

# Clarity

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# The Story

I was born in 1960 into a working-class family in South-East England.

As a child I was intense and inquisitive – hours spent reading adventure and mystery books, hobbies which involved searching for antique artefacts, long treks into the countryside at every opportunity. Seeking began at an early age!

As I grew up, my restlessness led to difficulties in choosing a career, an inability to focus in any particular area. I left school as early as I could, decided to train as a chef, and then ended up working on construction sites.

I enjoyed this very much. It absorbed much of my restless energy and required no investment of responsibility. I took my orders and got on with the work – leaving me free to indulge in roaming in the thought story.

There was a constant interest in the mysteries of the body and the universe – experimenting with various diets and herbal treatments, looking at the stars, eating magic mushrooms, and pushing the body to the limit with weight-training and body-building.

In my early twenties I was forced to slow down. A shoulder injury brought the weight-training to an end, my wife gave birth to our first daughter when I was twenty-two, and I changed from construction to horticulture. For several years I picked fruit in Kent orchards from early summer to late autumn and gardened at other times of the year. During this period my thoughts turned to spiritual and esoteric matters.

Around 1985 I joined a fraternal order which sent me regular monthly lessons in mysticism and 'universal law'. I enjoyed doing experiments and reading monographs each week.

After a couple of years I became interested in the teachings of a deceased Indian teacher, offered in monthly lessons and incorporating a guru-disciple relationship – even though the guru was already dead! I took this up and became involved with seeking enlightenment. This was my new obsession.

Another couple of years and several spiritual techniques later, I grew bored with it and happened upon a book by a western guru. This book told me that I was already awake and needed no liberation. The truth of what he was saying seemed obvious. However, he then went on (in the next few years and over the course of quite a few books) to proclaim himself the world teacher and offered a guru-disciple relationship for those who were interested.

Well, this time I was having none of it, although over the following five years I read a few more of his books as well as just about every other spiritual book I could get my hands on. But nothing really cut it for me the way the western guru's original book had done. Somewhere in me I knew it was true that I was already awake and free, but I was still confused, because I seemed to be just an ordinary person with all the usual sorts of problems that ordinary people have.

Anyway, I got sick of this guy's teachings and all the more traditional spiritual stuff, and next I hit the Advaita scene. I read everything by and about all the big Advaita names.

A lot of the confusion that I had felt before dissolved. I understood that all there is is Consciousness. So why did I still feel like a separate 'me'? What was the missing link? If I was already awake and free, then why did my life often seem like a pile of dung?

In 1997 I read Tony Parsons' first book, *The Open Secret*. I contacted him and he invited me to join a discussion at a house in London. It soon became clear to me how much mystique I had built around the whole 'enlightenment' drama. Tony appeared as an ordinary man and spoke with humour and patience. I listened to what he said in response to people's questions and I was struck by the simplicity of his answers. I went to more discussions over the next year and spoke to Tony on the phone when I could.

I wanted to make him into my 'teacher', but he explained that he had nothing to teach, and simply pointed out that there is only Consciousness – which I already am. Although I had understood this to some extent already, now it really began to sink in.

Tony pointed out that there does not need to be any kind of 'event' associated with the recognition of our true nature. Well, as it happened, in September 1998 an event arose. I was gardening and the rain was drizzling down. I looked up, and there was a subtle sense of 'me' not being there. I got on my bike and cycled around the lanes and it seemed as though there was a movie going on, without any effort necessary on my part to be taking part in it.

With this sudden dropping of the 'I', all need for understanding fell away as knowing was revealed. Even though Tony had pointed out that an event is not necessarily associated with the recognition of our nature as Consciousness, I had obviously still been subtly waiting for one, because now that this event or experience was occurring, it was seen as 'permission to be awake'. Without realising, I had been waiting for a confirmation of my true nature.

I rang Tony and excitedly explained what was going on and, with this new 'permission to be awake', speaking arose from clarity rather than the point of view of 'I'. Tony recognised that I was no longer relating to him as a separate character who was trying to get something, ie from the point of view of seeking and understanding.

As the day wore on, the mesmerisation as 'I' began subtly to return and claim this event – which was precisely the absence of 'I' – as 'my' enlightenment, 'my' awakening. There was a focus on the sense of sudden release – a blissfulness that arose in the absence of the 'I' – as being the enlightenment I had waited for.

I woke the next day. Was it still there? Yes! Then, after a few days, I noticed that the sense of release was wearing off a bit – but a couple of days later it was full on again. After a couple of weeks of it coming and going and of the 'I' reappearing and trying to hold on to its own absence, I went to one of Tony's discussions and the blissfulness seemed to be re-charged through being there.

But then a few days later it disappeared altogether and there was mesmerisation as the 'I' again. I didn't say anything about it to Tony and I didn't go to the meetings for a while. I felt confused.

Then I read a book by a woman who described an absence of the 'I' which lasted many years. After some time, she was told by certain 'teachers' that this was enlightenment. Then she became ill and died, and, in the afterword to her book, written by a friend of hers, I read that near the end she became confused and frustrated because the event had disappeared and the 'I' had returned.

Suddenly it became clear that these events where the 'I' suddenly disappears can actually be very confusing, so far as clarity is concerned. Such an event may last a few seconds or ten years or more, but unless the 'I' is seen for what it is – as simply a thought – then when this 'I' returns, there is a sense of loss, a sense of confinement in being an identified character again. As the identified character, the desire arises for more of this 'enlightenment', and there is the sense of being back in the agitation and tension of the play of seeking.

Now it was seen that all of life is a great play. There is only ever *knowing*, but this knowing is seemingly veiled by the mesmerisation with the 'I' thought and all the other thoughts that appear as 'my' story. Our true nature as Consciousness is awareness *and* the appearances. The 'I' is simply a part of the scenery, as are all the other various images, and when it is seen through – or seen for what it is – then seeking and tension fall naturally away.

It was clear also that this seeing through the 'I' is not necessarily a sudden happening, but may appear to happen gradually, as part of the play of life. And rather than in a rush of blissfulness, the natural ease of being is gently, gradually revealed.

The confusion was gone. I no longer required any event or sudden dropping of the 'I' to prove my nature as Consciousness. It was clear that the whole of my life and 'spiritual' search was arising as a play in Consciousness, and I understood the confusion around this whole issue, why 'spirituality' and 'enlightenment' are confused with simple clarity. This recognition of my true nature was not associated with any kind of event. It was clear that an event of any kind is easily confusing if it occurs without clarity – which is the seeing through of the 'I' and the thought story.

Obviously the event that happened in the garden was of no particular significance, nor is any other event. The occurrence of the event merely brought my confusion to a head and allowed the clear seeing of how I had been subtly waiting for an event as 'permission' to be what I already am. This clarity is not dependent on the absence or presence of the 'I'. If the 'I' appears, it is simply seen for what it is.

To bring this little story to a close: during the years of spiritual seeking I was divorced, married and divorced again, a single parent to my two daughters throughout most of their school years. I settled in a small village in Kent with not so robust physical health, and until recently worked locally as a gardener. Life is presently quiet and simple.

# Consciousness

You are Consciousness, oneness, all that *is*, the source and appearance of all. All appearances rise and fall in awareness, nothing else is ever happening. People are passing, clouds are going by, conversations are going on, thoughts appear and disappear. All unfolds presently in awareness.

This appearance as the character is already the perfect expression of oneness - nothing needs to change for this to be so. No awakening or enlightenment is needed – all of this is simply the story in the play. There is only already awakeness as oneness, regardless of whether there is mesmerisation with the play of images, or resting in recognition as your true nature.

This present appearance, however ordinary or extraordinary, is the content of awareness. Awareness and content are one – Consciousness. *You* are Consciousness – awake and aware and presently appearing as everything.

# The Play of Life

Seen in clarity, life appears as a great play. You – Consciousness – play all the roles and it is part of the play that You usually play the roles without knowing Your real identity. But sometimes, as part of the show, there is recognition of Your true nature.

When there is involvement as a character in the play without recognition of Your true nature the role is taken seriously and all the dramas of life seemingly appear from this. If a role is played where there is recognition of Your true nature, the play is seen for what it is.

When Your true nature becomes obvious, the character doesn't disappear in a flash of light, nor put on ochre robes and have disciples, nor teach 'spiritual' truths – although any of these is possible, depending on the pattern of the character's role in the play. The character will likely appear as he or she did before recognition. The character is likely to continue to lead what is an ordinary life in the play. It is not even necessarily so that the character tells anyone or communicates what is now obvious.

The whole play has no purpose or point beyond present appearance. It is Your cosmic entertainment. You are Your play. It has no existence separate from You.

# Life As It Is

When the whole conceptual story of a life extended in thought beyond the present content of awareness is no longer seriously entertained, there is a natural relaxing into ease. Identification as the 'I', or psychological self-sense, is merely an appearance in awareness, an addition to the appearance of the body image.

The allowing of life as it is – rather than any efforts to be rid of thought or 'I', or to become 'enlightened' – allows seeking to fall naturally away. Within the play, all efforts to be rid of 'I' merely reinforce identification with it.

Resting in life as it is does not bring ordinary bodily life to an end in some magical firework display of enlightenment. Thought continues to arise, life carries on, but it is no longer burdened by the complication of the search for unity. Life is seen as the expression *of* wholeness, rather than as a search *for* it.

You are Consciousness. Whatever Your present appearance, it is already perfect, including any play of identification as 'I', and also any seeking to be rid of 'I'. Life as the character is simply the play of appearances in awareness and has no requirement for awakening. There is only already awakens.

# Spiritual Life

Spiritual life has no particular relevance to clarity – it is simply part of the play of life. But because of what appears in the play as the individual's evolution through progressively 'higher' or finer stages of life, it is confused as a prerequisite to clarity.

The ordinary character, occupied with all the usual affairs of human life, perhaps becomes interested in religion or self-improvement. There could be a movement towards seeking enlightenment and maybe an interest in non-duality.

But this progression is not necessary for clarity to appear. Clarity could appear at any time in any character in the play. None of the apparent stages in the play of life has any ability to produce clarity. Advaitic knowledge has no more a special ability to create a condition for clarity to appear than does any other part of the play.

Spiritual life is based on the presumption of individuality, with reunion with the whole as the projected goal. And as a means to achieve this goal of reunion, an array of exotic techniques and methods are provided in the play, to 'purify' the individual, to get rid of the 'I', to become enlightened, etc.

The fundamental point that is missed at every stage of the individual's quest is that the individual – being played by You, who are Consciousness – is already what he or she is seeking. Nothing can make the seeker any more what he or she already is.

The search and all the methods and techniques employed are there for no more reason than any other part of the play. They arise for their own sake, simply as part of the play.

Clarity requires no spiritual 'qualifications'. Consciousness in the form of a person sitting in a lotus posture, visualising a purple light in their genitals, breathing the universe into the solar plexus, chanting *om* and ascending up the spine into the thousand-petalled lotus, has no greater chance of reunion than does Consciousness in the form of a drug addict in a ghetto. Consciousness is already perfectly present in either case, so reunion is neither necessary nor possible.

Spiritual life imposes many conditions on the 'impure' and 'separate' individual – special meditations, appropriate behaviours, ceremonies, diets, sexual conduct, destruction of the ego, cessation of thought, finding the stillness, surrendering to the guru, etc.

Consciousness, already being Consciousness in whatever form it appears, has no need of a vegetarian diet, celibacy, tantric sexuality, meditation or gurus. Consciousness is already all of these things. If there is a liking for chanting, meditation, eating vegetarian food or practising tantric sex, then that's all fine. But it won't help the recognition of this which You already are.

The character's attention could move to exotic planes and realms – see the

continual creation and dissolution of the universe at the atomic level and experience the eternal ecstatic cosmic union of Siva and Shakti. But when you get back, don't forget to go to work on Monday, pay the electricity bill and clean the toilet!

You – Consciousness – also appear in Your play as individuals playing the roles of teachers, masters or gurus. In some cases there may have been or there may be still occurring a transcendental event, which the individual believes is his or her 'enlightenment'. If the individual was already following a guru or a certain teaching before the event, it is likely that the beliefs and methods that appeared to lead up to the event will now be passed on to the individual's followers as 'the truth'.

As part of the play, some of these 'teachers' may even have the ability to induce unusual experiences in the disciple via energy transmission – often a strong attraction for the disciple.

There is nothing wrong with any of this. All of it is the perfection of the play. Carry on with it. Have fun. None of it leads to clarity.

## I Am That, But ...

I Am That - but ... I need to take responsibility, heal my life, go deeper, become more aware, be here now, enter the stillness, save the planet, express my emotions, think positively, become the witness, be blissful, find a guru, be useful, find the meaning of life, calm my thoughts, do good works, get rid of the ego, enter manhood or womanhood, be more practical, get enlightened, find my soul-mate, perform a ceremony, become initiated, get in touch with my feelings ... Maybe you do. How can I disagree? While you're busy with all that, I'll go and have a cup of tea and read the paper.

# What Already Is

What is, right now, is perfection – presence has not arisen from the past and is not leading to the future. All appears presently as a play in awareness.

The apparently separate individual may be involved with self-improvement, spiritual life or anything else throughout the unfolding of that life. But only the clarity of what You really are undermines the search for awakening or for being anything other than what already is.

# The Obvious

The play of life is not a separate creation watched and presided over by You. You – Consciousness – appear presently as the play, already wide awake, unable therefore to awaken. You are always obvious to Yourself; never hidden. The characters in the play have no separate existence, only an apparent one. The characters are You celebrating Yourself, immersed in the great play of life, playing the game of looking for Yourself, sometimes recognising Yourself within and as the appearance of Your play.

This communication about clarity has no particular relevance or significance over any other part of the play. It carries no merit and has no point. There is no purpose for You to find Yourself.

With clarity, all of this is made obvious – Your present appearance as the play in all its myriad forms, the recognition of the non-necessity of everything.

Right now You are Consciousness, appearing as a character in Your play. Maybe You think You need confirmation. Forget it. Relax. You already are That.

With much love to You from Yourself.

# Afterword

What has been sought all along is found to be none other than this which is the seeking. The ultimate goal or prize turns out to be what already is. There is nothing and no one to find. There is awareness with no one being aware. All along You have been the butt of your own cosmic joke. The magnificence of all appearances, everywhere you look and seek is simply Your own play or dream of being. There is nothing and no one and yet there is awareness whereby everything appears, including this appearance as an ordinary man or woman. You are, and always have been, completely awake, aware and present, but merely mesmerised by Your own cosmic play.

The character, Nathan, sought enlightenment as an escape from what appeared as the problems, trials and boredom of ordinary life. The ordinary life continues but no longer in distraction from presence. The search for the extraordinary is over – life is as it is.