

Escape from the Ten Kinds of Bondage You Are In!

Welcome, especially to our visiting retreatants and returning retreatants. It's wonderful to see you again, Michel, and all of the nivassis with your shining third eyes lit up with the glory of your love for God. And to those on the lovestream, wherever your bodies may be in this illusory morphogenic field, may you receive the tsunami of *shakti* that will bring you into God-Consciousness as your permanent state of realization of your true Self.

So this is a retreat that has been entitled “The Great Escape,” and I inflicted its music on you, in case you were wondering. You will have to be a master of your mind to get it out of your head, because it's one of those types of marching music that tends to keep marching even after you wish it was gone.

I was reconsidering the movie. Last week I think I told you it wasn't worth inflicting it on you, because it was sound and fury signifying nothing. I've had a change of heart about that, which came this morning when I was finally given the message of what I'm supposed to share with you in this retreat. (I'm always the last to know, you know.) When that came together, then I recognized, “No, I have to show it to you after the retreat.”

You see, when I first evaluated it, it was in accordance with the nature of the plot, which is a comic book, in a way, and much too long and involved with claustrophobic details of this escape effort. Then it's anticlimactic at the end, because most of the characters don't make it (they die, they're executed, etc.). So I felt that, at the plot level, it was relatively pointless—a vanity affair more than anything. But then, as I rethought it from the level of character, I realized, “No, no, this is actually a very important film.” Why? Because the producers somehow gathered every hero actor available in Hollywood in that period and included all of them in the film. And the film is, in a way, a paean to heroism and to the heroic attitude and the indomitable invincible force that is fearless, unafraid of death, and that conquers even in death. So, in a certain postmodern way, it's expressing the same archetype as Christ crucified, whose heroism in speaking truth to the Pharisees and the Romans and all of those non-believers was not held back by fear—whose presence in the world therefore remains as an immortal vibrational frequency that anyone can attune to and realize their own Christ-Self risen from their cross of suffering. In that sense, I think it's valuable because the retreat (seminar . . . call it what you will) this weekend is about becoming a spiritual hero, since this is what is now required of us.

So I want to talk to you about what we really mean by The Great Escape. In Kali Yuga, formally, every major religion is offering to be a vehicle for The Great Escape. Of course, some will call it salvation, redemption, the rapture, *jivan mukti*, *videha mukti*, the Buddha Nature, the Ascension—give it whatever term you prefer. But all of them capture one's loyalty (if they do) because they promise that through their *sadhana* (their practices, their prayers, their rituals, their rites of passage), you will be able to achieve The Great Escape. The problem is that all of the religions became taken over by ego-consciousness and by clerical establishments that were terrified of people's becoming liberated while alive, because it threatened their control and their purpose was social control at that point. That's why the Romans who killed Christ then became the Roman Church and acted as if they were the proper representatives of Christ-Consciousness when they had tried to snuff it out.

So the prayers that you have to believe as a Christian—starting with the Jesus Prayer that's so famous among the *hesychasts* (the Christian mystics), in which you have to repeat over and

over again like a mantra, “God have mercy on me, a sinner”—make you dependent on some grace coming to you in the future. As soon as you believe you are a sinner, you have lost the portal to The Great Escape, which can only be now, in the present—not in some future.

The same thing with Islam, which means “submission” (submission to Allah), but what about “union” with Allah? The Sufis didn't want to submit to Allah; they wanted to become drunkenly intoxicated on the realization that they were nothing other than Allah. For that reason, Sufis were burned at the stake and executed in many other ways. Finally they had to go mostly underground (as they still are today, at least in the Islamic countries).

We can see the same patterns happening even in Buddhism, which began, at least, as much more of a liberative enterprise. But, once the lamas took over, they made what should have been a path of instant enlightenment into a gradual path. There's no time for a gradual path now, so we want The Great Escape *now*, and that is the purpose of this retreat.

So what is The Great Escape, and what's the difference between The Great Escape and all the little escapes that the ego is much more interested in generally? I would even say that the ego is a program that is designed to keep one obsessed with little retreats, little escapes—escapes from the suffering of the ego mind in an almost infinite number of ways involving narcissistic jouissance. Some will abuse alcohol or drugs, some will abuse the internet and social media and their phones, some will run away by watching films, some will prefer to watch porn, some will prefer to read detective novels, some will play bridge, and some will play chess. You can go on and on as to what people are interested in doing to run away from the Real Self into meaningless activities—including becoming obsessed by juicy conspiracy theories and researching all kinds of strange and exotic things in the world that you can now reach via the internet. But attainment of the Real Self, this is what is avoided at all costs by the ego.

An ashram is a place that's designed to minimize the opportunities for the small escapes and focus attention on The Great Escape, which is why many egos devoted to the small escapes are very unhappy in an ashram and are constantly dreaming of being in a place where they have more opportunity for those small escapes that are so much fun. Of course, those always lead to disappointment and despair because, wherever you are, the grass is always greener somewhere else and the next escape is *the one*—the last one was disappointing, etc., etc. So most people stay on that gerbil wheel of one small escape after another (which never works), and they avoid confronting the necessity of making The Great Escape, because The Great Escape is from the ego itself.

We have to understand not only where we escape from, but where we escape to, and this is where there is some controversy among different schools of thought. I want us to go beyond all of that though because, ultimately, they're all in harmony although they employ different signifiers. So the Advaita Vedantans will say, “Reach the supreme Self” and the Buddhists will say, “Reach the no-Self and the emptiness,” whereas others will say, “No, reach the fullness.” You have every sort of philosophical intonation, but—when you analyze with luminous clarity—what do the signifiers actually point to in the Real? They are all pointing to the same thing, because the ultimate Real that you are cannot be adequately conceptualized by any term or set of terms or propositions or concepts or paradigms or any other way that you want to try to grasp the Real. The Self that you are (and make note of this), the Self that you are is ungraspable. Until you grasp that, you will not be able to reach freedom—you will not be able to give up the desire to grasp, to attain, to gain, to reach, liberation. You can never

reach it, because it's not an *it* . . . it's your *I*—not an other, not an object, not a God, not anything that you can objectify.

The entire project of philosophical understanding fails in the same way that the great mathematician Kurt Gödel discovered that every mathematical system fails. Every logical system reaches a point of failure where it cannot answer a question or its answer is inconsistent and contradictory. Until we develop a capacity to become connoisseurs of contradiction and paradox, and until we recognize the inadequacy of language to represent the Real, we will not be able to break through the veil produced by thought (which turns out to be the main obstacle to The Great Escape)—even though you have to think very clearly to get to the point where you can go beyond thought. So we have to know who is able to escape, exactly what we are escaping from, what is the secret of success, and what cannot be escaped.

I propose that there are **Ten Forms of Psychological Bondage** that we have to escape from. Just for starters (so that you have a sense of what I'm talking about, especially if you're new to Sat Yoga), when I refer to “ego-consciousness,” I mean that tiny sliver of the mind that identifies with the body and with the operating system of the body. That operating system is a set of algorithms of repetitious thought patterns that were installed in infancy by the parents and the family system as you acquired language; and that then developed further nuances, refinements, and subtle bondages as you internalized the family system, the social system, and whatever religious system, ethical system, or other system in which you became trapped ideologically. We need freedom from all ideological beliefs—all beliefs. Of course, we often cherish our beliefs and don't want to let them go. So we have to look at our beliefs and ask, “Is this really something that serves me by holding on to it? Or does it create a bondage that prevents me from realizing my infinite Nature?”

So, of the ten, I would say the first is **Fear** (people run scared), and there are two kinds of fear, really—phobic fear and anxiety. The phobic is situational or focused on an object (“I'm afraid of spiders,” or “I'm afraid of snakes,” or “I'm afraid of whatever”), but it's a specific thing that you then try to avoid. You spend your life avoiding it and then occasionally being horrified when you have to face it, but you orbit around a certain fear. Then there's anxiety, which is a fear that's so generalized that it has no object. It's just a fear of life, a fear of death, a fear of what could happen, a fear of what did happen, a fear of dreaming about what happened and what could happen . . . and the ensuing paranoid fantasies that bring about what you fear, since the world is a dream and a projection.

The second is **Depression**. And depression can be caused by self-hatred because you were not loved in childhood, or you were abused, traumatized, neglected, abandoned, etc. You can hate the world for having done that to you, and you can be depressed because you can't open your heart to love anyone because you were too hurt and you will never allow that again. So, of course, you're going to feel depressed because love is what it's all about.

Anger is the third. Of course, anger can be based on the frustration that you feel at your inability to accomplish something, or it can be rage and fury at someone else for being an obstacle to your intentions or for having insulted you or somehow challenged you and caused you to lose your poise and your sense of control of the territory.

Then there is the bondage of **Pride**. And pride here is *hubris*, the pride of the ego based on an illusory superiority complex and an illusion of control.

Then, of course, there is the bondage of **Guilt**. That can be based on real behavior (cheating, lying, or something else that your ethical system makes you feel guilty for). Or it can just be a sense of guilt that your birth and your existence were too much trouble for your mother and your father—that you're guilty for just being alive and disturbing their life plans, because you weren't planned and your life interrupted their dreams of being a ballerina or a rock star or whatever it happened to be. So you can have a sense of guilt totally based on a fantasy like that.

And then there's the really mean one, **Shame**, which is the inferiority complex, and/or a sense of unworthiness, unlovability.

One of the most popular forms of bondage in the time of capitalistic intentionality is **Busyness**. People love to stay busy, *rajasic*. You can be busy with routine things (“Oh, I've got to clean the house—I can't meditate . . . I've got to walk the dog . . . I've got to do this and I've got to do that . . . I'm always too busy to realize the Self”). Or you can be in a high-pressure situation where there's a time constraint and you have to solve a problem immediately, you're under stress and strain, and there's one problem after another that keeps you far too occupied with problem solving to be able to escape from the problem that you are to yourself.

Then, of course, there's the bondage of **Boredom**. There are many people who live very boring lives because they're not fully alive. They're living at far less than their potential and in states in which they have compromised or given up on their hero's journey because of security, money, or some other attachment. They have sacrificed their heart's true yearning for The Great Escape in order to take care of others and be a good girl or boy, etc.; but then they end up with very boring meaningless lives. Even though such lives may be very comfortable, they produce a kind of quiet agony.

Then there's the bondage of those who are **Spaced Out** and who prefer to be spaced out. This is a kind of personality strategy, but it can become a constitutional way of being such that one is just not really here—not in a state of enlightenment or liberation, but just in a state like an autistic retreat. It's a retreat into an inability to think—not a transcendence of thought, but a laziness of mind that prefers to sleep or be drunk on something that will just cause blacking out or tuning out through some mindless means.

And then there are the **Narcissistic Enjoyments** that are more positive, by which you can become fascinated by some new digital object that's available (a toy of some kind), or some enjoyment of the desire of the other. Whatever it is, that fascination is temporary and will also lead to a dead-end of boredom and meaninglessness. Although it provides temporary stimulation and release from boredom, it doesn't release you very far; so it's a very tiny escape.

How many people have gone through these ten forms of bondage? OK, are you ready to let go of those now and be free for The Great Escape? Good, because none of those ways of living will serve you, and you'll ultimately regret all of them. This is the time to complete that hero's journey.

What we want to escape from is the ego. But also, in the ego, there is the illusion of karma, suffering, and other kinds of bondage created by the ego mind that keep you earthbound and unable to conquer certain fears (like the fear of death, pain, loss, abandonment, isolation,

loneliness, etc.), while limiting the creative intelligence that you can access. The ego mind is just a tiny sliver of your complete consciousness, and it has veiled its access to the Unlimited Self in order to be able to focus on the illusion of pseudo-agency of the ego that is dedicating its consciousness to the well-being of its body (to its health and beauty), to its status in society, and to all the other goals that we are indoctrinated into wanting to have as egos. Those include being successful and finally trying to be loved and valued by your grandchildren or by others so that you can redeem a sense of having wasted most of your life. You try to externalize and connect with others in order to create certain effects that you can't actually transmit because you yourself haven't achieved freedom from the ego, so you can't really offer it to anyone else yet.

So in “The Great Escape” movie, the characters were in a prison camp of the Nazis. They decided that the best way out that wouldn't be detected was tunneling (I think that's a good metaphor), so they made several tunnels. The traditional approach to The Great Escape takes one of four tunnels. My suggestion is that you actually combine all of these into one much larger reality tunnel, but you can get through the barrier using any of these four tunnels.

The first of the four is **Krama**. We could translate that as “method,” but *krama* is the ancient Sanskrit word, and there actually was a Krama school in the Kashmir wisdom school. So you can get out by using a tried-and-true method. Some of the methods are very complicated, involving *asanas*, *mudras*, *pranayamas*, chanting of various kinds, and other kinds of *sadhana*—*kriyas*, all kinds of activities. It's based on action, on doing something that will change your state of consciousness. In order to get out through that tunnel, you actually have to have a lot of willpower to keep going with that method, because any method will be gradual and will require endurance and relentless stick-to-itiveness.

The problem for most egos is that they have conflicting desires. How many people here have joined a gym? For the first month, you went regularly every time, and you were lifting the weights and following what the coach did. Then one day you say, “Today I'm just going to have a beer and pizza and skip the gym, but I'll go back.” But then, somehow, you don't go back as regularly, and soon your membership is there but you haven't been there in months. The thing turns out to have been a waste of your money. How many people here have had that kind of an experience?

OK, so with any kind of *sadhana* based on a method, the odds are that you're going to give up on the method before you reach the goal. And the reason is, when you use any method, you're starting out from the belief that you are a person in the world who is a bodily being who has to take bodily action in order to achieve a change in consciousness. There's a contradiction in that because that's exactly the delusion that you want to overcome, so your methodology is ratifying the very thing that you need to drop.

Now, people with a very powerful will can actually get quite far using method, and some actually might make it. I think, in the old days, some actually did achieve *chitta-vritti-nirodha* through a method. Even Sri Ramana offers a method for those who want it: *atma vichara*, which is a pretty simple method—about as simple as you can get. But even with that, how many people really practice *atma vichara* without a break until they have broken through the ego and reached Atman consciousness? It almost never happens—it didn't happen in Ramana's lifetime very much. (One cow made it, maybe a few others. Marugana(?) probably did, and a few others, but not too many.) So, method is probably not the tunnel I would choose as my first option. But if your mind tends to be very enmeshed in concrete thinking,

that's what you want ("How do I do it? What's the exact mantra? How do you pronounce it?"). It's got to be exact.

All of these methods are, of course, small escapes that are delays. With *pranayama*, you can get to a temporary *kumbhaka* where your breath stops for a fairly long period and your thoughts stop. But then as soon as you get up and the breathing starts again, the thoughts start. I don't know anyone who's been liberated through pranayamas, OK? However, it gives you a glimpse, it gives you a taste of what it's like to be in a peaceful consciousness for a few minutes. Some drugs can do that and some other means; but, again, it's temporary and then you become dependent on whatever the prop is that you've used. I won't belabor that point anymore . . .

The second tunnel is ***Gyana***, and I would translate that here as "understanding."

Understanding is a much more powerful approach—a much more direct tunnel—because, if you reach a high level of understanding, your mind will enter a state of luminous clarity. But, in that state, what you will understand is that your Real Self cannot be understood.

Understanding leads to its own subversion or its own proof that thought—the symbolic capacity to grasp—cannot work, cannot reach the ungraspable. You cannot "stand under" that which is the actual foundation of your being. You cannot see the seer. You cannot know the knower as an object, as an other. You cannot reify the Self. You do not have two Selves so that one can know the other. The Self is, but it cannot know itself until its beingness has been fully Self-revealed, OK? And that cannot be attained through symbolic understanding; that has to be transcended. But it will take you far enough that you can grok that and then take the leap beyond the conceptual mind. So it has a value.

The third tunnel, in Sanskrit, I call ***Vandana***. There's a famous activist named Vandana Shiva. How many of you have heard of her? Yeah. Beautiful woman working for good in the world. *Vandana* means "adoration." So her very name means "adoration of Shiva." It's the state of such blissful love of God, such devotional surrender, that you enter a state of ecstatic bliss of union with that one that you adore. Then you become not one who adores an other (an ego adoring God) . . . it has to be at the soul level because the ego doesn't have adoration in its repertoire. Only the soul level of our consciousness can be in the fullness of adoration, because you have to be totally vulnerable and open for that. But you have to reach that point where the object of adoration drops away and so does the subject who adores . . . all that remains is adoration itself. That's the tunnel out because you're in ecstatic, drunken, divine madness; and, once you have entered that state, there's nothing that can stop you from final liberation.

For those who are more feeling-centered than thinking-function-centered and whose hearts are open and have love for God, adoration is a path that works. But, again, it works only when that adoration has attained its nondual nature. So it also tends to be gradual and incomplete, because the adoration is usually for one's concept of God or one's image of God or one's notion of an archetypal form that represents the Goddess or the Godhead in some way that can be held in the mind as an object; and that has to be dropped. You cannot make a graven image of the Supreme Lord, as all the Abrahamic religions do know.

The fourth tunnel is ***Pratyabignya***. The "gnya" comes from *gyana*, but this is not the same. *Pratyabignya* is "recognition, immediate recognition." It's like when you see someone whom you haven't seen in years and you have a sudden, "I know you" . . . it's a sudden recognition of your Self, of The Self, of the fact that you are The Self. That sudden recognition breaks

through all barriers and requires no method, no concepts, not even love. You go immediately to bliss without having any need for a dualistic relationality.

So those are the four tunnels. Tomorrow I'm going to propose a fifth one to you. But, for tonight, I think that will probably suffice to get you beyond the perimeter of your prison camp (if you're still in the ego) and to the realization of what freedom could be . . . total freedom . . . total freedom from suffering and from any frame of reference that limits you—any paradigm in which you are a victim or an extra or a being without the capacity to be God-realized. If you have any of those false beliefs, you have to drop them; and immediate recognition is, of course, the most efficacious way.

But what I'm recommending for tonight is that you consider combining all of these. *Atma vichara* is a simple method of asking (not verbally, but wondering), “Who am I really? What do I mean by I? I know I don't really mean the body. I know I don't really mean the mind because the thoughts arise by themselves. Sometimes I wish they weren't there yet I can't stop them. So I know that the mind is not me. It's a program, it's a robot, it's a mental parasite that I have no control over. And the affects that the ego mind brings up . . . I can be happy one minute and depressed the next . . . I don't have control over my emotions at the ego level . . . things can upset me very easily or scare me or bring me into a different mood, and I am not immune to those shifts.” You want to be completely free of being subjected to the disharmony and incoherence of your own mind.

If you do *atma vichara* and you do it with adoration, then it's much more powerful. If the “I” that I love is the “Supreme I” (the “I” that is universal)—not simply particular to this body apparatus, but the “I-Amness,” the “Great I-Am”—then there can be instant adoration, devotion, surrender, and yearning for union and love . . . joy. This opens the mind to the understanding that God is infinite and that there is nothing outside of God. We are all within God right now. We cannot be anywhere but in the mind of God; that's the only place there is. If you think you're living in a world outside of God, you're in a delusion because the world is an appearance within the mind of God. It's actually the Goddess who creates the beauty of the world. This is the energy of God that configures the quantum-wave functions and the qualium-wave functions to produce all the life forms of the universe—all the forms that consciousness takes, whether mineral, vegetable, animal, angel, avatar, or some other level of being (including the demonic and the *asuric*). All of it is an appearance within the mind of God.

So we have never left our abode, our home in the mind which is also the heart of God-Consciousness. But we have identified with the dream that God is having in that mind and with a character in that dream. We have lost our free will by playing out a character whose role is determined not by the will of the character's ego but by the will of God. Only when there is no differential between my will and thy will (“Let thy will be done”)—only when I surrender my will to that will of God—only then, paradoxically and miraculously, am I granted the power to change the nature of the role my character is playing in the world. That's what Grace is. You become the author of your life, not simply the character fictionally created by the desire of others and by causes and conditions in a world empty of essence. You become the active intelligence of the playwright who can now fashion a role worthy of your true divine nature. It is this that constitutes the rebirth that you go through once you have passed through the rite of ego death.

We'll talk more about that tomorrow. But quantum physics has given us a very simple, easy way to understand the nature of bondage. Everything is information that is carried by waves. What kind of waves? They're not waves that are made of matter (there is no such thing as matter). The physicists call them probability waves because they like to think that they know how probable it is that a wave function will collapse into a particle in this place or that place. So they will say there's a probability of a certain observation being made at a certain time . . . but never a certainty. Indeterminacy rules over cause and effect.

But what is that wave, really? It's a wave of consciousness, a mind wave, a wave of infinite potentiality. That's what the world is made of. These waves contain information that is constitutive of the knowledge within the mind of God; and these waves can be collapsed by the mind of the Goddess, whose function it is to determine the forms that offer the most beauty, power, grace, and freedom for the forms of life that manifest in a divine world. And there are two kinds of waves. The physicists only know the quantum-wave function that determines the material objective characteristics of a thing or a body of some kind. But there's actually a double helix congruent with the DNA molecule in the human. It's a helix created by a relationship between the quantum-wave function and the qualium-wave function, and this the physicists haven't yet grokked (although some are starting to). What the qualium-wave function does is determine the qualities of your personality, your character, and your repertoire of potential creative activity in the world. If that qualium-wave function is collapsed in a certain way that prevents you from feeling love, for example, or going beyond what is acceptable to the social other, or in some other way fully individuating your potentiality . . . if the qualium-wave function is collapsed such that it creates limitations upon your curiosity, your intelligence, your ability to grow, develop, and regain the full stature of your potency as pure spirit, then—if you want The Great Escape—that qualium-wave function must be decollapsed. That's what ego death is. It's simply that freeing of yourself from an identity that is produced by certain attitudes and certain foci of intentionality that serve the body, that serve particular goals, others, social activities, etc. So freedom of consciousness can be attained only when that has been completely decollapsed and then modulated in such a way that it enables complete creative freedom to manifest.

Traditionally, there are four levels or stages of the journey. We have them here, but we haven't fully activated them because people haven't reached them all. The first is the *pravartak* (a term from classical Indian theater), meaning when you first step on the stage in the first scene in which you are in the play. It's like a beginner and “Here I am,” but there's stage fright and performance anxiety and all kinds of obstacles in the unknownness of being on a new stage of life. Of course, you can also say it's “beginner's mind” (which is the real Zen mind) if you have no anxiety about that position.

Then you go from there to sadhakhhood. The *sadhak* is the full disciple, who is totally on it to complete the vows—to be in that state of total contentment, total nonviolence, total freedom from every kind of contraction and limitation and in a state of surrender to God—all the traditional *yamas* and *niyamas*.

Then the third level is that of the *siddha*. I haven't been able to name any siddhas here yet, but I'm hoping that we will soon have some. The siddha is the one who has so internalized the freedom of the qualium-wave function that it now begins to have effects on the quantum wave function, decollapsing aspects of that quantum-wave function that appear as aspects of the objective world. Now, those *mahasiddhas* (the famous ones in Tibet, for example, who have achieved ending their body through spontaneous combustion, or the rainbow-body effect,

where only the fingernails remain because everything else is gone) . . . they have decollapsed the quantum-wave function of the body itself. That's the final achievement that can be done at an individual level, but there's also a much larger quantum-wave function on a cosmic level that needs to be dissolved. In any case, we'll talk more about that when we reach a point where that is relevant to the potency of our capacity that has been awakened and activated.

Then there's the final state of the *swami*, the one who has become the master of the Self (the *swa*). There are usually three levels of swamihood that are spoken of. The first is the *nirvikalpa* level, where you have achieved what Ramana refers to as *mruta manas* ("dead mind," where there is no more tendency for conceptualization or mental chatter of an ego kind). Then there is the *nivritti* level. The *nivritti* is the wave of energy that is no longer going toward the world but is going entirely toward the Absolute Self—toward the singularity, toward the point beyond the Omega Point where a new world is born (it's like the womb of the next cosmic manifestation). Then the final level is the *nirgun* level—that level that is beyond all qualities, all describability, all conceivability . . . the Absolute Self.

I won't say more about that now; but this is the goal of The Great Escape, and we are designed to succeed in achieving it. So there are no actual obstacles but your own ambivalence about this achievement. How many want to make The Great Escape? OK, so shall it be.

Namaste,
Shunyamurti