

THE WORLD IS AS YOU SEE IT

IGOR KUFAYEV

WHEN ONE SEES FROM THE HEART, ONE'S VISION IS SAID TO BE ADJUSTED...

WHEN THE EARTH SHAKES, THE tremor is felt right at the heart, before any cognition has taken place. At that very instant, before any sensory experience is defined, we feel the gripping sensation at the very core of our being. A split second after, the immediacy of the event is being 'assessed' by the cognitive responses and we act in accord with the inborn reflexes or the way we've mastered the instincts.

These kinds of experiences strip us bare of all coverings and we stand naked in the presence of pure Being, even if only for a split moment. In the aftermath we often feel serene and elated from being shaken to the roots of our existence. These moments have the capacity to reveal that awareness is prior to any sensory or mental interpretation. The reason why it's not obvious is because cognition takes over in a flash, perhaps to reassure the continuity of sensory perception. This is the key to the mystery of perception, that which keeps the treasure of direct experiencing locked into relationship between the seer and the seen.



KASHMIR SHAIVA TANTRAS SPEAKS OF dramatic experiences that give us an immediate sense of our essential nature

beyond any coverings or conceptual understanding. These experiences don't have to be terrifying or frightening. The receptiveness to beauty could be just as powerful, for it opens the windows onto a transcendental view of reality.¹ Creating or being in the presence of a profoundly moving work of art, in whatever form, could trigger an esthetic response which prompts us to lose our identity, for a moment, and merge with *the work*. This transcendental experience of becoming one with what is being perceived could be said to be the very noble purpose of all arts. Most of us have had these experiences, albeit often too short and passing unacknowledged. Still, these are casual confirmations of the Self uncoated by its own power of perception, immediate and self-evident, even if its *fall* short of a true spiritual revelation.

One could argue that these are only fleeting moments and have little significance when it comes to deep spiritual insights. Fleeting as they are, these moments give us a distinctive flavor of Being beyond any sensory or mental interpretation, well before the Self has fully cognized itself on the level of human existence. That is, shaken to the core, we *fall* into awareness which puts us firmly on the ground of conscious living.

No matter how knowledgeable or intelligent we are, our perception is

subjected to the limitations imposed by the relationship between knower and known. It is because the knowledge itself is based on information provided by the senses and interpreted by the dichotomized nature of the mind. While subject and object remain a predominant experience, direct perception of Reality is hidden from the view. The purpose of spiritual practice is to free our awareness from the duality born of the perceiver and the perceived. Another meaning of liberation is freedom from the known – not so much from memory, which holds experiences stored as information, but freedom from the identification with the knower and the known above all else!

That liberation cannot be achieved on the level of mind. No matter how clear is the grasp of Ultimate Reality on the intellectual level, it is still a concept. Mind is inseparable from the dual nature of a thought, where subject and object are its chief constituents. It is for that reason Perennial traditions speak of merging into *the Heart*, for it reconciles the seer (subject) and the seen (object) into Oneness – as natural a state as Being itself.

Beatific or terrifying, all experiences rise from and merge into that sphere where perception is in the molten state of pure potentiality. This is of special significance, for our perception is at its utmost refinement when the creative tension between our awareness and pure

potentiality is in perfect alignment. That alignment is represented by union of Siva and *Sakti* and spontaneously takes place at the Heart.

The heart region is associated with many functions, and often serves as a metaphor for feeling, emotion and intuition. However, the *Spiritual Heart* is not the physical heart nor is it the energetic wheel, known as the *Anahata Chakra*, but the abode of Consciousness itself.² The Spiritual Heart transcends Time and Space, yet it has a precise location in the human body, and experience places it in the chest, two digits to the right of the central line, almost mirroring the physical heart.

Entering the Heart – as most explicitly expressed in the traditions of Sufism and Tantra – is paramount to direct realization of one's essential nature. For it allows *seeing* via *the Heart*. Here perception reaches its spiritual maturity, undisturbed by fluctuations of the mind, and refined to the point of Oneness.

The Heart is the seat of Prana (vital force) contained in perfect equilibrium; direct apprehension of the Supreme Essence is fully cognized here. From here it emanates as Universal Love and finds its expression on all planes. The Heart is the eye of Non-dual Awareness which beholds all creation with an equal vision. From here all perceptions ebb and flow as waves on the sea of infinity.



EVERYONE FAMILIAR WITH THE ancient *Advaita Vedanta* texts³ would recognize that the line, *The world is as you see it*, serves as a leitmotif of the entire scripture, and points to the core of experience itself. Yet the phrase is not as obvious as it may seem.

² It is an important distinction that the physical heart is the most refined replica on the material plane, while the Heart Chakra is the energetic wheel which balances the elementary realm with that of pure Tattvas (forms of energy).

³ Yoga Vasishtha – one of the most important scriptures of the Vedantic Philosophy.

⁴ According to the Tantric view, *Sakti* is the primordial power which gives rise to all Energy. It is the power of *Siva* (Pure Awareness) manifesting itself as *Sakti* (Pure Potentiality).

⁵ The very term Kundalini, "the coiled one", conveys the contracted state of Awareness on the psyche-physiological plane. When that energy is stirred, awakened and undergoes the process of expansion, it is known, from there on, as Prana *Sakti*.

At its face value, the line conveys the very nature of seeing, for the quality of perception is based on the cognitive responses. Empowered by the dichotomized and synthesizing nature of the brain, the senses complete the picture by giving us the three dimensional view of what we call manifested reality. That process, electrical in essence, is conducted by the *vital force* or *Prana*, as it is known in Indian Tradition.

Prana is the chief property of *Sakti*⁴, the dynamic aspect of Awareness which illumines all processes. *Sakti* is responsible for expansion and contraction of Awareness on the level of human experience⁵.

Perception is far from a passive act, and the information supplied by the senses is not an autonomous event taking place in a human body. It is a process where the inseparable relationship between the observer and the observed is in a state of creative tension. Moreover, that relationship is influenced by the quality of perceiving, the quality of observing. When I behold something, anything, I am bringing it forth into existence by a sheer act of seeing. Seen from that perspective, perception is a dynamic process where perceiver, perceiving and perceived are mutually interdependent modalities of Consciousness, without which there is no experience. Our perception is colored by the modality which dominates awareness at any particular moment. (For instance, when the object dominates our experience, perception is said to be reduced to the gross experience of physical reality. When our attention moves to the subject, there is a qualitative shift in awareness.)

The richness of our environment is based on the level of our awareness. The World 'out there' is the way we perceive it 'in here' and that's not a static affair, for our reality changes with our perception of it. It is for that reason that refinement of perception is seen as an indispensable part of any spiritual progress. From gross to subtle, to celestial and beyond, with every change in awareness there is a corresponding change in perception, and, as a result, in our environment. Consciousness is self-referral and perception is its inherent quality. It is said that the creative vision of an artist is based on the perceptual ability to see the world beyond the obvious. Likewise the mystical vision is a transparent perception of reality stripped of coverings from the sensory to the extra-sensory, to the divine vision of the Self beholding itself. Moreover, every change in perception is accompanied by subtle changes in what is being perceived. We are literally molding our reality by the way we perceive it. The true seeing unfolds in being able to appreciate the subtlest aspect of creation in all its beauty and splendor, "to see a World in a Grain of Sand And a Heaven in a Wild Flower..." to borrow William Blake's line, a poetic vision of Oneness in motion.



THERE IS A CERTAIN VIEW PREVALENT in *Neo-advaita* suggesting that names and forms are creations of the mind, which means that as long as the mind exists, so does the world of forms and phenomena. That view makes sense when the World is seen as an illusion or a reflection of Pure Awareness.

However, when the World is perceived in terms of one's own Self, what seemed unreal – at the initial or intermediate stages of Self-realization –

is now being experienced as one's own reality, permeated with Bliss. This is a very intimate affair where such terms as 'real' and 'unreal' completely lose their meaning. So the intimacy between name and form goes beyond formation of the mind. To have a better view on that, let us consider the following.

Any form in its essence is sound condensed as matter. Sound creates patterns; these patterns correspond to anything born into the manifested, audible plane of existence. Thus Kashmir Shaivism speaks of the vocalized patterns of Energy (*Sakti*) as an expression of Pure Awareness (Siva), where the matrix¹ of name and form is the Womb of all that is born into existence. These vocal sounds emanate from the Heart and assume an identity of their own by veiling Pure Awareness with the power of its own limitation. Yet, in essence, all names and forms are expressions of Oneness humming its own name to Itself.

Sakti (Pure Potentiality) is the dynamic expression of Siva (Pure Awareness). *Sakti* is Siva. Pure Awareness and Pure Potentiality are in a state of constant creative tension without which there is no experience at all. When it comes to perception, there is nothing that has no *Sakti* behind its movement. We could suggest that the unfathomable mystery of perception is perfectly reflected through the complex network of cognitive responses on the level of human physiology, where sensory experiences are divine attributes and Grace itself is the transmitter.

To sum it up without any attempts to pin in down, there is no Awareness without Movement within its own Stillness. Consciousness is conscious of itself because of its inherent movement within. What is real or unreal here is indeed a matter of perception. Hence the World is as you see it. Whatever you perceive, behold it tenderly; it is alive and throbbing with infinite possibilities of which you are but an expression – of Love in its pure potentiality. ❖

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Igor Kufayev - Vamadeva was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Classically trained in art from an early age, he student at the St Petersburg's Academy of Fine Arts, had his first solo exhibition at the age of twenty five and by his early thirties enjoyed an international art career in London.

At the age of thirty six Igor had undergone a radical transformation of consciousness which subsequently blossomed into spontaneous unfoldment of Grace. He abandoned his art career and for the next few years continued long hours of meditation, integrating expanded state of awareness throughout all his interactions. He has been sharing his revelations into the essence of Being since 2002. He points to the integral process of Self-realization where all cognitive and mental processes are orchestrated by the expansion of Consciousness within, emphasizing the importance of the physiology with its nervous system, that acts as a support for individual consciousness to mature into full Enlightenment.

Igor is among the principle presenters at this year's SAND (Science and Non-duality) Conference in The Netherlands and California, USA. He is currently based in Mallorca with his partner and their two children.

<http://igorkufayev-vamadeva.com>

¹*Matrica* (sanskrit), from the root *Ma* – Mother of all that exists. Hence the World is seen not as an Illusion, but as a pulsating with infinite possibilities – Reality itself. This is an alternative view of Maya, distinctively different from the dreamlike illusion generally accepted in Advaita Vedanta.