

The Movement's Vision

(Conveyed December 27th – 30th, 2015)

January 12, 2016

To my TM movement family:

The Movement's new consensus, reached only four years ago, has already had a profound impact on each of us who formed The Movement over 5,000 years ago to increase the happiness of the human race. One of the most startling impacts came from recognizing that we had failed to notice something about ourselves that we have been busy pointing out about others, because we too have been explaining away our own behavior to ourselves in ways which always put it in the best possible light.

Such self-serving explanations veiled our real reasons for that behavior, violating our own well-known injunctions against hypocrisy ("How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take that speck out of your eye,' while all the time a log remains in your own?").

Of course, it is more complicated than that. It is always more complicated than that. But it is still clear to us now that the Vedic wisdom most of us in The Movement have taught for ages sometimes trapped us in personal hypocrisy. For example, it used to be our understanding that the freedom caused by gaining enlightenment meant an eternal escape from past karmic influences. To fill in the obvious theoretical gap that an enlightened person still pursues desires, and still physically exists until the end of his body's life rather than disappearing at the moment of enlightenment, the concept of *lesh avidya* was created: that the faint remains of former ignorance play out as long as the body exists.

So I consoled myself with the thought that it was merely *lesh avidya* at work when I first decided that repairing my relationship with my wife from a previous life was more important than my brahmacharya vows. And later I thought that, since karma no longer bound me, I could safely take on some of the karma of other wives and lovers from previous lives by renewing each of those intimate relationships. I was convinced that I was free of all the consequences of my actions since I had had all the experiences required to conclude that I was permanently enlightened. I was also convinced, as Vedic wisdom teaches, that long periods of celibacy had helped me achieve my own enlightenment, so at the same time as I was setting my own vows aside, I was still persuading many of you to be celibate. I was your guru then and I saw that as my role in your life: to guide, to inspire, and even sometimes to force you faster along the path to enlightenment as dictated by Vedic culture.

I know that some of you are angry at my unintentional, unwitting hypocrisy, which only became clear to me during The Movement's recent discussions, and that some of you feel it was a serious mistake for me to try to inspire you with the illusion that I, and some of the others in the Holy Tradition, were life celibates.

I also know some of you feel trapped by what happened. I do as well, probably even more than you do as I have been trapped far longer. I even personally resisted the new more transparent explanations that Shankara championed, and explained so thoroughly and effectively, during The Movement's recent discussions which I had instigated. It was not emotionally easy for me to discard all those Vedic explanations which had consoled me when making these personal, intimate decisions, to watch them all crumble under the combined force of Shankara's and Jehovah's arguments, to be left without a veil to hide behind, with only the reality that I am a man, and that after centuries of vigorous religious leadership I had secretly yearned for personal tenderness in my relationships with others.

That yearning had led to my life as a shah, where I was expected to have many wives and lovers. Guru Dev, as I have already explained, showed me how the unresolved and complicated desires from that life, which I had not consciously remembered, came roaring back into my life this time. But once those misleading Vedic explanations had been dismissed by Guru Dev, I myself could immediately see the real underlying reason for my behavior. I unconsciously missed that tenderness. And I must confess that is still the only thing I do not regret about all these personal complications — the tenderness of my intimate relationships, for which I remain most thankful.

I know there are those in our spiritual family who have copied such actions, thinking that they too are enlightened, that they too are only indulging in *lesh avidya*, that they too are free from the consequences of their actions. I hope this explanation of how our personalities keep affecting our decisions, even if we are enlightened, will help free them from that delusion. And I trust everyone else will understand why I, like all the other members of the Holy Tradition, never again intend to start another movement nor pretend to be living as a brahmacharya during a time when I am not.

Of course we do not expect others to adopt that conclusion as quickly as we have. It did, after all, take almost two years before some of us accepted Shankara's arguments. But since my friends and I started the guru-disciple culture, and reinforced it in each other over the centuries, sometimes as guru, sometimes as disciple, it would be foolish for us to expect its imminent demise. We are aware that any culture, once created, keeps mutating and spreading, depending on those who take it up in pursuit of their goals. And we know that our ideal of enlightenment has also been adopted over the centuries by many motivated mostly by their desperate hope to be released from all the binds of their karma, who recognize and are afraid of what they have done in the past, and want to escape its consequences.

However, our having discarded that hope, that version of the theory of karma, need not frighten even those desperate adopters, because at the same time that we are shattering the hope of permanent escape from individual life, we are also discarding the idea that our past actions govern what events happen to us in our current life, although their continuing influence on our

personalities may sometimes make that appear to be true. And there is no reason to fear the specter of mountains of karma if they don't exist.

When the members of The Movement realized that such emotional excuses for our own behavior had crept into our comprehensive explanation of life, and that instead of alleviating fear, they have actually been generating more fear, our attempts to explain why undesirable things happen to us took a new turn — a revitalized interest in the power of reason to appraise the value of any explanation, no matter whose explanation it is, or where that explanation is popular, or how widely believed it is. That is why our new mission statement is: to make reason as attractive in Heaven as it is on Earth.

It seems an obvious choice now, but it had previously never occurred to any of us that individual life itself, and the physical Universe itself, might both be eternal. That was beyond our imaginations' horizon. We had always assumed that a creator had created both us and the Universe — a projection by us of one brighter, more intelligent, more creative and more powerful than any of us. The subtle logical flaws in creation myths, and the fact that the continuum of change requires a totally different perspective to understand it clearly, combined to keep us calmly unsuspecting in the dark.

It required each of the members of The Movement to have both the full and prolonged experience of what we called enlightenment, and the full understanding of Vedic wisdom, to form an effective basis for our honest sharing and discussing of the disadvantages of, and the problems caused by, those ideas. It was that combination which allowed us to break out of the confines of those ideas and to reach a new consensus on a rational explanation of individual life as an eternal free-will experience.

That is why we are committed, going forward, to changing our behavior from being your inspiring guru to being your friend who will simply explain whatever spiritual wisdom we have acquired, without ever complaining again about how you live or expecting you to conform to our current conclusions.

We have completely dropped the notion of having desires for what others should desire, since we have already dropped the idea that one divine will exists whose desires for all of us we thought we were serving. That admittedly enticing belief has also often frustrated us, and for good reason. It violates the reality that each individual has an eternally free will — which is why it has never been completely convincing to us that the purpose of the existence of all those free wills was simply for them to discover, some day, that they should have been obeying one divine will ever since they were created in preparation for eventually merging with that divine will.

The Movement's vision has shifted dramatically as a result. Our vision is now focused on our shared home, the Earth, where trillions of minds live. Ironically, the vast majority of those minds appear relatively content with pursuing the daily adventures of survival (even though they are indestructible) and we have no plans to interfere with their contentment. Among

the tiny minority of those minds who are human, such survivalism has also been popular, but the development of technologically-advanced civilizations has encouraged many to pursue more fulfilling desires.

More than half of the human race now also has some emotional attraction to images of virtuous living, often due to having experienced or heard about one of us. But that emotional attraction is insufficient to inspire almost any of them to adopt a different method of pursuing happiness other than just going along with the daily flow of life based on the passions and fears they have developed due to their own personal experiences.

Since we no longer have any issue with this, we will cease trying to change that reality with any inspirational method other than sharing clear explanations of what we understand about the effective pursuit and experience of happiness.

What we will focus on instead is creating ever clearer explanations, both of our own lives and personalities and of how the physical Universe works. Although The Movement has a clear advantage when it comes to spiritual wisdom, we are trailing behind the millions of scientists who have recently been pursuing more accurate physical and biological knowledge. But we will catch up soon on that front too, because we are not as afraid of stepping on (our own) toes as they are.

Such fears seem to create almost impermeable barriers to clear perceptions. Being afraid of treading on sacred ground, of looking foolish by even thinking about ideas their peers consider nonsense, or of even considering any idea outside the deterministic model, keeps otherwise rational minds away from accepting the reality that all minds are essentially long-lived beings of light. We don't have the scientific answers as to how that reality is structured. But we see them. We experience them. So it is interesting to us, and we are turning our attention to that as well.

We will therefore be encouraging scientists to be ever bolder in their pursuits, and it should help matters that we don't care in the slightest if they want to believe that life in the Universe is an accident, or a completely determined physical side effect of exploding stars, or that the Universe itself was created by a Big Bang. We certainly understand the emotional appeal of determinism, as it releases one from personal responsibility. But that dodge will become unnecessary as it becomes ever clearer that there are no punishments waiting for free thinkers, or for any exercise of your free will (other than the revenge that other individuals or social institutions think you deserve — and we have each felt that lash more often when we were virtuous than otherwise).

It was anomalies like that — the infliction of pain as a response to virtue — which originally supported our understanding of karma, because karma was supposed to even things out over time. But those anomalies also eventually convinced us that the popular versions of the theory of karma must be inaccurate, since even things out over time does imply that at many times injustice still reigns. Still, we think something similar to karma is true. What has appeared

to us to be karma at work is probably just the combined influence of all of our own decisions to reward and punish others to attempt to make them conform to our image of what we want them to be.

But The Movement now sees that there is no advantage whatsoever, to us or to others, to want others to be anyone other than who they are – indestructible minds with free will and developed personalities. And so what we always understood to be karma, and its unfathomable ways, we now see as the enduring nature of all of our personalities' passions and fears affecting the physical world. What happens in the physical world of action is neutral. It is our personalities' relationship to that neutral physical world which causes our pleasures and pains and develops our perspectives on what is good and what is bad, on what is virtuous and what is not.

Because our new consensus about life is completely based on engaging more intelligently in the pursuit of our own self-interest, rather than trying to overcome it, we think it is far more likely that many scientifically-oriented minds will eventually share our overall vision of individual life. But whether that happens or not, we look forward to working with those scientists, and with political leaders, business creators, artists and others, to create ever more interesting human civilizations which allow free will to thrive, because our new consensus makes it perfectly clear to us that others' beliefs don't really affect us nearly as deeply as we had thought, and so we no longer consider it optimal to influence other minds by creating uniting belief systems for them.

That has also made it easier for us to see that no matter what other minds think about life, only one kind of relationship between eternal equals makes sense in our mutual pursuit of more happiness: friendship. However unequal we are in abilities, power and intelligence in that pursuit, friendship remains the best relationship to have with any other mind. Trying to dominate another mind's decisions may be practically effective at times, yet it is still an illusory goal for the dominator, and it is always counter-productive for the dominated mind, even if (and perhaps especially if) it temporarily improves their behavior.

The members of The Movement have always had considerable respect for free will, but there is considerably more in our new consensus, because we have discarded the undercutting idea that the ultimate purpose of free will is to submit that individual will to a divine universal will. And we are confident that the advantages to our own personal pursuit of happiness caused by this shift in our vision will more than compensate for the slight inconvenience of our no longer being considered divine.

As for believing in these communications, no one in The Movement expects or wants you to believe them. These are explanatory, not mandatory, concepts. This is an intellectual shift in understanding for all of us, one I myself resisted. So resistance to adopting these explanations is expected and that does not bother anyone in The Movement. We expect billions to remain emotionally attached to previous explanations, and to exaggerated beliefs about who we are, for

the foreseeable future. But we also expect that civilizations which emphasize free will, which we will all help create, will eventually become irresistibly attractive to the vast majority of influential minds.

Still, we do want each of you to hear that this shift in The Movement's vision has occurred. We have long recognized the power of ideas to shape, and even to distort, our own individual pursuits of happiness. The same is true for those who have listened carefully to any of us over the centuries, and even for those who have only sort-of listened. So we believe these new ideas, as well as even better ideas to come, hold the promise of an ever more civilized future.

I expect there will be many members of our extended spiritual family who will find it difficult to perceive the value and the power of this shift in understanding, because our main focus for such a long time has been on purifying and living our spiritual ideals, rather than trying to understand life rationally. That is such a different perspective on the pursuit of happiness that I expect most will cling even more tightly to how I explained things when I was Maharishi. But even that tighter clinging will demonstrate that a doubt has been effectively planted among your thoughts, and I will do my best over the coming centuries to clarify this new perspective until those doubts give way to a new freedom from our past visions.

In the meantime, almost any kind of turning within will help practically everyone, and those of you who use my effortless version will find it especially helpful in freeing yourself from clinging to partially valuable, partially problematic, perspectives.

This is what I couldn't wait to share with you, as all of us in The Movement believe that these ideas will fundamentally change human civilization at its cultural core.

Love,

Maharishi