

THE CYCLE OF SAMSAARA (Worldly Life)

by
Dr. Nitin Trasi

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All over the centuries, the sages have been telling us that Consciousness is One – that we are not, each of us, separate psychological entities. The *Upanishads*, the *Srimad Bhaagavatam*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Yoga Vaasishtha*, all proclaim the same truth - that the one Consciousness merely appears as many, like the sun reflected in many vessels of water. J.Krishnamurti too made the same point, and said that we are, each one of us, the "rest of mankind." (Krishnamurti, 1982, 70). And now, modern physics is reaching startlingly similar conclusions. Quantum physicist Erwin Schroedinger asserted that Consciousness is one, and that its apparent appearance as many is a deception as seen "in a gallery of mirrors." (Schroedinger, 1969, 139, 95). This fact has even been demonstrated experimentally in several ways (the ganzfeld experiments and others).

What this means is that, although we, the average people, see ourselves psychologically as distinct entities, each with our own distinct consciousness, *this feeling of separateness is actually an illusion*. A person who sees through this illusion of separateness and thus realizes or regains the original wholeness has been termed by spiritual tradition to be 'Enlightened' (Enlightenment, *atma-jnana*). The resulting metamorphosis (*metanoia*) has been called Liberation (*moksha, mukti, nirvana*), because such a person is liberated from the desires and the desire-based suffering which are both the result of the illusion of separateness. The Liberated state is known as *sahaja stithi*, which means 'natural state,' because this is the most natural, sane, normal state possible in a human being.

Based on this one principle, we can explain how the whole cycle of human consciousness operates:

The reality is that there is one Consciousness, which, as it is single, and indivisible, we will also refer to as Wholeness. This one Consciousness or Wholeness expresses itself through the various individual living creatures, operating through them as the sentience in each individual unit. In addition, in the case of human beings, each body-mind unit actively creates an illusory separateness, which occurs by virtue of its power of verbalized thinking. Verbalized thought gives man the ability to think and conceive of 'himself' as a separate, autonomous entity apart from the body-mind apparatus – an entity which will supposedly survive the death and destruction of that body-mind. The reason or incentive for such a concept comes, as Freud has said, from man's denial of the reality of death. (Brown, 1959, 159).

The false sense of being a separate entity has been called "pseudo-separateness" by Ken Wilber, and the anxiety that it generates is "separation

anxiety." (Wilber, 1989, 102-9). This separation anxiety results in an unconscious desire to 'regain' the prior Wholeness, which desire the individual tries to satisfy by pursuing "substitute objects," in search of "substitute gratification." Moreover, he sees this as being done by a 'me,' the pseudo-entity – the "substitute subject." Thus all of humanity is actually in search of its own prior Wholeness, *which it has never really lost* (only apparently so), and this manifests as myriad substitute subjects searching for substitute gratifications in innumerable substitute objects. This is 'samsaara' or worldly life. Like a king dreaming that he is a pauper, desiring to become a king, and making all sorts of unsuccessful efforts to fulfill that desire (and finally waking up to find that he was always a king – which is Enlightenment).

Conversely, the Liberated One has come full circle. He has realized his total inherent psychological adequacy, his complete (psychological) self-sufficiency, *paripoornataa*. He no longer has the craving for substitute gratifications, for their very rationale (the illusory separateness) has now disappeared.

This idea of substitute gratifications ties in neatly with a study done in about half a dozen countries including the U.S.A. and Japan, which measured the 'happiness level' of persons over a period of years, and after major events, desirable (like winning a lottery) and undesirable (like amputation of a limb). Surprisingly, it found that after such events, (after a variable interval of time), the happiness level of the concerned person invariably returned to its original 'setting.' (BBC Asia, 1995-96).

This is easily explained if we consider that the events involved only substitute gratifications, while the happiness level of a person is really determined by the level of 'separation anxiety' in the person, which is in turn determined by the degree of his (unconscious) feeling of isolation, of being a separate entity. Therefore, unless this changes (decreases), there can be no real or lasting change in his 'happiness level.' And such a change can only come with (real) spiritual understanding and maturation.

In the course of the evolution of consciousness in individual body-mind units, starting from the stage of infancy (when the idea of a separate entity does not exist), the separation anxiety will increase with the mental development of the child until he reaches full adult psychological maturity. However, the level of differentiation of the ego (or the degree of the feeling of separateness) may be different in different persons. Correspondingly, the degree of separation anxiety will also vary, and will be maximum in a person in whom the illusion of separation is at its highest. The greater the separation anxiety, the more *unconscious* is the desire for re-integration or wholeness, and the stronger the desire for substitute gratifications. Such strong desire manifests phenomenally as 'lust.' A man typically graduates from the baser types of substitute gratifications (food, sex) to higher and higher types, till finally he realizes that lasting satiety cannot be achieved by merely fulfilling the worldly desires, for no amount of fulfillment of such desires can remove the persistent feeling of emptiness (which is actually nothing but the unconscious craving for wholeness). At this stage the substitute desire manifests itself as an indefinable, apparently causeless discontent, not related to any immediate worldly or material

problems, or his situation in life – what is called existential angst. It is these persons who will be drawn to the spiritual pursuit. That is, these persons will begin to *consciously* look for reunification, rather than try to find it unconsciously in substitute gratifications. This explains why only some people are bitten by the Enlightenment bug, whereas others are just not interested.

But then the spiritual pursuit itself is based on a hoax, because, as we said earlier, *the Wholeness was never really lost*. In fact, this pursuit also, paradoxically enough, is a search for substitute gratification with Consciousness (objectified) or Wholeness (conceptualized) as the substitute object. Finally, it is when the understanding of this very fact dawns on the person, that Enlightenment is said to have taken place, and the search ends with the realization that there is nothing to search for – the seeker (which is Consciousness) IS the sought (which is also Consciousness).

Meister Eckhart, the 13th century Christian mystic said:

Whether you like it or not,
Whether you know it or not,
Secretly all nature seeks God and works toward Him.

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NOTE: 1. Ganzfeld experiments are controlled experiments which seem to prove that telepathy is possible. But I have mentioned them because they correlate very well with the idea that Consciousness is one, and their results can be explained very easily on this basis.

Daryl J. Bem and Charles Honorton, "Does Psi Exist?", *Psychological Bulletin*, 1994, Vol. 115, No. 1, 4-18.

William R. Corliss, Ganzfeld experiments: do they prove telepathy exists? From *Science Frontiers* #89, Sep-Oct 1993. © 1997

In October 1996, Jason Brown of Franklin Pierce College reported a similar experiment which yielded a 'hit' ratio double that expected by chance. (*Times of India*, 9.5.97, article on Paranormal Research by Mukul Sharma).

2. The study on 'happiness level' was quoted in a BBC Asia TV program broadcast in India sometime in 1995-96

3. The word ego is used here in the spiritual and not in the Freudian sense. *Ahamkaara* is the actual word used in Hindu spiritual literature. It means the sense of separate individuality (*aham*) or doership (*kartruttva*).

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