



## Awakening to Immortality

We are awakening faculties that we do not generally use, in body, mind, emotion and soul. The human being has lost certain faculties in order to develop others. For example, some animals have the faculty of hibernation which most humans have lost, but rishis (holy men) in the Himalayas use it to attain *samadhi*.<sup>1</sup> The secret for awakening is to remember that the configuration of the cells of our body is governed by the magnetic field, and that is why it is so important to shift one's identity so that one is able to start discovering one's magnetic field, one's light field and one's mental or causal field. We need to understand the impact of the field upon the body and equally that of the body upon the magnetic field.

Hazrat Inayat Khan, the great musician and teacher who brought Sufism to the West in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, said: '*In matter, life unfolds, discovers, realizes the consciousness that has been buried in it for thousands of years.*'

Perhaps we need to become conscious of body functions instead of forgetting the body to get into *samadhi*. By drawing your attention to the body cells you awaken them, and this is particularly true of the centres, the chakras.

## Awakening in matter

Realization needs to be actuated as a tangible transformation in your personality; this is creativity: when realization is empowered by an emotional attunement it becomes a configuration which has the capacity to restructure your subtle bodies and ultimately your physical body.

You may concentrate on qualities such as mastery, compassion, truthfulness, joy, peace, freedom, and while doing this imagine the expression that your face would assume if you enhanced that quality in your personality.

On one hand, consciousness discovers itself in matter, and then there is a gradual awakening of matter to become conscious. Père Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit visionary, writes about this. I find it very helpful to meditate at night looking at the stars, and think '*It is really the light of the stars, the Big Bang, that has crystallized as the fabric of the planet Earth, and that fabric has evolved into my body*'. This thought establishes a relationship between your notion of yourself and the universe, discovering the universe in yourself, because otherwise if you are just enclosed in your personal vantage point, in your body identity, then you do not access the bounty of the universe in your being.

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<sup>1</sup> Samadhi is the fulfillment of meditation in the Hindu (Vedic) and Buddhist traditions: a state of enlightenment and union of the still and silent mind with Universal Mind.



But the body is more evolved than the inorganic matter of the planet, and probably of the galaxies. Schrodinger, the physicist, wrote about this in his book *What is Life?* In the beginning inorganic matter is like a fresco; you have the same design repeating itself. Then at a certain moment there is a breakthrough in evolution: suddenly the atoms have different configurations, and therefore they complete each other in order to serve consciousness better. At the mental level there is a breakthrough when the thoughts of people in our society cooperate – as Hazrat Inayat Khan wrote, '*The way we think is the way humanity thinks*'.

He also wrote, '*As matter evolves it becomes more intelligent. When one studies the growing evolution of the natural world, one finds that at each step of evolution the natural world has shown itself to be more intelligent.*' That is exactly what Schrodinger and Teilhard de Chardin were saying: matter evolves.

*'Every atom, every object, every condition and every living being has a time of awakening.'*

It is like an alarm clock that has been set for a certain time, but maybe you can advance it a little. The important thing is that there is an enormous need to awaken.

*'There comes a time in the evolution of man when a yearning is developed for the unattainable.'* That is what lures us beyond ourselves. If we don't progress we get sclerosed, we go backwards – we can see that happening all around us. And you can never reach the unattainable; you can never say 'I'm illuminated now; I've got it in my pocket'. It's always like the horizon, the further one advances, the further it recedes.

This touches upon an important thought which will help you in your practice. Henri Poincaré, the French mathematician, said 'Infinity consists in the possibility of always imagining a larger number than one has imagined so far'. That means that one can always imagine a further space and a further time than one has imagined so far, and the beauty is that one can also imagine a further quality than the quality one has imagined so far. How do we know God? By projecting upon God qualities we know in their limited form. As we try to imagine them perfect in the divine form, we are actually perfecting our own qualities.

So something touches you deeply, you are destabilized and you need liberation. Like the sea that has become unruly – like turning in one's sleep. I hope you feel a kind of uneasiness, a feeling that 'I can't go on like this', that your wings are clipped. A need to awaken. That is the impulse behind the whole spiritual quest: the desire for liberation, for release. How do we awaken? We will start by working with the physical body and the electromagnetic field, which is part of the life field, to change the condition of the body.

Surprisingly perhaps, inertia is a state in which there is a chance for new life to arise. You find this in yoga - it's probably the secret of samadhi. One sits still, just as the body would be at the moment of death. Hazrat Inayat Khan says that the first birth



is the birth of man, the second is the birth of God. So by holding back one's own life one is inviting a force of life beyond one's life. In other words, you are overcoming the limitation of your own power – you can't lift yourself up with your boot straps. Your will will not do it for you, as long as your will is not conscious of its ground in the divine will.

To bring your body into a state of inertia, the breath is an important key, because even at a physical level our metabolic rate is regulated by the rhythm of our breath. If your breath is fast, you are in the state of an animal when it is catching prey or defending itself, but if your breath is slow, then you are like the animal in its cave, when it does not have to leap into action. That is the reason why meditations often start with breathing practices, because even as you become conscious of your breath, it will slow down.

When you hold your breath between inhaling and exhaling, this can lead to that state of inertia.

Let us experience this now: *Always start by exhaling. As you exhale, first contract your abdomen and then your chest. It's strange because one thinks that one's consciousness is extending as one is exhaling, but the body is contracting.*

*When you inhale, dilate the abdomen first, then the chest. So both when inhaling and exhaling, first the abdomen, then the chest.*

*At first it is your consciousness of your breath that will slow it down. But then your will takes over, and you are mastering that very fundamental function of breath and metabolism; you are actually awakening physiological faculties. When you are breathing in, you have to feel that the energy of the universe is converging in your body; when you are breathing out, your magnetic field is reaching out into the universe. The rhythm of the breath gives a sense of being involved in the process of becoming – the arrow of time.*

*Now introduce a period of holding the breath between inhaling and exhaling. It's just as though you had caught hold of a pendulum and stopped it from moving... You are experiencing eternity... And that is how you discover your immortality, that dimension of your being that we call God, which is not limited by time and space.*

*When you hold your breath you are putting your body into that inert state, and now when you exhale, that further dimension is being expanded in the universe through you.*

*After inhaling again, when you hold your breath, I suggest you concentrate on the way that the prana energy<sup>2</sup> is circulating in your blood and your cells, instead of just in your lungs. Discover what is happening to your cells as they are vested with this new energy, and you might be able to discover how the cells of your body are beginning to dance with ecstasy. This is the dance of Shiva.*

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<sup>2</sup> Prana is the word used in the Hindu tradition to refer both to breath and to the life force which constitutes the universe.



*This is the way in which your consciousness is awakening in matter, in your body, and your body is awakening through the act of consciousness.*

One of the faculties which we are awakening in the body is the activity of the chakras, the energy centres which are connected with the hormone system and with the autonomic nervous system. Each chakra has an effect on the whole body and mind.

I recommend that we learn how to direct our breath into a particular centre. You could include the chakra at the base of the spine to start with, the muladhara chakra, which means, the root.

*As you inhale into the muladhara chakra you consciously draw in earth energy from the planet – that is one of the advantages of sitting cross-legged on the ground – and it rises up along your spine.*

*This energy must be transmuted as you go from one chakra to the next, so that it becomes pure spirit at the top of the head.*

*Now as you exhale, imagine that pure spirit chases away the pollution of the body, mind and emotions. There is no room for that pollution in a purified body and mind.*

## Filtering - Nigredo

How does one transmute energy? Perhaps the best example of transmutation is to be found in alchemy. There are six stages. The first is Nigredo, which is filtering. It means that one separates that which one can't digest and expels it. It is important to know when you cannot digest something. Don't try. The stronger you are, the more you can digest, but you have to know your limits.

It is difficult to forgive people who act in a very evil way, so one has to find some kind of detachment until one is able to deal with them - there is a psychological immune system as well as a physiological one.

In our time we are suffering from an indigestion of impressions, and we have to learn how to refuse to take in an impression: that is detachment, vairagya in yoga.

## Transmuting – water into vapour

Buddha said that you place a sentinel at the doors of perception. The sentinel allows certain things through, and others not. I demonstrated what effect detachment has on the body when my doctor asked me to lower my blood pressure by meditating. I meditated on Buddha sitting in the middle of a storm - where he sits everything is calm - and my blood pressure went down immediately. That is detachment: you observe it, just as a scientist observes a phenomenon, without being part of it. You can't be affected.



This brings up a very important theme, that of self-sufficiency. We are continually enriching ourselves from the environment, to such an extent that we become dependent on it. The consequence is that we do not call upon our inherent qualities. In the measure to which we are independent of what we experience, we awaken our dormant potentialities - that is self-sufficiency. That is why ascetics make themselves self-sufficient.

The second step in alchemy, after Nigredo, is described as the transmutation of water into vapour. Somehow your energy becomes more and more like pure spirit.

Perhaps you know that in homoeopathic medicine there is not one atom remaining of the original medicine - matter has been transformed into energy. In science this is called ionization. It means that an electron in an atom has been transformed into energy. 'Plasma' is the condition in which all the electrons have been transformed into energy. Most of the matter in the universe is plasma. The opposite process also takes place when energy becomes matter.

The same process is found operating in the matter of the body: our electromagnetic field is not only the convergence of the electromagnetic field of the environment; the cells of our body also contribute to the electromagnetic field when they become pure energy. That is the secret of working with the body of resurrection, preparing oneself for life after life: you shift your identity from your body to your magnetic field.

So could you do this:

*When you start inhaling, identify with your body, then towards the end of the inhale identify with your magnetic field, and in between experience how your physical body gets transmuted into your field. When you exhale, you do the opposite. Somehow keep in mind that the magnetic field is the template in which the body is configured, so that the body is secondary to the magnetic field which is the initial state. So you are recharging the body with your magnetic field.*

*Between the inhale and exhale, when you hold your breath, don't just identify with the electromagnetic field, which is dynamic: there is such a thing as a static magnetic field, like the field around and inside a magnet. To get the body into a state of inertia so that a new energy can come through, it has to reach a static state. When you hold your breath, your energy field is static, as though the pendulum has stopped, or like the point at the top of the pendulum which is motionless. They are not subject to the process of becoming. The consequence is that one's thoughts are suspended beyond their usual agitation, and one's identity is not with the physical body, not even with one's magnetic field, but just with pure energy. One is pure energy.*

Perhaps it is not that thoughts are suspended; perhaps it is that one is reaching into the very foundation of thought, like thought beyond thinking, being aware at the mental level without being aware of different thoughts. David Bohm says the mind can function in the implicate state. An example of this would be to consider space



without thinking that you are located in space - that is a theme of Buddha's. Or Einstein showed that if the body were travelling at the speed of light one would lose a sense of becoming. Buddha calls this state the life of your life. He gives the example of a tree that one fells leaving only a stump and the roots, and then it can grow again - is it then the same tree? So we are talking about something more fundamental than what occurs in the branches and the trunk. The life of our life. It carries within it all possibilities, which then become limited when it grows into the existential state. It is like playing a game of chess and losing some of the pieces.

So now you return to the original state; the state of inertia.

## Regeneration

Then new life comes in. What is regeneration? Here is a picture to illustrate it: the world that we know is only a cross section in three dimensions of an infinite world, whereas the real world is multi-dimensional. Imagine insects that could only perceive two dimensions. Their world would be like a sheet of paper, and anything that cuts through that paper from a three-dimensional world is experienced as two-dimensional. Now translate that into our three-dimensional world: some of the richness of the multi-dimensional world is coming through, but we only experience it in the perspective of three dimensions. So there is a lot in the multidimensional world that does not break through into our three-dimensional world. But one can invite it to come through.

That is what we are doing in meditation. By thinking that the possible is continually becoming actual, we awaken dormant faculties, and make our potential a reality. It means that we can awaken energy in the universe that is not active in us yet, so this energy comes into our bodies, and into our whole existence. It is an extraordinary thought, that there is no limit to our potentiality. For example, if you play a game of chess, you may lose a few pieces, but if you are a good player you can go on playing and still win. But the game of chess of the world is different, because the number of pieces is infinite, so however many you lose there is still more to come. If you lose at one stage you can always win at the next. That is why Hazrat Inayat Khan says that a defeat can prove to be a victory.

## Experiencing pure spirit

So far we have looked at how to nourish ourselves with different kinds of energy, and then how to transmute energy, working with two poles: earth and pure spirit. The third stage in the alchemical process goes beyond the magnetic field: it is experiencing oneself as pure spirit. We can transmute earth energy into pure spirit, and we can invest pure spirit into physical energy - in Christianity this is called 'quickenings with the Holy Spirit'.



Of course we don't know what happens after death but it seems that there are different levels which we will experience according to the realization we reach in this life, and we can make preparations for this transition in our meditations. Identifying with your magnetic field is a step beyond identifying with your physical body. If, before death, we have learned how to identify ourselves with our magnetic field, our consciousness survives the death of the body in the magnetic field.

There is a further process, whereby the electrons in the cells transform themselves into photons; meditations with light help to create a body of light (that does not mean just physical light), and this light body may represent a more advanced state after death.

The ultimate stage may be pure spirit, even beyond light. It is a state of energy which has become totally purified, immaculate and egoless – and consequently defenceless, like a child. The best representation of what you mean by being pure spirit is discovering the child in you.

Can you see the difference between identifying yourself with your magnetic field and being pure spirit?

Now we have the opposite, which is infusing our body and our magnetic field with the energy of pure spirit. That is the secret of healing. That is why we speak of healing by the power of the Holy Spirit. Of course one thinks of the quickening of the Holy Spirit as if the Holy Spirit were descending on one; that is the first step. The second step is that one realizes that one is already infused with the Holy Spirit, but one needs to awaken it. The exercise which embodies what I am saying is:

*As you inhale, think of earth energy that you are drawing from the planet, then you transmute it in the course of your inhaling by passing in review each chakra until you get to the top of the head, then it is pure spirit. When you hold your breath you remember the Life of the Life, the roots of the tree, the thought behind the thinking. Then on the exhale you do the opposite: you infuse your magnetic field with pure spirit.*

We are speaking about evolution, and what we mean by that is to be better able to manifest the divinity of ones being.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This article is an edited version of a talk given in Paris on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2002. and was first published in *Caduceus Journal* issue number 55, Spring 2002. <http://www.caduceus.info>