a bath, or whatsoever you wanted to do -- but why are you hurting this poor man?"

The man went back, told the master the whole thing as it happened, in minute detail. The master asked, "What is your reaction, then?"

The man said, "My reaction is that the wife of the chief priest is a very religious woman. I felt much respect for her. And the chief priest is simply ugly -- I wanted to cut his throat!"

The master said, "Now listen: I am more interested in the chief priest -- he can be converted because he is hot. If he can be so full of hate, he can also be so full of love, because it is the same energy that becomes hate or love. Love standing upside-down is hate -- love doing shirshasana, a headstand, is hate. But it is very easy to put a man back on his feet. As far as the wife is concerned, she is cold, ice-cold. I have no hope for her; she cannot be converted."

I totally agree with the Sufi master. Those who are against me, Zareen, why are they against me? Their hearts are stirred. Something has started happening to them, and they don't want it to happen. It is risky. I have started influencing their lives and they don't want to go with me.

Their whole investment is against it. They want to avoid me, and they see that they cannot avoid me -- they are becoming heated up. Hence the hatred; hence they are inventing all kinds of lies. But I have great hope for these people -- in fact, I love these people. Sooner or later they are going to end up with me.

The real problem is with those people who are indifferent, ice-cold, neither for nor against. I would like to divide the whole humanity into two camps: the friends and the enemies. And the more friends I have the more enemies are bound to be there. There is a certain balance in it; in life everything balances. If you have so many friends, you are bound to have so many enemies; otherwise the balance will be lost. If you have more friends, you will have more enemies; the balance has to be kept. Life continuously balances itself.

I watch the whole scene and enjoy it.

Zareen, you need not be worried about it. But I can understand your concern.

You say, "There is so much nonsense about your teachings and the activities of your ashram in the press recently...."

There will be more and more every day, because more and more people are going to come to me. Millions are on the way. And the more people become interested in me and the work that is going on here, the more and more people become involved in it, the more and more people will be against it -- a kind of balance. It is how things happen in the world; it is a natural phenomenon.

And all kinds of nonsense is bound to be told, because the people who are against have never been here. If they had been here they would have not been against, so they live on rumors. And negative things have a way of their own: they spread more easily, faster, quicker, because the whole of humanity lives in negativity.

For example, just the other day I received a letter from Canada saying that the Canadian government is becoming concerned, very much concerned, about my sannyasins and the people coming to me from Canada. And they are seriously inquiring into the whole phenomenon, because they are afraid that my commune may turn into another Jonestown. Now, I feel happy, because when governments become concerned that means something is happening. When a faraway country becomes so much concerned that they are thinking of sending a team to investigate the whole phenomenon, that

mean things are on the way, that I am becoming some kind of disturbance to them. I must be popping up in their dreams.

And on what grounds are they becoming so much afraid? Because one American sannyasin committed suicide, another American sannyasin went mad. These two instances are enough.... Now, Americans are all mad! And have you seen an American who has never pondered the possibility of committing suicide? The psychologists say that every American, at least four times in his life, thinks of committing suicide. The greatest rate of suicide is in America.

Out of one hundred thousand sannyasins, one sannyasin commits suicide -- that is enough! And that too an American sannyasin. What else were you expecting from an American sannyasin? Another American goes mad...it is absolutely normal! But the negative catches our attention immediately. How many Americans have gone sane, nobody bothers. And how many Americans have been prevented from committing suicide, nobody counts. They will never be counted.

And journalists, the press, and other media, they are also only interested in the negative things. Unless you do something wrong, you are not news. George Bernard Shaw says: If a dog bites a man, it is not news. But if a man bites a dog, it is news.

Something is newsworthy only if it is outlandish, if it is eye-catching.

You can go on doing a thousand and one things and nobody will take any note. Do only one thing wrong and the whole world suddenly becomes interested in you.

And then people are very inventive. When you tell a rumor to a person you add something to it. People are creative! And when that person shares the rumor with somebody else, do you think he will share it exactly as you told him? He will give it a new color, a little more depth, a little larger dimension. He will make it more attractive, he will exaggerate it. And it goes on and on from mouth to mouth.

Rumors have a way of spreading, and everybody contributes to them. They don't have anything that relates to the facts. But this is how it always happens. And then it continues.... I will be gone and the rumors will continue, and they will go on increasing. They become independent forces; they go on growing.

I have heard:

God has the blues. Saint Peter suggests a trip to Earth to pick up a nice Greek girl, possibly in the old swan suit. God says, "No. As long as I stuck to those Greek girls it was alright. But once I made the mistake of knocking up a Jewish girl, two thousand years ago, and I'll be damned if they aren't still talking about it!"

Rumors go on and on.... And what they are doing to me is nothing uncommon; it is expected. They have always done such things to Jesus, to Socrates, to Mansoor, to Buddha, to Kabir. If they don't do these things to me, that will be a surprise. In fact, I will not feel good if they don't do these things to me. I would like to be counted with the buddhas -- and that is the only way!

Jesus decided to return to earth. He had seen that in America there was a resurgence of Jesus freaks and born-again baptists, so he thought it was a good time to come. He brought Peter along with him.

When he came to Earth he made the announcement that he was Jesus, the Son of God. No one would believe him; they thought he was some kind of nut. So Jesus asked Peter, "How can I get them to believe me, to convince them that I am the true savior?"

Peter said, "Remember that trick you did in Galilee, when you walked across the water? I bet that would work."

So they made a press announcement that tomorrow Jesus would walk on water. On the next day, the television and newspapers were at the lake to watch Jesus walk on water. Jesus and Peter arrived and rowed out to the middle of the lake, then Jesus climbed over the side of the boat and immediately sank. When he came back up, Peter, in shock, asked, "What happened? Why did you sink?"

"Shut up, you fool!" said Jesus. "The last time I did this I didn't have these damned holes in my feet!"

Things are more difficult than they were in the time of Jesus and Buddha! But I am enjoying, I am having a good time. Zareen, don't be worried at all. My suggestion is: you should enjoy it.

You say, "It somehow infuriates me because it seems so far from the actual facts."

Don't feel infuriated, don't feel angry -- that won't help. My people have to learn to laugh at all these stupid things that are bound to become more and more intense. As my work deepens, more and more nonsense rumors will go around -- which will have nothing to do with the facts. Or, even if they have something to do with the facts, they will distort them.

People are going to invent many kinds of stories. If you become infuriated, in a way you help them. That's what they want. That's what they want! -- that if my people become infuriated, angry, then they can crush, destroy you. And, certainly, they can crush and they can destroy you. My people are very few, a chosen few.

Don't feel infuriated; otherwise you will be playing into their hands. When such things come to your notice, have a good laugh. Learn to laugh -- respond with laughter! Laughter has to be your protection. And your laughter will make them look stupid. When somebody says something against me, have a good laugh. Pat him on the back, hug him! Give him a good kiss!

That's what Jesus means, really: love your enemies. But I know, it is easy to love your enemies -- it is more difficult to love your neighbors. So I say, just as Jesus says, again: Love your neighbors. They are the same people! Hug your neighbors; don't just go on loving them spiritually -- express it. When somebody is saying some nonsense thing about me, express your love. Let him feel puzzled -- let him feel either he is mad or you are mad. He will never be able to figure it out, what happened -- why you hugged him. He was not saying such nice things about your master...why did you hug him? That might give him a longing to come and see the master too. When the disciple is doing such a thing it is worth taking the trouble to go and see what is happening there.

Zareen, no need to be angry.

And you say, "Letters in response to the contrary are not being published."

They will not be published, because the newspapers, the television, the radio, they are in the hands of the vested interests. They will publish everything that is against me, because some newspaper is owned by a Hindu, some newspaper is owned by a Jaina, some newspaper is owned by a Mohammedan, some newspaper is owned by a Christian -- and all the newspapers are owned by different kinds of politicians. Your letters will not be published. These things have to be taken for granted.

You say, "Now, I know this must make no difference whatsoever to you. Is this then what Jesus means when he says to turn the other cheek?"

Yes, that's exactly what Jesus means. That's the best way to transform people, to convert people. The best possible way to convert people to your own way is to give the other cheek. Love them. Laugh at their nonsensical statements. Enjoy their rumors. Make jokes out of them, and make them puzzled.

If you can do that much, you are doing my work, Zareen.

Enough for today.