

Since I became enlightened I have never come across a person who is not enlightened. You see only that which you are. Before I became enlightened, the same was the case with me -- the whole world used to appear tremendously asleep, in darkness, in death, unenlightened, because you are reflected continuously everywhere. Every other person is just a mirror; you see yourself. So don't be worried about others; think about yourself. That should be your problem.

Others are not your problems. Whether they are enlightened or not, how does it concern you? Why should you be worried about it? If somebody wants to remain unenlightened, it is absolutely his business to decide about it. If they want to play the game of being unenlightened, it's perfectly okay. If you have become fed up with the world, if you are fed up with your anguish and anxiety and you have realized that now it is time to awake, then there is no difficulty. Nobody can prevent you. Nobody is preventing you. It is only your own decision to play the game as an unenlightened being or to play the game as an enlightened being. It is only a question of inner decision.

In a single moment, in one stroke, you can become enlightened. It is not a gradual process, because enlightenment is not something that you have to invent. It is something that you have to discover. It is already there. It is not something that you have to manufacture. If you have to manufacture it, of course, it will take time; but it is already there. Close your eyes and see it there. Be silent and have a taste of it. Your very nature is what I call enlightenment. Enlightenment is not something alien, outside you. It is not somewhere else in time and space. It is you, your very core.

I was staying at Mulla Nasrudin's. One morning when we were sipping tea, the wife of Mulla Nasrudin told him, "Mulla, you swore terribly at me in your sleep last night." Mulla Nasrudin laughed and said, "Who was asleep?"

You are not asleep. Whatsoever you are doing, you have chosen to do it; it is your choice. And I insist that it is your choice, because if it is your choice, then it can be dropped immediately, the moment you are ready to change your choice. You have chosen your life to be this way -- the way of agony, anguish.

Certainly you will ask, "Why should one want to choose a life of agony, anguish, anxiety, pain, suffering? Why? Why should one choose a life of sorrow?" There are reasons, great reasons behind it: because only in sorrow can you BE. In ecstasy you disappear. Only in pain can you exist as an entity. In bliss you are lost as a drop is lost in the ocean. You are afraid to lose yourself; hence you have chosen the ways of agony. They create the ego; the more you suffer, the more you feel you are. Suffering gives you a definition. It makes you feel solid; it gives you a feeling that you are separate from the whole. That's why you have chosen it. Nobody has chosen sorrow and suffering directly. Indirectly, you have chosen to be an egoist. Hence you have to choose suffering: without suffering you cannot be an egoist. The ego cannot exist without a sea of suffering around it. The ego is like an island in a sea of suffering.

You are enjoying your ego. You are continuously strengthening it, decorating it, making it more and more valuable. This is your choice.

Once you see that the ego is deeply connected with suffering and without suffering it cannot exist, then if you don't want to suffer, you drop the ego, you forget all about the language of the ego. The language of the ego is the language of agony. And then things are very simple.

I have heard:

A little boy worrying through his very first day at school, raised his hand for permission to go to the wash-room, then returned to the class a few moments later to report that he could not find it. Dispatched a second time with explicit directions, he still could not find it. So this time the teacher asked a slightly older boy to act as guide. Success crowned his efforts. "We finally found it," he told the teacher. "He had his pants on backwards."

This is the situation. You are enlightened beings, just your pants are backwards. You need a slightly older boy to guide you, that's all. That's what a Master is meant to be.

Nothing is missing; nothing can be missing. You are born enlightened. Then you have chosen a life of suffering and agony. You can live enlightened, you can die enlightened. It depends on you. It is a question of sheer choice.

"Are you the only enlightened person in this ashram?" In this ashram you will not even find trees unenlightened.

"If yes, is it impossible to enlighten or to be enlightened near an enlightened person?" It is not a question of being near an enlightened person. If you don't choose, you can be here forever and you will not choose. If you choose to be enlightened, you can be enlightened anywhere.

I am needed, a Master is needed, because your desire to be enlightened is not very strong, not very intense. You don't feel the urgency, you don't feel thirsty enough for it. It is not your first priority. Maybe it is somewhere on your shopping list -- just at the end. If any money is left, if time is left, and the market remains open, you will see. But it is not first. First comes the world, and then comes God. Of course, you never come to God, because the world is vast -- one thing leads to another, and it goes on and on. God has to be your first priority. I am needed only to help you to put God on your list as the first priority, that's all. If you can put it there yourself, then you can become enlightened anywhere.

I became enlightened without any Master, so there cannot be any problem for you. If it can happen to me, it can happen to you. The Master is not a must. It has become a must because you are so lethargic, because you are so unwilling to move towards ecstasy, because you are so attached to the ways of sorrow and anguish.

You have become so attached to the prison, you don't want to get out of it. Even if the door is left open, you don't escape. You go on deceiving yourself; you don't even look at the door. You go on deceiving yourself that the door is closed and the guard is there. And there is nobody! The door is open and the guard is not there. But you want to remain in the prison; you have become too attached. You have invested too much in the prison. In fact you have started looking at the prison as your home. The outside world looks strange and wild, and you feel afraid.

People are afraid of freedom, and people are afraid of knowing life too deeply. People are afraid to love, people are afraid to BE. They have lived long in the dark; now they are afraid of light -- afraid they will not be able to open their eyes, afraid they will be dazzled, their eyes may be destroyed, afraid because their life in the darkness has become a settled routine. It is secure. Why take any chance? Why go into the unknown and the uncharted?

The darkness has become too familiar; otherwise you can become enlightened anywhere. It is your treasure. You can claim it any moment. It is a surprise why you have not claimed it up to now.

And remember, nobody else can enlighten you AGAINST yourself. If you have decided to remain the way you are, then there is no possibility. All the Buddhas and all the Christs and all the Krishnas all put together, they cannot do anything -- and you will remain the same as you are. And it is good in a way that it should be so. If you can be enlightened by somebody else, against you, then that enlightenment cannot be very valuable. It cannot be a freedom. If you can be forced to be enlightened, then that too is going to be a slavery, a bondage -- a new bondage.

No, it is absolutely your choice! Choose it or leave it, but remember always, it is your responsibility.

There are many people who come to a Master and surrender just so that they stop feeling responsible. That is a wrong type of surrender. Surrender means "I am ready to cooperate," that's all. It does not mean "Now you are responsible, and if I don't become enlightened then you will be responsible for it." Then even through surrender nothing is going to happen, because the surrender in the first place happened through wrong reasons.

When you come to me to be initiated, this is the whole meaning of initiation: that you tell me that "I am ready," that "I will not hinder your efforts," that "If you help me, I will welcome it," that "If you knock at my door, you will find me ready to receive you," that "I am ready to become a host to you," that "I will cooperate," that "My yes is total." That is the meaning of sannyas, the meaning of surrender: that "I will not say no," that "I will not resist," that "I will not fight you." It is not throwing away responsibility; it is simply dropping resistance. Not dropping responsibility, but only resistance. And once resistance is dropped, things start happening on their own accord. I am just an excuse.

Exactly, a Master is what the scientists call a catalytic agent. It does not "work"; its presence is enough. It simply helps by being present. A Master cannot do anything to you in reality, but his presence.... You feel more trust. You cannot trust yourself; that's why you need to trust me. If you can trust yourself, there is no need. If you feel enough unto yourself, there is no need. If you don't feel enough, you don't feel confident enough, you don't feel that you will choose the right thing, you don't feel that you will move into the right direction, then surrender is helpful. You trust somebody you feel has known, somebody you feel loves you, will not harm you, somebody you feel has more than you. You trust him. You hold his hand.

And all that happens always happens within you -- and it happens without the doing of the Master. Enlightenment is not something that can be "done" by anybody. You just relax in trust, and it starts arising in you. It was waiting there for the moment when you can say yes. If you can say yes to the whole, good, there is no need for a Master.

If you cannot say yes to the whole sky -- it may seem too huge -- then say yes to a window. The Master is a window; it opens towards the sky. It brings you towards the sky. The Master is just a passage. Pass through the Master in trust, in love, in surrender, and things will start happening.

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