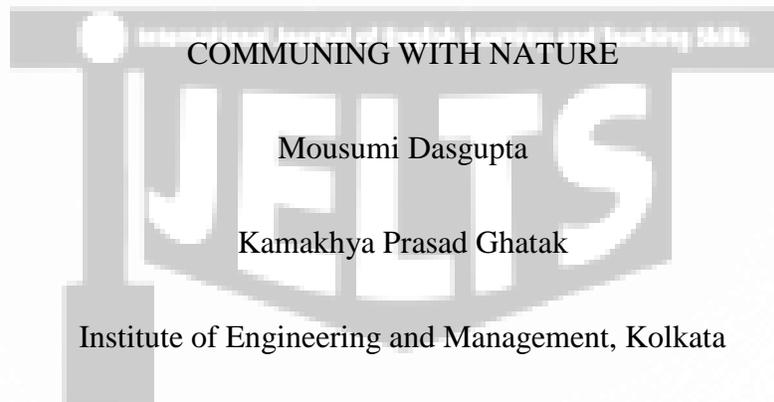


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## COMMUNING WITH NATURE

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## Communing with Nature

Nowhere does man express himself as honestly as he does in a diary. And the diary of a spiritual aspirant is bound to contain basic truths which will throw light on the dark recesses of our own personalities. Circa forty years ago in 1980, a young researcher in Nano-Technology and spiritual aspirant traveled barefoot throughout Himalayas on a rare Pilgrimage of discovery. At the end of each long, tiring day, he meticulously entered his thoughts and experience in two small, clothbound diaries. Often going without food, sleeping wherever he put down his bundle for the night, lashed by the cold northern winds, he established a deep and lasting communion with nature. His pen becomes dipped in sheer poetry as he describes the Himalayan splendor around him. His grumblings, too, are always edged with tongue-in-check humor, with never a trace of bitterness. The narrative is interestingly interspersed with his own sketches of the routes, villages, or temples along way. This young aspirant is the author of this note.

While standing near Gomukh, under the high, dazzling snow covered peaks of the Himalayas, watching nature all around with wonder-struck eyes, there can be no room for worldly thoughts, sorrows or memories of the past. The mind reaches a state of concentration devoid of all distracting thoughts. It is then steeped in ineffable joy at the sight of the snow, divinely beautiful in its own right, and is led forward into a state of Samadhi (divine absorption). Sattvic joy is something that can be attained only through long and arduous discipline. At Gomukh, one reaches this state without efforts. The heavenly bliss that one comes to experience in the midst of natural beauty is superior to the common pleasure of the rajasic man.

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Tranquility is truth; truth is beauty; beauty is bliss and bliss is divinity-this seems to be the lesson preached by each particle of snow, each stone, each petal and each blade of grass. It is my thirst for the nectar of tranquility that drives me to wrestle with the difficulties of travel in these inaccessible regions to reach Gomukh. Tranquility is the innate nature of all; it is a self-existent reality. Therefore, there need be no striving to produce it. Abolish agitation and tranquility reveals itself. Effort is needed not to generate tranquility, but to banish agitation. The mass of light, the sun's disc, is concealed by clouds. The clouds need only move away and immediately the solar disc that appeared to be nonexistent reveals itself. Here there is no question of producing the solar disc and making it shine forth. In the same way, with the cessation of agitation, tranquility rises forth.

Tranquility is experienced in dreamless sleep by everyone alike. Later there is waking from the state; that is to say "I" asserts itself for the first time as agent. Then desire begins to operate. Next, the sense organs like the eye and the ear awaken and operate in regard to their objects. Simultaneously crop up attitudes, affirmative or negative, and concepts such as happiness and unhappiness. This ego-sense and the activities engendered by it is known widely as distraction or, in other words, agitation. This transmigratory existence is nothing but the summation of these discrete masses and their operations. The physical organism transmigratory existence name, form, distraction, pain, agitation these are but synonyms denoting one and the same truth. The source of agitation well known to be the inner organ that assumes such forms as "I": this", "knower", "known". In brief, agitations are the various fabrications of the inner organ and tranquility is their cessation.

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Let a tigress roar in front of a sage merged in profound meditation or let a bird sing sweetly before him, his tranquility is unaffected. Although external objects still surround him, for him they are as good as nonexistent and thus no longer promote agitation. That is why certain teachers have laid it down as a rule that by liquidating not the world created by God, but the world created by man, that is, by undermining the fabrications of the mind of man, tranquility is attained. The conclusion of all spiritual sciences and of all great sages is that agitation or transmigratory existence is the summation of all possible relations between subject and object; while liberation or tranquility is the cessation of such relations. When the objective relationships disappear, like the sun with the disappearance of the clouds, the supreme Truth has been indicated in manifold ways by various philosophers, there is no doubt about Its unity. A real difference cannot result from differences in labels or processes of thought. What has been established thus far is that high-souled sages attain that unsurpassed tranquility untained by association with a variety of names and forms. Through discipline, they discard the distractions of the mind, sense organs and body and thus attain the state of mind that leads to tranquility.

Now arises the question: What is the state of the sages when the body, senses and mind are functioning? Is theirs a plight of wretchedness full of agitation such as that of the ignorant? Never. In the midst of agitation, they experience, without a break, internal tranquility. Since the principle of tranquility hidden from them. How can there be darkness in light? How can there be agitations in tranquility? Don't deep in cool water of a deep pond in summer when all around it is scorching heat, simultaneously half his body feels the heat while the other half enjoys coolness. Sita, dwelling under the Asoka tree in Lanka, surrounded by ogresses, is said to have experienced, at one and the same time, the torments of hell and, because of her constant

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recollection of her lord, the quintessence of bliss. Likewise, even sages, impelled by past actions, may not be able to avoid the activities of the sense organs and the mind, as well as the consequent sensations of pain and pleasure. But even in the midst of such deep distraction, the great souls who have firmly realized the essence of tranquility will continue to experience it without a moment's break. When we say that the supreme Truth manifests itself or that tranquility is experienced, we mean the same thing, Sankar has said: "Not for a moment do the sages remain without the experience of Brahman."

In other words, the minds of the sage take on the form of Brahman, which leaves them not even for the briefest time. To say that Brahman shines forth is the same as saying that the mind assumes the form of Brahman. In the midst of external activities, the mind no doubt, assumes from moment to moment the forms of objects. Nevertheless, what is extremely difficult to accomplish for an ordinary type of knower is achieved by eminent sages, namely, to keep unaffected their mental grasp on the truth of Brahman. Just as the body-bound souls never miss the experience of the body even the midst of severest distractions, so the shining forth of Brahman is experienced without any difficulty by the knowers of Brahman. The fact is, it is easier for them to do so. It becomes their very nature. For such sages, who are hardly less than God Himself, and who habitually find themselves on the summit of such experience, there is concentration of mind, both when the mind is restricted and when it operates towards objects. Although the states of concentration and of distraction are both alike to them, it is assumed, from the point of view of duality, that in one state there is apprehension of objects while in the other there is not.

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In philosophy, the cause of love and the cause of knowledge edge, as well as the form of love and the form of knowledge are discussed separately, yet the ultimate goal the followers of the seemingly divergent paths reach is one and the same. If that is so, those who deride the bhaktas (devotes) as misled fools deserve to be laughed at. To abandon all love of worldly pleasures as the bhaktas do and immerse one's mind completely in the love of God can only be the consummation of great merit. Whatever be the form of God, only a mind which has freed itself totally from worldly entanglements can be filled with divine love. For people whose vasanas (inborn dispositions) have been washed away by the flood of divine love, the Advaitic (non-dualistic) knowledge cannot be far, if at all they want it. Believe firmly in the existence of God, believe that He IS, believe that He is the father of the universe who preserve everything – then it does not matter in what form you worship Him, on what pedestal, or in what world you place him; then there is no doubt that the omniscient. One, immanent in everything and everywhere, will bestow His grace upon you. When a bhakta, filled with longing to see his Beloved, cries out as if his heart would break, “My Lord, My Lord, O supreme soul, when shall I behold Thy lovely form with these eyes of mine?” only people who have tasted the divine sweetness of that intense love can understand it. Seeing that bhakti (devotion) and jnana (knowledge) are equally good, wise one should never waste their precious time arguing excitedly about the superiority of the one or the other. What wise men ought to do is to adopt one of these paths according to their qualifications and inclinations, pursue it steadily and see God, thus fulfilling the purpose of this invaluable human birth.

Those who have such love of God, love solitary places like Gomukh which proclaim the glory of the Lord. There is nothing here which does not help the enjoyment of

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contemplation and prayer. This solitary place is extremely suitable to people who see God, who love God, or who meditate upon God, for they require no external assistance in their activities. Solitude serves them best to perfect their discipline. This region is unrivalled not only in its perpetual solitude, but also in its clear, pure spiritual atmosphere, and so it aids the bhakta as well as the jnani to reach easily the state of samadhi, which is the culmination of Jnana, bhakti and dhyana.

However, for the karmayogi, who performs his duties as acts of devotion, without desire for reward, solitary places are not suitable. He can bathe here devoutly, gain God's grace and thereby destroy sins and acquire mental purity. He can reinforce his faith in God by observing the glory of the creator which manifests itself everywhere in the divine land, but unlike the bhakta or the jnani, he cannot afford to stay on this region and at the same time carry on his duties as karmayogi, for a karmayogi has to depend upon external objects for his activities.

Today people may laugh at such notions as heaven, ascent into heaven, a visit to holy places as an act of merit, and death at the spot as a passport to the realm of the gods. They may deride all that is said about such things as the ravings of fools. Yet even they cannot deny the natural attractions of the surrounding landscapes of the Himalayas. The snow-clad peaks shining like silver or gold in the sunshine and the noise of the avalanches resembling the bursts of cannons convert the region into a wonderland, and fill the hearts of theists and atheists with astonishment and admiration. As for me, my heart was dancing with joy at the divine splendor all around me. My mind was intoxicated with the glory of God. God Himself shines here as this

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mass of spotless snow, as lakes and springs as these tall peaks and these powerful cold blasts and these crystalline streams.

All I see is God. The Himalayas are God; the entire earth is God. Everything exists in him. Everything shines because of his brightness. All beauty in His. I enjoyed the natural beauty of that divine region, realizing His presence everywhere whether in the snow or mountains, in lakes or rivers, in stone or soil, in sunshine or wind, in pleasure or sorrow.

Observe what these snow-white peaks dazzling in the sun are doing in this lovely place, inaccessible to man and animal. They are sweetly, perpetually singing hymns to God; they do nothing else. When I say so, you may be inclined to laugh at the idea: "What! Are we to imagine that this inanimate mountain, a mere heap of earth and stone, sings like a skilled musician?" The silent grandeur, the enormous extent, and the unshakeable firmness of the mountain and the divine beauty and fragrance of the flowers that fascinate even birds and beasts—these are, in themselves, hymns to God. The music of course is not vocal. But vocal music is harsh and grating compared with the silent music of the sights around me here. Heard melodies are sweet; those unheard are sweeter! The perennial streams of the Alakananda, and this waterfall, Vasudhara—what are they doing here? They too are loudly and ceaselessly singing the glory of God: "It is from this that all forms of streams flow". These streams are gratefully singing the praise of the creator who makes them flow. These fine birds sweeping along the skies are proclaiming the matchless glory of the Lord. Look at those charming flowers, bright with many colors, blooming here on the meadow! They, too, proclaim nothing else. In this holy land everything seems to join in that universal harmony. I had my bath in the Vasudhara and then sat down on the plain, which shone bright with fresh green grass and lovely flowers, to enjoy the

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gentle warmth of the sun. Gradually my ears were filled with the divine music issuing from all sides. That lifted me to the thought of the glory of God, and slowly I attained a state of meditation in which I became unconscious of the material world around me....

Without eating anything, I was filled; without friends and things to gladden, my heart was filled with bliss. Intoxicated with divine joy, I forget all distinction between me and the world around me. All sense of duality disappeared. I was now one with the Vasudhara, the Himalayas, the world itself. In that union I felt the fullness of divine joy. That oneness is the Truth, the blissful Truth. O Himalaya! I find no end to your spiritual greatness. As a dweller among the Himalayas I have indeed listened with rapture to your divine song from day to day, but really, very rarely have I experienced that ecstasy which I attained today.

*The story is really long but at last I have understood that there is no "I" to understand at last together with the fact that real "I" in me is not at all equal to the sum of the body I wear and the mind which drives the body.*