

A photograph of a wooden boat on a calm lake at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a golden glow and a reflection on the water. The boat is in the foreground, and the background shows a line of trees on the far shore.

the **empty boat**

Encounters with Nothingness

REFLECTIONS ON THE STORIES OF CHUANG TZU

OSHO

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reflections on the stories of chuang tzu

OSHO

Preface

Osho, can you summarize your teaching in short because I am here only for a day or two.

It is impossible. In the first place I have no teaching to summarize. I am not a teacher, I am presence. I have no catechism. I cannot give you ten commandments - do this, don't do that.

And whatsoever I say today I may contradict tomorrow – because my commitment is to the moment. Whatsoever I said yesterday, I am no longer committed to it. The moment I said it I became free of it. Now I won't bother about it, I won't look at it again. Whatsoever I am saying to you right now is true this very moment; tomorrow I will not be committed to it. Whatsoever tomorrow brings I will say it. Whatsoever today has brought I am telling you now. And if they are contradictory who am I to make them consistent? I don't make any effort on my own.

My commitment is to the moment. I am never committed to the past. I am like a river: where I will be tomorrow nobody knows, not even I myself. You will be surprised, I will also be surprised.

The question must be from someone who comes from the continent I call "Acirema" – it is "America" read in the reverse order. America is topsy-turvy. Everything has become chaotic. People are in such a hurry that they have forgotten that there are a few things which you cannot get in a hurry for which patience is a must.

You cannot get truth in such a hurry. Patience is a basic condition for it. It is not like instant coffee and it does not come packed in tins. It does not come ready-made. Truth is not a commodity that somebody can give to you. It grows in you.

That's what I mean when I say I am a presence, I am not a teacher. If you are here, something may grow in you. I say, "may" because it depends on you. I am here. If you are ready to receive me, something will start growing within you. It is like a child becoming a young man. Yes, truth is like that. The false personality drops and the true being arrives. It is like a child becoming a young man, a young man becoming an old one. There is no way to hurry the process. You cannot make a child grow up fast in one night, in a day or two. It will take time. And it is good that it takes time because only through time do things become seasoned.

No, I cannot do that, I cannot summarize. I have no teaching. And even if I had a teaching I would not summarize it, because the more you summarize something, the more it becomes less alive. Love is vast, life is vast; law is limited. Law can be summarized; love cannot be summarized. Law is defined but life is excessive. You cannot summarize life, there cannot be a synopsis of life; you cannot summarize law. I am life. There is no way to summarize me.

And I am still alive so whatsoever you summarize I will destroy tomorrow.

When you summarize, by and by things become absurd.

Never summarize anything that is alive. I am still alive. When I am dead and gone then people will summarize. And I am going to give them a hell of a lot of trouble. It will not be an easy thing. They will go nuts. It will be impossible to put me into a synopsis.

It has been always so. You cannot summarize Buddha. Because of summarizations many schools were born. Buddha died, then there was a question. People wanted to summarize. For forty years the man had been teaching – morning, afternoon, evening – for forty years. He had talked a lot, he had said many things, and now he had gone and it had to be summarized.

Truth is not like a commodity. When you come to me, if you really want to know what my truth is, you will have to be here. My truth can be expressed to you only when I have come to know your truth too. When I have come to know you and you have come to know me, in that meeting will be the truth.

glimpse. It cannot be given to you. You will have to receive it and you will have to prepare for it. You will have to become a very relaxed being. You will have to be able to soak me up and allow me to sink deep into your heart.

It happened ...

In the Amsterdam National Museum an elderly couple came to see Rembrandt's masterpiece "The Nightwatch." When, after a long walk through the many corridors, they finally reached the famous painting, the usher overheard the man say to his wife, "Look, what a beautiful frame!"

The frame may have been beautiful, but can't you see that something is missing in the admiration? Something essential is lost. I am not saying that the frame was not beautiful, the frame may have been the most beautiful frame in the world, but to go to see Rembrandt's masterpiece "The Nightwatch" and then to talk about the frame is absurd. Even to see the frame is foolish, stupid. The painting is not the frame. The frame has nothing to do with the painting.

What I am saying is just a frame, what I am is the painting. Look at the masterpiece and don't let yourself be bothered with the frame.

Chapter 1

The Toast Is Burned

*He who rules men lives in confusion;
He who is ruled by men lives in sorrow.
Yao therefore desired
Neither to influence others
Nor to be influenced by them.
The way to get clear of confusion
And free of sorrow
Is to live with Tao
In the land of the great Void.
If a man is crossing a river
And an empty boat collides with his own skiff,
Even though he be a bad-tempered man
He will not become very angry.
But if he sees a man in the boat,
He will shout at him to steer clear.
If the shout is not heard, he will shout again,
And yet again, and begin cursing.
And all because there is somebody in the boat.
Yet if the boat were empty,
He would not be shouting, and not angry.*

*If you can empty your own boat
Crossing the river of the world,
No one will oppose you,
No one will seek to harm you.*

*The straight tree is the first to be cut down,
The spring of clear water is the first to be drained dry.
If you wish to improve your wisdom
And shame the ignorant,
To cultivate your character
And outshine others;
A light will shine around you
As if you had swallowed the sun and the moon:
You will not avoid calamity.*

A wise man has said:

*“He who is content with himself
Has done a worthless work.
Achievement is the beginning of failure,
Fame is the beginning of disgrace.”*

*Who can free himself from achievement
And from fame, descend and be lost
Amid the masses of men?
He will flow like Tao, unseen,
He will go about like Life itself
With no name and no home.
Simple is he, without distinction.
To all appearances he is a fool.
His steps leave no trace. He has no power.
He achieves nothing, he has no reputation.
Since he judges no one,
No one judges him.
Such is the perfect man:
His boat is empty.*

You have come to me. You have taken a dangerous step. It is a risk because near me you can be lost forever. To come closer will mean death and cannot mean anything else. I am just like an abyss. Come closer to me and you will fall into me. And for this, the invitation has been given to you. You have heard it and you have come.

Be aware that through me you are not going to gain anything. Through me you can only lose all because unless you are lost, the divine cannot happen; unless you disappear totally, the real cannot arise. You are the barrier.

And you are so much, so stubbornly much, you are so filled with yourself that nothing can penetrate you. Your doors are closed. When you disappear, when you are not, the doors open. Then you become just like the vast, infinite sky.

That is your nature. That is Tao.

Before I enter into Chuang Tzu's beautiful parable of The Empty Boat, I would like to tell you another story, because that will set the trend for this meditation camp which you are entering.

I have heard ...

It happened once, in some ancient time, in some unknown country, that a prince suddenly went mad. The king was desperate – the prince was the only son, the only heir to the kingdom. All the magicians were called, miracle makers, medical men were summoned, every effort was made, but in vain. Nobody could help the young prince, he remained mad.

The day he went crazy he threw off his clothes, became naked, and started to live under a big table. He thought that he had become a rooster. Ultimately the king had to accept the fact that the prince could not be reclaimed. He had gone insane permanently; all the experts had failed.

But one day, again hope dawned. One sage, a Sufi, a mystic, knocked on the palace door and said, “Give me an opportunity to cure the prince.”

But the king felt suspicious, because this man looked crazy himself, more crazy than the prince. But the mystic said, “Only I can cure him. To cure a madman, a greater madman is needed. And you, miracle makers, your medical experts, all have failed because they don't know the ABC of madness. They have never traveled that path.”

It looked logical, and then the king thought, “There is no harm in it, why not try?” So the

opportunity was given to him.

~~The moment the king said, "Okay, you try," this mystic threw off his clothes, jumped under the table and crowed like a rooster.~~

The prince became suspicious, and he said, "Who are you? And what do you think you are doing?"

The old man said, "I am a rooster, more experienced than you. You are nothing, you are just a newcomer, at the most an apprentice."

The prince said, "Then it is okay if you are also a rooster, but you look like a human being."

The old man said, "Don't go by appearances, look at my spirit, at my soul. I am a rooster like you."

They became friends. They promised each other that they would always live together – and the whole world was against them.

A few days passed. One day the old man suddenly started dressing. He put on his shirt. The prince said, "What are you doing, have you gone crazy, a rooster trying to put on human dress?"

The old man said, "I am just trying to deceive these fools, these human beings. And remember, even if I am dressed, nothing is changed. My roosterness remains, nobody can change it. Just by dressing like a human being do you think I am changed?" The prince had to concede.

A few days afterwards the old man persuaded the prince to dress because winter was coming, and it was becoming so cold.

Then one day suddenly, he ordered food from the palace. The prince became very alert and said, "Wretch, what do you mean? Are you going to eat like those human beings, like them? We are roosters and we have to eat like roosters."

The old man said, "Nothing makes any difference as far as this rooster is concerned. You can eat anything and you can enjoy everything. You can live like a human being and remain true to your roosterness."

By and by the old man persuaded the prince to come back to the world of humanity. He became absolutely normal.

The same is the case with you and me. And remember, you are just initiates, beginners. You may think that you are a rooster but you are just learning the alphabet. I am an old hand, and only I can help you – all the experts have failed, that's why you are here. You have knocked on many doors, for many lives you have been in search – nothing has been of help to you.

But I say I can help you because I am not an expert, I am not an outsider. I have traveled the same path, the same insanity, the same madness. I have passed through the same -the same misery, the same anguish, the same nightmares. And whatsoever I am doing is nothing but persuading you to come out of your madness.

To think oneself a rooster is crazy; to think oneself a body is also crazy, even crazier. To think oneself a rooster is madness; to think oneself a human being is a greater madness – because you don't belong to any form. Whether the form is that of a rooster or of a human being is irrelevant-you belong to the formless, you belong to the total, the whole. So whatsoever form you think you are, you are mad. You are formless. You don't belong to any form, and you don't belong to any body, you don't belong to any caste, religion, creed; you don't belong to any name. And unless you become formless, nameless, you will never be sane.

Sanity means coming to that which is natural, coming to that which is ultimate in you, coming to that which is hidden behind you. Much effort is needed because to cut form, to drop and eliminate form, is very difficult. You have become so attached and identified with it.

This *Samadhi Sadhana Shibir*, this meditation camp, is nothing but to persuade you toward the formless – how not to be in the form. Every form means the ego; even a rooster has its ego, and man has his own. Every form is centered in the ego. The formless means egolessness; then you are not centered in the ego, then your center is everywhere or nowhere. This is possible, this which looks

almost impossible, is possible, because this has happened to me. And when I speak, I speak through experience.

Wherever you are, I was, and wherever I am, you can be. Look at me as deeply as possible and feel me as deeply as possible, because I am your future, I am your possibility.

Whenever I say surrender to me, I mean surrender to this possibility. You can be cured, because your illness is just a thought. The prince went mad because he became identified with the thought that he was a rooster. Everybody is mad unless he comes to understand that he is not identified with any form – only then, sanity.

So a sane person will not be anybody in particular, cannot be. Only an insane person can be somebody in particular – whether a rooster or a man, or a prime minister or a president, or anybody whatsoever. A sane person comes to feel the nobodiness.

This is the danger ...

You have come to me as somebody, and if you allow me, if you give me an opportunity, that somebodyness can disappear and you can become a nobody. This is the whole effort – to make you a nobody. But why? Why this effort to become a nobody? Because unless you become nobody you cannot be blissful; unless you become nobody you cannot be ecstatic; unless you become nobody the benediction is not for you – you go on missing life.

Really you are not alive, you simply drag, you simply carry yourself like a burden. Much anguish happens, much despair, much sorrow, but not a single ray of bliss – it cannot. If you are somebody you are like a solid block of stone, nothing can penetrate you. When you are nobody you start becoming porous. When you are nobody, you are really an emptiness, transparent, everything can pass through you. There is no hindrance, there is no barrier, no resistance. You become a passivity, a door.

Right now you are like a wall; a wall means somebody. When you become a door you become nobody. A door is just an emptiness, anybody can pass, there is no resistance, no barrier. Somebody you are mad; nobody, you will become sane for the first time.

But the whole society, education, civilization, culture, they all cultivate you and help you to become somebody. That's why I say religion is against civilization, religion is against education, religion is against culture – because religion is for nature, for Tao.

All civilizations are against nature, because they want to make you somebody in particular. And the more you are crystallized as somebody, the less and less the divine can penetrate into you.

You go to the temples, to the churches, to the priests, but there too you are searching – how to become somebody in the other world, how to attain something, how to succeed? The achieving mind follows you like a shadow. Wherever you go, you go with the idea of profit, achievement, success, attainment. If somebody has come here with this idea he should leave as soon as possible, and he should run as fast as possible from me, because I cannot help you to become somebody.

I am not your enemy. I can only help you to be nobody. I can only push you into the bottomless abyss. You will never reach anywhere, you will simply dissolve. You will fall and fall and fall and dissolve, and the moment you dissolve the whole existence feels ecstatic. The whole existence celebrates this happening.

Buddha attained this. Because of language I say *attained* – otherwise the word is ugly, there is no attainment – but you will understand. Buddha attained this emptiness, this nothingness. For two weeks, for fourteen days continuously, he sat in silence, not moving, not saying, not doing anything.

It is said that the deities in heaven became disturbed – rarely it happens that somebody becomes such total emptiness. The whole existence felt a celebration, so the deities came. They bowed down before Buddha and they said, “You must say something, you must say what you have attained.” Buddha is said to have laughed and said, “I have not attained anything; rather, because of this mind which always wants to attain something, I was missing everything. I have not achieved anything, the

is not an achievement; rather, on the contrary, the achiever has disappeared. I am no more, see the beauty of it,” said Buddha. “When I was, I was miserable, and when I am no more, everything is blissful, the bliss is showering and showering continuously on me, everywhere. Now there is no misery.”

Buddha had said before: “Life is misery, birth is misery, death is misery – everything is miserable. It was miserable because the ego was there. The boat was not empty. Now the boat was empty; now there was no misery, no sorrow, no sadness. Existence had become a celebration and it would remain a celebration for eternity, forever and forever.

That’s why I say, it is dangerous that you have come to me. You have taken a risky step. And if you are courageous, then be ready for the jump.

The whole effort is how to kill you; the whole effort is how to destroy you. Once you are destroyed the indestructible will come up – it is there, hidden. Once all that which is nonessential is eliminated the essential will be like a flame – alive in its total glory.

This parable of Chuang Tzu is beautiful. He says that a wise man is like an empty boat.

*Such is the perfect man –
his boat is empty.*

There is nobody inside.

If you meet a Chuang Tzu, or a Lao Tzu, or me, the boat is there, but it is empty – nobody in it. If you simply look at the surface, then somebody is there, because the boat is there. But if you penetrate deeper, if you really become intimate with me, if you forget the body, the boat, then you come to encounter a nothingness.

Chuang Tzu is a rare flowering, because to become nobody is the most difficult, almost impossible, the most extraordinary thing in the world.

The ordinary mind hankers to be extraordinary, that is part of ordinariness; the ordinary mind desires to be somebody in particular, that is part of ordinariness. You may become an Alexander, but you remain ordinary – then who is the extraordinary one? The extraordinariness starts only when you don’t hanker after extraordinariness. Then the journey has started, then a new seed has sprouted.

This is what Chuang Tzu means when he says: “A perfect man is like an empty boat.” Many things are implied in it. First, an empty boat is not going anywhere because there is nobody to direct it, nobody to manipulate it, nobody to drive it somewhere. An empty boat is just there, it is not going anywhere. Even if it is moving it is not going anywhere.

When the mind is not there life will remain a movement, but it will not be directed. You will move, you will change, you will be a riverlike flow, but not going anywhere, with no goal in view. A perfect man lives without any purpose; a perfect man moves but without any motive. If you ask a perfect man “What are you doing?” he will say, “I don’t know, this is what is happening.” If you ask me why I am talking to you, I will say, “Ask the flower why the flower is flowering.” This is happening, this is not manipulated. There is no one to manipulate it, the boat is empty. When there is purpose you will always be in misery. Why?

Once a man asked a miser, a great miser, “How could you succeed in accumulating so much wealth?”

The miser said, “This has been my motto: whatsoever is to be done tomorrow has to be done today and whatsoever is to be enjoyed today has to be enjoyed tomorrow. This has been my motto.” He succeeded in accumulating wealth – this is also how people succeed in accumulating nonsense.

That miser was also miserable. On the one hand he had succeeded in accumulating wealth, on the other hand he had succeeded in accumulating misery. The motto is the same for accumulating misery.

also: whatsoever is to be done tomorrow, do it today, right now, don't postpone it. And whatsoever can be enjoyed right now, never enjoy it right now, postpone it for tomorrow.

This is the way to enter hell. It always succeeds, it has never been a failure. Try it and you will succeed – or, you may have already succeeded. You may have been trying it without knowing. Postpone all that which can be enjoyed, just think of the tomorrow.

Jesus was crucified by the Jews for this reason, not for any other. Not that they were against Jesus because he was a perfect man, a beautiful man, why were the Jews against him? Rather, on the contrary, they had been waiting for this man. For centuries they had been hoping and waiting: “When will the messiah come?”

And then suddenly this Jesus declared, “I am the messiah for whom you have been waiting, and I have come now. Now look at me.”

They were disturbed – because the mind can wait, it always enjoys waiting – but the mind cannot face the fact, the mind cannot encounter this moment. It can always postpone.

It was easy to postpone: “The messiah is to come, soon he will be coming ...” For centuries the Jews had been thinking and postponing and then suddenly this man destroyed all hope, because he said, “I am here.” The mind was disturbed. They had to kill this man, otherwise they would not have been able to live with the hope for the tomorrow.

And not only Jesus, many others have declared since then, “I am here, I am the messiah!” And Jews always deny, because if they don't deny, then how will they be able to hope and how will they be able to postpone? They have lived with this hope with such fervor, with such deep intensity, you cannot believe it. There have been Jews who would go to their beds at night hoping that this would be the last night, that in the morning the messiah would be there.

I have heard about one rabbi who used to say to his wife, “If he comes in the night, don't waste a single minute, wake me up immediately.” The messiah is coming and coming, he may come at any moment.

I have heard of another rabbi – his son was going to be married, so he sent invitations to the marriage to friends and he wrote on the invitation, “My son is going to be married in Jerusalem on such-and-such a date, but if the messiah hasn't come by then, my son will be married in this village of Korz. Who knows, by the time the day of the marriage comes, the messiah may have come. Then I will not be here, I will be in Jerusalem, celebrating. So if he has not come by the date of the marriage, only then will the marriage be here in this village; otherwise in Jerusalem.”

They have been waiting and waiting, dreaming. The whole Jewish mind has been obsessed with the coming messiah. But whenever the messiah comes, they immediately deny him. This has to be understood. This is how the mind functions: you wait for the bliss, for the ecstasy, and whenever it comes you deny it, you just turn your back towards it.

Mind can live in the future, but cannot live in the present. In the present you can simply hope and desire. And that's how you create misery. If you start living this very moment, here and now, misery disappears.

But how is it related to the ego? Ego is the accumulated past. Whatsoever you have known, experienced, read, whatsoever has happened to you in the past, the whole is accumulated there. The whole past is the ego, it is you.

The past can project into the future – because future is nothing but extended past. The past cannot face the present – the present is totally different, it has a quality of being here and now. The past is always dead, the present is life, the very source of all aliveness. The past cannot face the present so it moves into the future – both are dead, both are nonexistential. The present is life; neither can the future encounter the present, nor can the past encounter the present. And your ego, your somebodyness is your past. Unless you are empty you cannot be here, and unless you are here you cannot be alive.

How can you know the bliss of life? It is showering on you every moment and you are bypassing it.
Says Chuang Tzu:

*Such is the perfect man –
his boat is empty.*

Empty of what? Empty of the *I*, empty of the ego, empty of somebody there inside.

*He who rules men, lives in confusion;
he who is ruled by men lives in sorrow.*

He who rules men, lives in confusion ...

Why? Because the desire to rule comes from the ego; the desire to possess, to be powerful, the desire to dominate, comes from the ego. The greater the kingdom you can dominate, the greater the ego you can achieve. With your possessions your inner somebody goes on becoming bigger and bigger and bigger. Sometimes the boat becomes so small and the ego becomes so big.

This is what is happening to politicians, to people obsessed with wealth, prestige, power. Their ego has become so big that their boats cannot contain them. Every moment they are on the point of drowning, on the verge, afraid, scared to death. And the more afraid you are the more possessive you become, because you think that through possessions, somehow security is achieved. The more afraid you are, the more you think that if your kingdom could be a little greater, you would be more secure.

He who rules men, lives in confusion ...

Really, the desire to rule comes out of your confusion; the desire to be leaders of men comes out of your confusion. When you start leading others you forget your confusion – this is a sort of escape, a trick. You are ill, but if somebody is ill and you become interested in curing that man, you forget your own illness.

I have heard ...

Once George Bernard Shaw phoned his doctor and said, “I am in much trouble and I feel that my heart is going to fail. Come immediately!”

The doctor came running. He had to climb three staircases, perspiring. He came in and without saying anything, just fell down on a chair and closed his eyes. Bernard Shaw jumped out of his bed and asked, “What has happened?”

The doctor said, “Don’t say anything. It seems I am dying. It is a heart attack.”

Bernard Shaw started helping him; he brought a cup of tea, some aspirin, whatsoever he could do. Within half an hour the doctor was okay. And then he said, “Now I must leave, give me my fee.”

George Bernard Shaw said, “This is really something. You should pay me! I have been running around for half an hour doing things for you and you have not even asked anything about me.”

But the doctor said, “I have cured you. This is a treatment and you have to pay me the fee.”

When you become interested in somebody else’s illness you forget your own, hence so many leaders, so many gurus, so many masters. It gives you an occupation. If you are concerned with other people, if you are a servant of people, a social worker, helping others, you will forget your own confusion, your inner turmoil – you are too occupied.

Psychiatrists never go mad – not because they are immune to it, but they are so much concerned with curing and helping other people’s madness, that they forget completely that they can also go mad.

I have come to know many social workers, leaders, politicians, gurus, and they stay healthy just because they are concerned with others.

But if you lead others, dominate others, out of your confusion you will create confusion in the lives. It may be a treatment for yourself, it may be a good escape for you, but it is spreading the disease.

He who rules men, lives in confusion ...

And not only lives in confusion, he also goes on spreading confusion in others. Out of confusion only confusion is born.

If you are confused, please remember – don't help anybody, because your help is going to be poisonous. If you are confused don't get occupied with others, because you are simply creating trouble, your disease will become infectious. Don't give advice to anybody, and if you have a little clarity of thought, don't take advice from someone who is confused. Remain alert, because confused people always like to give advice. And they give it free of charge, they give it very generously. Remain alert! Out of confusion only confusion is born.

... he who is ruled by men lives in sorrow.

If you dominate men, you live in confusion; if you allow others to dominate you, you will live in sorrow, because a slave cannot be blissful.

*Yao therefore desired
neither to influence others
nor be influenced by them.*

Someone of the name Yao – Chuang Tzu is talking about that man.

*Yao therefore desired
neither to influence others
nor be influenced by them.*

You should not try to influence anybody – and you should be alert, not to be influenced by others. The ego can do both, but it cannot remain in the middle. The ego can try to influence, then it feels good dominating; but remember that the ego also feels good being dominated. The masters feel good because so many slaves are dominated, and the slaves also feel good being dominated.

There are two types of mind in the world: the mind of those who dominate - the male mind, and the mind of those who like to be dominated – the female mind. By female I don't mean women, or by male, men. There are women who have masculine minds and there are men who have feminine minds. They are not always the same.

These are the two types of mind: one which likes to dominate and one which likes to be dominated. In both ways the ego is fulfilled because whether you dominate or are dominated you are important. If someone dominates you, then too you are important, because his domination depends on you. Without you, where will he be? Without you, where will his kingdom be, his domination, his possessions? Without you, he will be nobody. The ego is fulfilled at both extremes; only in the middle does the ego die. Don't be dominated and don't try to dominate.

Just think what will happen to you. You are not important in any way, not significant in any way, neither as a master nor as a slave. Masters cannot live without slaves and slaves cannot live without

masters – they need each other, they are complementary. Just like man and woman they are complementary. The other is required for their fulfillment.

Don't be either. Then who are you? Then suddenly you disappear because then you are not significant at all, nobody depends on you, you are not needed.

There is a great need to be needed. Remember, you feel good whenever you are needed. Sometimes even if it brings misery to you, even then you love to be needed.

A crippled child, always on the bed and the mother always saying: "What to do? I have to serve the child and my whole life is being wasted." But still, if this child dies, this mother will feel lost, because at least this child needs her so totally that she has become important.

If there is nobody who needs you, who are you? You create the need to be needed. Even slaves are needed.

*Yao therefore desired
neither to influence others
nor be influenced by them.
The way to get clear of confusion
and free of sorrow
is to live with Tao
in the land of the void.*

This middle point is the land of the void, or the door to the land of the void – as if you are not, as if nobody needs you, and you don't need anybody. You exist as if you are not. If you are not significant, the ego cannot persist. That is why you go on trying to become significant in some way or other. Whenever you feel that you are needed, you feel good. But this is your misery and confusion, and this is the base of your hell.

How can you be free? Look at these two extremes. Buddha called his religion the middle path, the *majjhim nikaya*. He called it the middle path because he said that mind lives in extremes. Once you remain in the middle the mind disappears. In the middle there is no mind.

Have you seen a tightrope walker? Next time you see one, observe. Whenever the tightrope walker leans toward the left, he immediately has to move towards the right to balance; and whenever he feels he is leaning too much to the right, he has to lean towards the left.

You have to go to the opposite to create balance. So it happens that masters become slaves, slaves become masters; possessors become possessed, the possessed becomes the possessor. It goes on, it is a continuous balance.

Have you observed it in your relationships? If you are a husband, are you really a husband for twenty-four hours? Then you have not observed. In twenty-four hours the change happens at least twenty-four times – sometimes the wife is the husband and the husband is the wife, sometimes the husband is again the husband and the wife is again the wife.

And this goes on changing from left to right. It is a tightrope walk. You have to balance. You cannot dominate for twenty-four hours, because then the balance will be lost and the relationship will be destroyed.

Whenever the tightrope walker comes to the middle, neither leaning to the right nor leaning to the left, then it is difficult for you to observe unless you yourself are the tightrope walker; in the middle the mind disappears. Tightrope walking has been used in Tibet as a meditation, because in the middle the mind disappears. The mind comes into existence again when you lean towards the right, then the mind comes again into being and says: "Balance it, lean towards the left."

When a problem arises, the mind arises. When there is no problem, how can the mind arise? Why

you are just in the middle, balanced totally, there is no mind. The equilibrium means no mind.

~~One mother, I have heard, was very worried about her son. He was ten years old and he had not yet spoken a single word. Every effort was made but the doctors said, "Nothing is wrong, the brain is absolutely okay. The body is fit, the child is healthy, and nothing can be done. If something were wrong, then something could be done."~~

But still he would not speak. Then suddenly, one day in the morning, the son spoke and he said "This toast is burned."

The mother couldn't believe it. She looked, she got scared, she said, "What! You have spoken? And you spoken so well! Then why were you always silent? We persuaded and tried and you never spoke."

The child said, "There was never anything wrong. For the first time the toast is burned."

If there is nothing wrong why should you speak?

People come to me and they say, "You go on speaking every day ... " I say, "Yes, because so many wrong people go on coming here and listening. There is so much wrong that I have to speak. If nothing is wrong then there is no need to speak. I speak because of you, because the toast is burned."

Whenever it is in the middle, between any extreme or polarity, the mind disappears. Try it. Rope walking is a beautiful exercise, and one of the very subtle methods of meditation. Nothing else is needed. You can observe the rope walker yourself, how it happens.

And remember, on a rope thinking stops because you are in such danger. You cannot think. The moment you think, you will fall. A rope walker cannot think, he has to be alert every moment. The balance has to be maintained continuously. He cannot feel safe, he is not safe; he cannot feel secure, he is not secure. The danger is always there – any moment, a slight change of balance and he will fall and death awaits.

If you walk on a tightrope you will come to feel two things: thinking stops because there is danger and whenever you really come to the middle, neither left nor right, just the midpoint, a great silence descends on you such as you have not known before. And this happens in every way. The whole of life is a tightrope walk.

... *Yao therefore desired* to remain in the middle – neither be dominated nor be dominating, neither be a husband nor be a wife, neither be a master nor be a slave.

*The way to get clear of confusion
and free of sorrow
is to live with Tao
in the land of the void.*

In the middle the door opens – the land of the void. When you are not, the whole world disappears because the world hangs on you. The whole world that you have created around you hangs on you. When you are not there the whole world disappears.

Not that existence goes into nonexistence, no. But the world disappears and existence appears. The world is a mind creation; existence is the truth. This house will be there, but then this house will not be yours. The flower will be there but the flower will become nameless. It will be neither beautiful nor ugly. It will be there, but no concept will arise in your mind. All conceptual framework disappears. Existence: bare, naked, innocent, remains there in its pure, mirrorlike beingness. All the concepts, all the imaginations, and all the dreams disappear in the land of the void.

*If a man is crossing a river
and an empty boat collides with his own skiff,
even though he be a bad-tempered man*

he will not become very angry.

~~*But if he sees a man in the boat,*~~

he will shout to him to steer clear.

*And if the shout is not heard he will shout
again, and yet again, and begin cursing –
and all because there is somebody in that boat.*

Yet if the boat were empty,

he would not be shouting, and he would not be angry.

If people go on colliding with you and if people go on being angry with you, remember, they are not at fault. Your boat is not empty. They are angry because you are there. If the boat is empty they will look foolish, if they are angry they will look foolish.

Those who are very intimate with me sometimes get angry with me and they look very foolish. If the boat is empty you can even enjoy the anger of others, because there is nobody to be angry with. If they have not looked at you. So remember, if people go on colliding with you, you are too much of a solid wall. Get a door, become empty, let them pass.

But even then sometimes people will be angry – they are even angry with a buddha. Because they are foolish people – if their boat collides with an empty boat, they will not look whether there is somebody in it or not. They will start shouting; they will get so messed up within themselves they will not be able to see whether there is somebody in it or not.

But even then the empty boat can enjoy it because then the anger never hits you; you are not there, so whom can it hit?

This symbol of the empty boat is really beautiful. People are angry because you are too much there, because you are too heavy there – so solid they cannot pass. And life is intertwined with everybody. If you are too much, then everywhere there will be collision, anger, depression, aggression, violence, and the conflict continues.

Whenever you feel that someone is angry or someone has collided with you, you always think that he is responsible. This is how ignorance concludes, interprets. Ignorance always says, “The other is responsible.” Wisdom always says, “If somebody is responsible, then I am responsible, and the only way not to collide is not to be.”

“I am responsible” doesn’t mean, “I am doing something, that is why they are angry.” That is not the question. You may not be doing anything, but just your being there is enough for people to get angry. It is not a question of whether you are doing good or bad. The question is that you are there.

This is the difference between Tao and other religions. Other religions say: Be good, behave in such a way that no one gets angry with you. Tao says: Don’t be.

It is not a question of whether you behave or misbehave. This is not the question. Even a good man, even a very saintly man creates anger, because he is there. Sometimes a good man creates more anger than a bad man, because a good man means a very subtle egoist. A bad man feels guilty – his boat may be filled, but he feels guilty. He is not really too spread out on the boat, his guilt helps him to shrink. A good man feels himself to be so good that he fills the boat completely, overfills it.

So whenever you come near a good man, you will always feel tortured – not that *he* is torturing you, just his presence. With so-called good men you will always feel sad, and you would like to avoid them. So-called good men are really very heavy. Whenever you come into contact with them they will make you sad, they depress you, and you would like to leave them as soon as possible.

The moralists, the puritans, the virtuous, they are all heavy, and they carry a burden around them, dark shadows. Nobody likes them. They cannot be good companions, they cannot be good friends. Friendship is impossible with a good man – almost impossible, because his eyes are always

condemning. The moment you come near him, he is good and you are bad. Not that he is doing anything – just his very being creates something, and you will feel angry.

Tao is totally different. Tao has a different quality, and to me Tao is the deepest religion that has existed on this earth. There is no comparison to it. There have been glimpses, there are glimpses in the sayings of Jesus, Buddha, and Krishna – but only glimpses.

Lao Tzu or Chuang Tzu's message is the purest – absolutely pure, nothing has contaminated it. And this is the message: it is all because there is somebody in the boat. This whole hell is all because there is somebody in the boat.

*Yet if the boat were empty,
he would not be shouting,
and he would not be angry.*

*If you can empty your own boat
crossing the river of the world,
no one will oppose you,
and no one will seek to harm you.*

*The straight tree is the first to be cut down,
the spring of clear water is the first to be drained dry.
If you wish to improve your wisdom
and shame the ignorant,
to cultivate your character and outshine others,
a light will shine around you
as if you had swallowed the sun and the moon -
and you will not avoid calamity.*

This is unique, because Chuang Tzu is saying that the halo of saintliness around you shows that you are still there. The halo ... that you are good, is sure to create calamity for you, and calamity for others also. Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu - master and disciple – both have never been painted in pictures with halos or auras, like Jesus, Zarathustra, Krishna, Buddha, or Mahavira. They have never been painted with an aura around their head, because they say if you are really good no aura appears around your head; rather, on the contrary, the head disappears. Where to draw the aura? The head disappears.

All auras are somehow related to the ego. It is not Krishna who has made a self-portrait, it is the disciples, who cannot think of him without drawing an aura around his head – otherwise he looks ordinary. And Chuang Tzu says: “To be ordinary is to be the sage.” Nobody recognizes you, nobody feels that you are somebody extraordinary. Chuang Tzu says: “You go in the crowd and you mix. Nobody knows that a buddha has entered the crowd. No one comes to feel that somebody is different because if someone feels it then there is bound to be anger and calamity. Whenever someone feels that you are somebody, his own anger, his own ego is hurt. He starts reacting, he starts attacking you.

So Chuang Tzu says: “Character is not to be cultivated,” because that too is a sort of wealth. And so-called religious people go on teaching: cultivate character, cultivate morality, be virtuous.

But why? Why be virtuous? Why be against the sinners? Your mind is dual, you are still ambitious. And if you reach paradise and you see sinners sitting there around God, you will feel very hurt – your whole life has been wasted. You cultivated virtue, you cultivated character, while these people were enjoying themselves and doing all sorts of things which are condemned – and here they are sitting around God. If you see saints and sinners together in paradise you will be very hurt, you will become

very sad and miserable – because your virtue is also part of your ego. You cultivate saintliness to be superior, but the mind remains the same. How to be superior in some way or other, how to make others inferior is the motive.

If you can gather much wealth, then they are poor and you are rich. If you can become a great Alexander, then you have a great kingdom and they are beggars. If you can become a great scholar, then you are knowledgeable and they are ignorant, illiterate. If you can become virtuous, religious, respectable, moral, then they are condemned, they are sinners. But the duality continues. You are fighting against others and you are trying to be superior.

Chuang Tzu says: “If you cultivate your character and outshine others, you will not avoid calamity. Don’t try to outshine others, and don’t try to cultivate character for this egoistic purpose.

So for Chuang Tzu there is only one character worth mentioning, and that is egolessness – all else follows it. Without it, nothing has worth. You may become godlike in your character, but if the ego is there inside, all your godliness is in the service of the Devil; all your virtue is nothing but a face and the sinner is hidden behind. And the sinner cannot be transformed through virtue or through any type of cultivation. It is only when you are not there that it disappears.

A wise man has said:

*“He who is content with himself
has done worthless work.
Achievement is the beginning of failure,
fame is the beginning of disgrace.”*

... very paradoxical sayings, and you will have to be very alert to understand them; otherwise they can be misunderstood.

A wise man has said:

*“He who is content with himself
has done worthless work.”*

Religious people go on teaching: Be content with yourself. But yourself remains there to be contented with. Chuang Tzu says: “Don’t be there,” then there is no question of contentment or discontentment. This is real contentment, when you are not there. But if you feel that you are content, it is false because you are there, and it is just an ego fulfillment. You feel that you have achieved, you feel that you have reached.

Tao says that one who feels that he has achieved has missed already. One who feels that he has reached has lost, because success is the beginning of failure. Success and failure are two parts of one circle, of one wheel. Whenever success reaches its climax the failure has already started, the wheel is already turning downward. Whenever the moon has become full there is no further progress. Now there is no further movement. The next day the downward journey starts and now every day the moon will be less and less and less.

Life moves in circles. Whenever you feel that you have achieved, at that moment the wheel has moved, you are already losing. It may take time for you to recognize this, because mind is dull. Much intelligence is needed, clarity is needed, to see things when they happen. Things happen to you and you take many days to recognize it, sometimes many months or many years. Sometimes you even take many lives to recognize what has happened.

But just think about your past. Whenever you had a feeling that you had succeeded, immediately things changed, you started falling – because the ego is part of the wheel. It succeeds because it can

fail; if it cannot fail then there is no possibility of success. Success and failure are two aspects of the same coin.

Chuang Tzu says:

A wise man has said:

*“He who is content with himself
has done worthless work.”*

... Because he is still there, the empty boat has not come into being yet, the boat is still filled. The ego is sitting there, the ego is still enthroned.

*Achievement is the beginning of failure,
fame is the beginning of disgrace.”*

*Who can free himself of achievement and fame
then descend and be lost
amid the masses of men?
He will flow like Tao ...*

Be alert and attentive.

*Who can free himself of achievement and fame
then descend and be lost
amid the masses of men?*

*He will flow like Tao, unseen,
he will go about like life itself
with no name and no home.*

*Simple is he, without distinction.
To all appearances he is a fool.*

This is how a wise man is – a fool.

*To all appearances he is a fool.
His steps leave no trace. He has no power.
He achieves nothing, he has no reputation.
Since he judges no one, no one judges him.
Such is the perfect man -
his boat is empty.*

The ego cannot flow like a river. It is frozen. How can a frozen river flow? The ice must melt, only then can it flow. Frozen, you have a form – melted, the form disappears. Frozen, you are somebody somewhere, a name – melted, the name is lost, “somebodyness” disappears. You have become nothing, formless. Only when you are not frozen do you flow, and when you flow you are like life itself because life is a movement. Only death is unmoving, only death remains where it is. Life goes on moving and moving and moving – it is a continuous flow.

If you have succeeded, you are frozen because now you are afraid to melt – because if you melt the whole success will be lost. Your success is part of your frozenness. If you have become famous you are frozen, now you are dead, now you cannot melt. You have to protect yourself, your fame, your respect, your reputation. You have to protect, and you have to remain with your past. You cannot

move into the unknown future, because who knows, the unknown path may lead you to somewhere where the fame is lost, the reputation is lost. So you will move only on the trodden path, on the charted, on the known. You will move in the circle of memory, on the wheel of memory.

Life never moves on the trodden path, it always moves into the unknown. Every moment it is moving into the unknown and if you are afraid of the unknown you are frozen, you will be dead. Life will not wait for you. You have to melt and only one who has no reputation to save, no fame to protect can move with the unknown and can move happily. He has nothing to lose. Hence, Buddha's beggars are nameless, homeless, nothing to protect, nothing to preserve. They could move anywhere, just like clouds in the sky, homeless, with no roots anywhere, floating, with no goal, no purpose, no ego.

*He will flow like Tao, unseen,
he will go about like life itself
with no name and no home.*

This is what a sannyasin means to me. When I initiate you into sannyas, I initiate you into the death, into namelessness, into homelessness. I am not giving you any secret key to success, I am not giving you any secret formula for how to succeed.

If I am giving you anything, it is a key to how not to succeed, how to be a failure and unworried, how to move nameless, homeless, without any goal, how to be a beggar – what Jesus calls poor in spirit. A man who is poor in spirit is egoless – he is the empty boat.

Simple is he, without distinction.

Whom do you call simple? Can you cultivate simplicity?

You see a man who eats only once a day, who wears only a few clothes or remains naked, who doesn't live in a palace, who lives under a tree – you say this man is simple. Is this simplicity? You can live under a tree and your living may be just a cultivation. You have cultivated it to be simple, you have calculated it to be simple. You may eat once a day, but you have calculated it, this is mind-manipulated. You may remain naked -that cannot make you simple. Simplicity only happens.

Simple is he, without distinction.

You feel that you are a saint because you live under a tree, and you eat once a day, and you are vegetarian, and you live naked, you don't possess any money - you are a saint.

And then a man passes who possesses money; condemnation arises in you, and you think, "What will happen to this sinner? He will be condemned to hell." And you feel compassion for this sinner. Then you are not simple. Because distinctions have entered, you are distinct.

It makes no difference how the distinction has been created. A king lives in a palace – he is distinct from those who live in huts. A king wears clothes which you cannot wear – they are so valuable that he is distinct. Then a man lives naked on the street and you cannot live naked in the street – so he is distinct. Wherever distinction is, ego exists. When there is no distinction, ego disappears; and non-ego is simplicity.

*Simple is he, without distinction.
To all appearances he is a fool.*

This is the deepest saying that Chuang Tzu has uttered. It is difficult to understand because we always think that an enlightened person, a perfect man, is a man of wisdom. He says: *To a*

appearances he is a fool ...

~~But this is how it should be. Amongst so many fools, how can a wise man be otherwise? To a~~
appearances he will be a fool and that is the only way. How can he change this foolish world and s
many fools ... toward sanity? He will have to be naked, and go under the table and crow like a rooste
Only then can he change you. He must become crazy like you, he must be a fool, he must allow you
laugh at him. Then you will not feel jealous, then you will not feel hurt, then you will not be ang
with him, then you can tolerate him, then you can forget him and forgive him, then you can leave hi
alone to himself.

Many great mystics have behaved like fools and their contemporaries were at a loss – what to ma
out of their lives – and the greatest wisdom existed in them. To be wise amongst you is really foolish
That won't do; you will create much trouble. Socrates was poisoned because he didn't know Chuang
Tzu. If he had known Chuang Tzu, there would have been no need for him to be poisoned. He tried
behave like a wise man amongst fools, he tried to be wise.

Chuang Tzu says: "To all appearances the wise man will be like a fool."

Chuang Tzu himself lived like a fool, laughing, singing, dancing, talking in jokes and anecdote
Nobody thought him to be serious. And you could not find a man more sincere and serious than
Chuang Tzu. But nobody thought him to be serious. People enjoyed him, people loved him, and
through this love he was throwing seeds of his wisdom. He changed many, he transformed many.

But to change a madman you have to learn his language, and you have to use his language. You
have to be like him, you have to come down. If you go on standing on your pedestal then there can be
no communion.

This is what happened to Socrates, and it had to happen there because the Greek mind is the mo
rational mind in the world, and a rational mind always tries not to be foolish. Socrates angered
everybody. People really had to kill him, because he would ask awkward questions and he would mak
everybody feel foolish. He would put everybody in a corner – you cannot answer even ordinary
questions.

If somebody insists, if you believe in God, then Socrates will ask something about God: "What
the proof?" You cannot answer, you have not seen. But God is a far off thing; you cannot even prov
ordinary things. You have left your wife at home – how can you prove, really, that you have left you
wife at home, or that you have even got a wife? It may be just in your memory. You may have seen
dream, and when you go back there is neither house nor wife.

Socrates would ask penetrating questions, analyzing everything, and everybody in Athens became
angry. This man was trying to prove that everybody is a fool. They killed him. Had he met Chuang
Tzu – and at that time Chuang Tzu was alive in China, they were contemporaries – then Chuang Tz
would have told him the secret: "Don't try to prove that anybody is foolish because fools don't like
this. Don't try to prove to a madman that he is mad, because no madman likes it. He will get angri
arrogant, aggressive. He will kill you if you prove too much. If you come to the point where it can b
proved, he will take revenge."

Chuang Tzu would have said, "It is better to be foolish yourself, then people enjoy you, and then b
a very subtle methodology you can help them change. Then they are not against you."

That's why in the East, particularly in India, China and Japan, such an ugly phenomenon nev
happened as happened in Greece – Socrates was poisoned and killed. It happened in Jerusalem – Jes
was killed, crucified. It happened in Iran, in Egypt, in other countries – many wise men were kille
murdered. It never happened in India, China, or Japan, because in these three countries people came
realize that to behave as a wise man is to invite calamity.

Behave like a fool, like a madman, just be mad. That is the first step of the wise man – to make yo
at ease so you are not afraid of him. This is why I told you that story.

The prince became friendly with this man. He was afraid of others, doctors, learned experts because they were trying to change him, cure him, and he was not mad. He did not think that he was mad, no madman ever thinks that he is mad. If a madman ever comes to realize that he is mad, madness has disappeared. He is no longer mad.

All those wise men who were trying to cure the prince were foolish, only this old sage was wise. He behaved foolishly. The court laughed, the king laughed, the queen laughed. They said, "What? How is this man going to change the prince? He himself is crazy and seems to be deeper in madness than the prince."

Even the prince was shocked. He said, "What are you doing? What do you mean?" But this man must have been an enlightened sage.

Chuang Tzu is talking about this type of phenomenon, this phenomenal man.

To all appearances he is a fool.

His steps leave no trace.

You cannot follow him. You cannot follow an enlightened man – no, never – because he leaves no trace, there are no footprints. He is like a bird in the sky, he moves and no trace is left.

Why does a wise man not leave traces? So that you should not be able to follow. No wise man likes you to follow him because when you follow you become imitators. He is always moving in such a zigzag way that you cannot follow. If you try to follow him, you will miss. Can you follow me? It is impossible, because you don't know what I am going to be tomorrow. You cannot predict. If you can predict, you can plan. Then you know where I am going, then you know the direction, then you know my steps. You know my past, you can infer my future. But I am illogical.

If I am logical you can conclude what I am going to say tomorrow. Just by looking at whatsoever I have said in my yesterdays you can conclude logically what I am going to say tomorrow. But that is not possible. I may contradict myself completely. My every tomorrow will contradict my every yesterday, so how are you going to follow me? You will go crazy if you try to follow.

Sooner or later you will have to realize that you have to be yourself, you cannot imitate.

His steps leave no trace.

He is not consistent. He is not logical. He is illogical. He is like a madman.

He has no power.

This will be very difficult to follow because we think that the sage has power, that he is the most powerful of men. He will touch your blind eyes and they will open and you will be able to see; you are dead and he will touch you and you will be resurrected. To us a sage is a miracle worker.

But Chuang Tzu says: *He has no power* – because to use power is always part of the ego. The ego wants to be powerful. You cannot persuade a wise man to use his power, it is impossible. If you can persuade him, it means some ego was left which can be persuaded. He will never use his power because there is no one to use and manipulate it. The ego, the manipulator, is no longer there, the boat is empty. Who will direct this boat? There is nobody.

A sage is power, but he has no power; a sage is powerful, but he has no power – because the controller is no longer there. He is energy – overflowing, unaddressed, undirected – there is no one who can direct it. You may be cured in his presence, your eyes may open, but he has not opened them because he has not touched them, he has not cured you. If he thinks that he has cured you, he himself has become ill. This *I* – "I have cured" – is a greater illness, it is a greater blindness.

He has no power.

He achieves nothing, he has no reputation.

Since he judges no one,

no one judges him.

Such is the perfect man -

his boat is empty.

And this is going to be your path. Empty your boat. Go on throwing out whatsoever you find in the boat, until everything is thrown out and nothing is left, even *you* are thrown out, nothing is left, your being has become just empty.

The last thing and the first thing is to be empty; once you are empty you will be filled. The all will descend on you when you are empty – only emptiness can receive the all, nothing less will do, because to receive all you have to be so empty, boundlessly empty. Only then can the all be received. Your minds are so small they cannot receive the divine. Your rooms are so small you cannot invite the divine. Destroy this house completely because only the sky, space, total space, can receive.

Emptiness is going to be the path, the goal, everything. From tomorrow morning try to empty yourself of all that you find within: your misery, your anger, your ego, jealousies, sufferings, your pain, your pleasures – whatsoever you find, just throw it out. Without any distinction, without any choice, empty yourself. And the moment you are totally empty, suddenly you will see that you are the whole, the all. Through voidness, the whole is achieved.

Meditation is nothing but emptying, becoming nobody.

In this camp move as a nobody. If you create anger in somebody and you collide, remember, you must be there in the boat, that's why it is happening. Soon, when your boat is empty, you will not collide, there will be no conflict, no anger, no violence – nothing.

This nothing is the benediction, this nothing is the blessing. For this nothing you have been searching and searching. But unless the searcher is lost, there can be no fulfillment.

And now that you have come, don't go back filled with yourself. Go empty. Move in this wide world as an empty boat, and all the blessings of life, all the blessings that are possible in existence will be yours. Claim them but you can claim them only when you are not. This is the problem – how not to be. And I say to you it can be solved. I have solved it, that's why I say it.

It will be difficult for you to meet Chuang Tzu. But I am here. You can look in me, you will find the same empty boat. I'm talking to you, but nobody is talking to you. And I'm not claiming any wisdom. I'm not claiming anything. I have no powers to cure you, no miracles will happen here, because I'm interested only in the ultimate miracle – when somebody becomes ordinary. That is the ultimate miracle. Meditate on it, pray for it, make all efforts for it. And remember only one thing – you have to become the empty boat.

Enough for today.

Chapter 2

The Man of Tao

*The man in whom Tao
Acts without impediment
Harms no other being
By his actions
Yet he does not know himself
To be “kind,” and “gentle.”*

*He does not struggle to make money
And does not make a virtue of poverty.
He goes his way
Without relying on others.
And does not pride himself
On walking alone.*

*“The man of Tao
Remains unknown
Perfect virtue
Produces nothing
‘No-Self’ is ‘True-Self.’
And the greatest man
Is Nobody.”*

The most difficult thing, almost impossible for the mind, is to remain in the middle, is to remain balanced. To move from one thing to its opposite is the easiest. To move from one polarity to the opposite polarity is the nature of the mind. This has to be understood very deeply, because unless you understand this, nothing can lead you into meditation.

Mind's nature is to move from one extreme to another. It depends on imbalance. If you are balanced, mind disappears. Mind is like a disease: when you are imbalanced it is there, when you are balanced, it is not there.

That is why it is easy for a person who overeats to go on a fast. It looks illogical, because we think that a person who is obsessed with food cannot go on a fast. You are wrong. Only a person who is obsessed with food can go on a fast, because fasting is the same obsession in the opposite direction. It is not really changing yourself. You are again obsessed with food. Before you were overeating; now you are remaining hungry – but the mind remains focused on food from the opposite extreme.

A man who has been overindulging in sex can become a celibate very easily. There is no problem. But it is difficult for the mind to come to the right diet, difficult for the mind to stay in the middle.

Why is it difficult to stay in the middle? It is just like the pendulum of a clock. The pendulum goes to the right, then it moves to the left, then again to the right, then again to the left; the whole clock

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