

India 2012

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Mumbai, February 22, 2012

So far, for me, 2012 is all about going through the heartbreak of my wife and step-daughter and cat leaving me and me coming to India on a three month ticket, almost without rationale other than that I needed a paradigm shift. My agenda started forming only after I'd paid for my ticket and ordered my visa.

Tomorrow will be two weeks since I left Oregon, after putting most of my stuff in storage and arranging whatever I could think of to be arranged.

Three times, for a total of about a year, I had been in India before, but it's been 27 years since the last time. In 1980 and '81, I was in Pune at the Rajneesh (now Osho) ashram. In 1985, I traveled to Bangkok, then Delhi and Khajuraho and Agra and Kathmundu for a couple of months.

This time, inspired by rereading most of Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram* in January, the most concrete item on my still very much forming itinerary, is to hang out in and get to know Mumbai a little bit.

Later, I definitely plan to do a clean out *panchakarma* retreat at one of the famous ayurvedic resorts in Kerala. At some point, I will go to Tiruvannamalai and visit the Sri [Ramana Maharishi](#) Ashram; also, the intention is strong to be in Jabalpur on [March 21st](#), at the tree under which [Osho](#) got enlightened on [March 21, 1953](#).

[Coincidentally, I was born on Osho's 22nd birthday; in December of '53 and the arithmetic indicates that I must have been conceived back in that March.]

Osho has been my main life teacher and, after all these years, I will still say I am an Osho sannyasin, if asked.

There are looser ideas to visit Ammachi and her Amritapuri Ashram in Kerala, before she leaves there in Mid-March; may see Nithyananda in Bangalore; Dolano in Pune; Asaram Bapu, at his Sant Shri Asaramji Ashram in Ahmedabad; Shree SurajBani in Jamshedpur; Anandmurti Gurumaa, and Rishi Chaitanya Ashram in Rishikesh; a friend emailed me of an "India Holy Retreat" with Babaji Baldev Singh, which I haven't yet checked out much; also, perhaps, Goa, Chennai, Auroville, Varanasi and whatever else presents itself along the way.

My dilemma with Ammachi is I would have to there earlier than I want to be in Kerala. My *Vimshottari* entered Mercury-Ketu-Jupiter on the day before my trip; it goes into Mercury-Ketu-Saturn on March 27th; then it enters Mercury-Ketu-Mercury a week and a half after I'm scheduled to be back home (wherever that is). Though not an expert in vedic astrology, I have been amazed for decades how life shifts coincide with the *dasas & bhuktis*; this trip neatly divided between a Jupiter emphasized first half and a Saturnian second. Just seems that my retreat time should be after March 27th.

Also, I'm not a Bhakti type and Ammachi seems too caught up in being the Divine Mother for all her many children for my tastes. Nithyananda is cute, but he brags about himself all the time, and, though he talks a lot, the pearls of wisdom are few.

Dolano, at the Osho ashram in Pune, actually seems like she may be enlightened. In the lines of Bhagwan and Papaji, an intelligent German woman, I think, and from the youtube videos, she seems to have a no bullshit approach, speaking lucidly from her own experience.

Of course, I have been thinking of going to Pune; curious what it has become; also, it would obviously be a

good place to connect with people. My dilemma there is, after checking out the ashram website, it all seems so expensive and regimented and high security, which turns me off.

The other gurus, above, are still virtually unknown to me.

It's not that I feel a need to find someone who is enlightened, but it would seem surely to be a plus.

Meantime, I pay homage to my dead spiritual heroes...

The two places I for sure wanted to visit here in Mumbai are the Woodlands apartments where Osho lived between 1970 and 1974, before he went to Pune; and the flat where Nisargadatta lived the final years of his life, in Khetwadi. A week ago, I got to the Woodlands and made my first try at finding Nisargadatta's house.



On Peddar Road, the Woodlands are three modern, sterile high rises in a very wealthy locality which reminded me of downtown Beverly Hills. Prior to his stay at the Woodlands, Osho had been mostly referred to as Acharya Rajneesh for many years. It is at the Woodlands where he first started being called Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and it's also when and where he began initiating people into Sannyas.

I just stared at the apartments and the surrounding shops and imagined Bhagwan living there; walking around there. It is not how I had ever visualized it; but almost nothing ever is. There did not seem much else to do, so after a few minutes my driver and I were off to Khetwadi.

Traveling the few miles from Peddar Rd. to Khetwadi, (for not at all the first time) I was struck by how many completely different worlds (100s) exist in this huge city and how quickly they change from one to another.

10th is a short side lane in the Grant Road area of Khetwadi. It is like one of the many non-tourist, non-slum, variations of a 'typical', Indian village. It, and the two bigger lanes at 90 degrees to it on either side, look the same as the do in the youtube videos taken there near the end of Nisargadatta's life in the late '70s. The best hints I had as to which actual flat he lived in were phrases from two different websites about him that said "On the loft's south end was a fairly large window overlooking 10th Lane" and " The landmark for the building is a public toilet opposite to it.". Couldn't find the public toilet, so, I couldn't be certain which of the few flats, mostly above shops, was his, but I got a good idea as there were few to choose from. For a while, I walked around; tried asking several people about him and which flat was his, but:



1. He died in 1981, which is a long time ago;
2. Not one Indian I could find there spoke a word of English, as helpful as all of them would like to have been; and
3. Even repeating 'Nisargadatta Maharaj' over and over produced not a glimmer of recognition in anyone.

Had a nice meal just as the Sun was setting on the day; then returned to my hotel in the P.D. Mello Road section of Mumbai, north of Colaba.

Over the last week, with my dissatisfaction at not definitively locating Nisargadatta's flat nagging at me more and more, I did a few creative, further internet searches and acquired a few additional hints to work with, including a photo of the front of the "Vanamali Bhavan" building as it apparently was named; also, a photo of the public restroom, the most mentioned landmark across the street.

Yesterday, I had success! Sometime before 11am, I went to Khetwadi again, this time with the intention of combing the area until I for sure found Nisargadatta's residence.

As I said, 10th Lane is very short. So, I found myself walking up and down it several times once again; asking questions of more people who could respond to my English only with apologetic blank stares. Still no public toilet and no single flat that exactly matched the photo I had seen.

Finally, a man who spoke a smidgeon of my language, who had been informed by someone else I had inquired of that I was looking for something on 10th Lane, came up to me and indicated that there was another small section of the lane, after a slight hitch, on the other side of what I thought was the defining cross street.



Seconds later, I found myself in front of Nisargadatta's flat, it looking just like the photo; and yes, just across the narrow dirt lane, there was the public toilet facility, with no stripes, but otherwise exactly like its photo.

The downstairs entry door was wide open, appearing dark inside in contrast with the bright sun of the day, and I walked in. After hesitating a moment, in front of the stairs - entry to what looked like a small dark room on the right - I started to ascend and almost immediately, an older woman appeared ahead of me. She didn't appear too alarmed that a gora was walking up her stairs. She kindly listened to me repeating Nisargadatta Maharaj with a question mark, motioned for me to wait here and went back up the stairs. A moment later, a younger woman came down who spoke enough English for us to communicate.

She led me up the stairs, into the small kitchen, 8 feet (?) square with a ceiling barely a foot above my head with an unprotected ceiling fan hanging down that I had to make sure that I didn't walk into, where a small Indian man sat. He was introduced to me as the father-in-law of the charming younger woman; the nephew of Nisargadatta. They indicated that I could go into the adjoining main room; again, smaller appearing than in the interior videos and photos I'd seen, but here it was - the actual room where Nisargadatta used to receive and address people who came to him. There's a small photo of him on the wall above where he used to sit.

Such a treasured moment for me. I surveyed the dingy, nearly bare room; walked over and looked out the window on to 10th Lane; came back and looked at the picture of Nisargadatta on the wall to the right of the entry back into the kitchen, again, for a moment, and then thanked them and excused myself and left.

To me, the greatest book of wisdom ever written in the history of mankind is Nisargadatta's [I Am That](#). It is beyond my imagination to conceive of anything more succinct and profound.

How is it that this author's final residence for many years has not turned into a celebrated, well known, holy shrine?; instead, revealing no memory, not even in the form of a single, simple sign?

How is it that two of the very few enlightened people I know about lived here in southern Bombay, just a few miles from one another, while now, in the age of the internet, I have yet to discover for sure, an alive one in all of India; and maybe, other than possibly [Eckhart Tolle](#), Gilbert Schultz, Master Ni, [Mooji](#) and a small handful of others, in the entire world?



Chennai, March 5, 2012

My grandmother would have been 98 today.

The second chapter of my India journey began yesterday evening when I left Mumbai and came to Chennai. Just before I left, on both Friday and Saturday late afternoons, I went to see and hear Karl Renz give his free talks at the Chetana Book Center, which happens to be the publisher of the Nisargadatta books. Amazingly, it was only a one kilometer walk from my hotel.

His most basic message is: "Just be what you cannot not be". Both days, he started punctually (he is German) at 4 o'clock, immediately opening the floor to questions. On both days there were about 20 of us in the audience.

For the most part, I liked and enjoyed him. He's radical, real, with an angry edge, spontaneous, witty, sometimes humorous, irreverent; reminding me a little of [U.G. Krishnamurti](#). One of his youtubes is entitled "You will never be happy".

He obviously saw his job as to pull the rug out from underneath anyone's questions. Most of the questions were at least somewhat mental and he dissected them handily. There were a lot of lulls. During one of the longer ones on Friday, I said I didn't have a question, but instead relayed my story about coming to India for no reason other than that my family left me and that the highlight of my trip so far has been finding Nisargadatta's house and how that was. Everyone, including Karl, was quite entertained by it.

After the first 'talk', I bought Karl's book *May It Be As It Is*, subtitled *The Embrace of Helplessness*; read the first 50 pages or so.

For me, the second evening was a little more boring than the first. There were two people, an Indian man just to the left of Karl and an Indian woman directly behind me who were full of their own ideas and insisted on debating with him. He let them both discourse on way too long, too many times, for my tastes. Probably I should have said something, but I didn't.

Yesterday, Sunday afternoon, my main taxi driver and guide in Mumbai, Ilyas, picked me up to take me to the domestic airport to embark on this next rung of my journey. Ilyas is a muslim and I love him. On the back window of Ilyas's taxi, it says "No Life without Namas. Namas is Everything." He says *Namas* means prayer.

First, I had Ilyas take me to the Chetana bookstore where I traded in my Karl Renz book, even Steven, for a copy of *I Am That* in Hindi and inscribed it on the inside "To Ilyas, my best friend in Mumbai - my favorite book in the world - the reason we twice went to Khetwadi". He looked like he would rather have had whatever amount of money the book cost rather than the book, but I did pay him Rs1000 for the trip to the domestic airport.

Went out from my air conditioned hotel for the first time today at about 2pm; my mission to get some fruit - so far, the only fruits I buy are oranges, bananas and whatever I can peel.

Mission accomplished, I was back in my room at 2:45pm; my shirt absolutely soaked with sweat. It was fantastic. India has got to be the filthiest country in the world. Litter everywhere. So many smells. The dust was hard on my eyes though.

Tiruvannamalai, March 8, 2012

My ex-step-daughter is 12 today.

"To see Chidambaram, to be born at Tiruvarur, to die at Banaras or even to think of Arunachala is to be assured of Liberation."

- Old Tamil saying

There were no apparent 'whys', other than the romance of it; but,



the universe gave me enough clues that I ought to be in Tiruvannamalai in time for the full Moon, so I was.

Arrived night before last (Tuesday) at about 7 o'clock. Found a hotel with vacancy on the 5th try - apparently lots of others wanted to be here for the full Moon as well - and my room is clean and air conditioned and costs me Rs1210 per night. [Arunachala](#) is directly behind my hotel, but I can't see it without walking some, because the hotel and other buildings are in the way.

My health has remained pretty good - my bug bites have much subsided since I left Mumbai, but I found I was moving pretty slow on my first day here. My room doesn't have windows; and, as a result, I didn't make it out on my first day until about 11 in the morning and it was already blazing hot. Wandered around for an hour with my laptop on my back looking for an internet cafe to no avail - the best prospect only had room for two customers and the two customers were both already there before me.

Like I'm sure every other city in this country, even in the heat of day, there were crowds, noises and smells everywhere; and, I noticed more than ever, just like the goats and the cows, a good percentage of the people, dodging obstacles effortlessly without even wearing any shoes. 'That'll be the day' when I get that comfortable here, I thought.

Everyone you ask tries to be helpful, but it's so amazing how often every other one tries to head you back in the same direction you've just come from. Direction is always indicated by an obtuse flip of the forearm or hand and there doesn't seem to be any way to indicate or decipher distance.

Anyway, not giving up, I finally got a rickshaw who drove me around for another 1/2 hour, but still did not find any internet.

Got back to my room soaked and exhausted (see 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' at the bottom of my [2nd report](#) from three days ago) and I still had not accomplished anything, other than a couple of bananas for breakfast while I was walking.

My priorities always are: Water, Internet, Food; in this order.

Finding drinking water in India is nowhere near as challenging to find as it used to be, as long as you don't mind toxic plastic bottles too much.

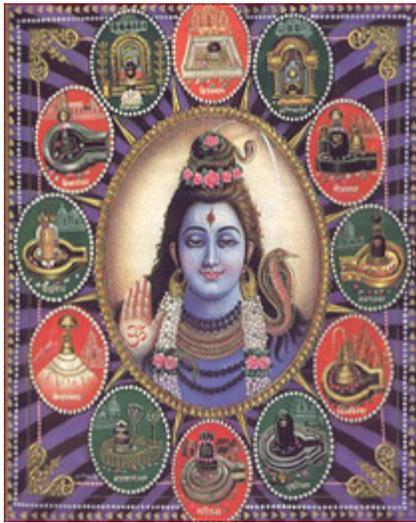
Theoretically, my internet should be pretty easy to handle as I had acquired in Bombay (for just a couple thousand rupees) a wireless USB modem that's supposed to give me internet access everywhere I go in India; but it doesn't work all the time, and, I notice, so far, it seems to have an especially hard time immediately adapting to a new locale. Despite trying everything I could think of in Windows 7 'Network & Sharing Center' late Tuesday night all the way to Wednesday, later afternoon, there was still no success regarding internet connecting.

Had lunch a couple of doors down from where I'm staying - couldn't read anything on the menu - just conveyed that I was hungry and whatever they served me, it hit the spot nicely and they were as satisfied as I was.

Miraculously, at around five in the afternoon, on my 20th try, the Tata Photon+ suddenly kicked in and finally I could check my email; very, very slowly; but, Thank God! - all three priorities handled.

At 7pm, my first 24 hours here already history, despite my mind nagging at me, I had not yet done any real sightseeing or anything else yet, but that just had to be OK. Technically, it was still double digit hours before the actual full Moon and I figured I'd probably make it over to the ashram the next morning.; and as it was cooling down outside - I'd go out and explore some more in a little bit.

Meantime, I continued to answer emails and diddle around on the internet.



Sometime close to 8pm - my mind just not leaving me alone that I wasn't missing something - finally, I shut down the computer and exited my room. To my utter astonishment, what I found was that there were literally thousands of pedestrians, covering both lanes of the main road in front of me, all walking in the same direction, left to right.

So, I walked out into the street and joined in. It soon became obvious that we were all heading to the HUGE lingam temple about 1km up the road, which I had barely taken note of, towering above the buildings between it and me, during my wanderings earlier in the day.

As us masses of people neared it in the night, it lit up with colored lights and a huge bonfire at its base, I can only say that IT and whatever was going on, all of us shoulder to shoulder, back to front, was tremendous. There was major congestion in front of the fire; many with their hands formed in reverent prayer to it and the Lingam behind.

After watching the goings on there, I turned 90 degrees and jostled my way up the link of the semi-internal structure in front of the monument. There were thousands of candles planted in patterns on the ground; vendors, beggars and sadhus along each side; mantras and music blaring at various places along the way.

Even had I seen any westerners, which I didn't, it did not seem at all like a venue where one might try to carry on a conversation with anyone, so I didn't try asking anyone for any elucidation about what all was going on. After a while, I made it out of the denser throng and walked, against the voluminous traffic, back to my hotel.

Within 50 yards of home, I heard a couple of loud yelps behind me; and, as I turned around, a blond, small medium sized dog jumped up and appeared to chomp down on my left hand. It was, of course, shocking, and I pulled away in stunned reflex, while realizing that, although the entire lengths of my middle, ring and little fingers had been in the dog's mouth, he or she hadn't bit me; and, in fact, almost all I felt was tongue.

A couple of people shouted angrily at the dog; one grabbing a rock and threatening to throw. I just continued on, after glancing at the dog still standing there looking at me along with a couple more yelps. I felt only love for and from the dog.

I knew what he was saying to me. I just didn't fully comprehend it at the time.

Safely back in my room, I went back on the internet to find out what was going on. What I found was: that this is what happens [every full Moon](#) in Tiruvannamalai. On the full Moon night, tens of thousands walk completely around the base of Arunachala, a distance of 14km!; beginning and ending at the main temple which I had gotten to. It is called *Pradakshina*. [Jyothi, I hardly had any idea!] And, it is considered sacrilegious to be anything other than barefoot.

Nah, I thought. I was beat. I didn't train for this. I hadn't walked anywhere without shoes on my bony, duck feet since about 1963. Out of the question.

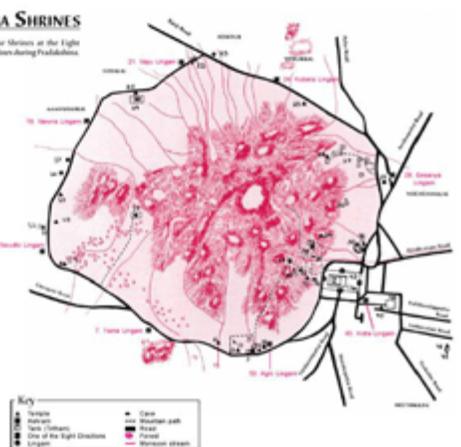
So, I kept researching various sites on the internet, every once in a while going out onto the overlook to the street on my floor, always finding 1000's of people marching towards the temple.

Wikipedia informs us that Arunachala is one of the five main shaivite holy places in India; the most

GIRI PRADAKSHINA SHRINES

These signs contain photographs of the Shrines at the Light Discourse. Diagrammed all their directions during Pradakshina.

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50. Sri Arunachaleswari Temple



important one for people practicing *Atma Vichara* (self inquiry). Asked about the special sanctity of Arunachala, Ramana Maharshi said that other holy places such as Kailas, Kasi and Chidambaram are sacred because they are the abodes of Lord Siva whereas Arunachala is Lord Siva himself.

The Ramana Maharshi Ashram website calls Arunachala the Spiritual Center of the world. An old Tamil saying is: "To see Chidambaram, to be born at Tiruvarur, to die at Banaras or even to think of Arunachala is to be assured of Liberation."

The website goes on to say that "The Maharshi encouraged all of his devotees to make the nine-mile circuit, even those who were infirm, knowing for certain that the spiritual benefits of *giripradakshina* far outweighed any physical hardships. He said, "The greatness of this has been described at length in *Arunachala Puranam*. Lord Nandikesa asked Sadasiva about its greatness and Sadasiva narrated as follows: "To go round this hill is good. The word '*pradakshina*' has a typical meaning. The letter '*Pra*' stands for the removal of all kinds of sin; '*da*' stands for the fulfillment of desires; '*kshi*' stands for freedom from future births; '*na*' stands for the granting of deliverance through jnana. One should go round either in *mouna* (silence) or *dhyana* (meditation) or *japa* (repetition of Lord's name) or *bhajan* (singing praises) and thereby think of God all the time. One should walk slowly like a woman who is in the ninth month of pregnancy.""

Also, I learned that Arunachala also represents the entire universe and its zodiac; and, walking around it clears karma with all signs.

Nah, I continued to insist to myself. This is ridiculous. It's late. I'm tired. I can't walk completely around a mountain in the middle of the night barefoot.

At exactly 11:11pm, I looked at the clock; I took off my shoes and socks, grabbed my water bottle and exited my room once again.

As I entered the throng, I prayed to the full Moon directly over my head to please protect my feet.

I felt every step; every little pebble on the road. All was good as I made it to the temple; and, this time I just continued through, past the blazing fire along with nearly every body else.

It is going to be very difficult to fully and adequately describe. All the way, the path came to more, smaller temples; in varying densities, there were more holy men singing bhajans on the side, more one or no armed beggars, snake charmers, monkeys; more vendors selling pictures of Ganesh and Shiva, bottled water, various foods, trinkets, jewelry... Twice I bought slices of watermelon along the way.

I learned to deliberately step on discarded fruit peelings which tended to cool and caress the bottoms of my aching feet.

There came a point - was I a quarter of the way around? More? Less? I didn't know, but the pad of my left foot, just below the toes, suddenly seemed too inflamed to continue. I hobbled to the side, wondering what I was to do - as far as I knew, there were no helicopters around to take me back to comfort and safety... Blisters were forming on both soles, but the one on the left was considerably most painful.

A ring salesman had an empty chair next to him in his 'booth' and he said commandingly "Sit". So, I sat, and started examining the bottoms of my feet, trying to think of something I could protect them with. "Does anybody have any tape?", I asked.

He put a blue agate ring on the ring finger of my left hand, but it was too big. He replaced it with a green agate ring which fit. "This will help you", he said. "How much?", I asked. He replied "200 rupees". I paid him, thanked him, got up and continued on my way, vowing simply to trust that I was not going to die, and if so, so be it.

Normally, even by Indian standards, I am a fast walker; but, I watched, as the kilometers ticked by, that there came a point where even older Indian women were making their way past me as I hobbled down the road, still feeling and

paying attention to every aching step.

Gratefully and proudly, I report to you that I made it around the mountain. I arrived back in my hotel room at four o'clock in the morning. I prayed that my Zoë will have a happy birthday and I went directly to deep, luscious sleep.

This morning, well, shortly before noon anyway, I awoke and waddled into this new day.

Tiruvannamalai, March 15, 2012

My time in Tiruvannamalai has gotten more enjoyable by the day.

My most recent plans had been to be in Jabulpur before the 21st, for a couple of days; then, on to Varanasi for two or three weeks; then, Rishikesh and do some *panchakarma* there to probably round out my current India experience.

As it was becoming more difficult to consider leaving here, several days ago, I asked: How good of an idea is it for me to be in Jabulpur on the 21st? and got the **Black&Red** card (in my Thoth deck). Probably, I will die, I thought - I better go.

Now, it's even harder to conceive of leaving this amazing place so soon, especially since moving to the south side of Arunachala on the outskirts of Tiruvannamalai, where most of the many (40+?) ashrams are. It almost feels like I have found a home.

Interestingly, every place I have stayed on this trip has gotten remarkably better *and* less expensive, each of my, so far, five hotels on the way. For my three weeks in Mumbai, I felt affection for my room, though it cost me Rs2000 per day; was small, dirty and bug-ridden. Now, I find myself in a very clean and charming place with lots of light and space that I actually like hanging out in; an expansive deck just outside my door with a great view of Arunchala half way to my right; and, now, my rent is Rs300 per day or about \$7.18.

The Ramana Maharshi ashram is 10 minutes walk away. It is a beautiful, peaceful place. One can sit or quietly walk in the big hall almost any time. There is (divine) chanting in the evening.

One can hike 3/4km up Arunachala, behind the ashram and see and sit in the caves that Ramana Maharshi lived for over 50 years before he died. There are many other caves too, including one in which Papaji lived and other illuminated souls as well, going back 100s of years. Actually, the "caves" are more like overhanging boulders, in most places; many of them further hewn out of the rock over centuries.

Slightly closer to me, to the right when you get to the main road, is the Seshadriashram, where I've eaten dinner a couple of times. Seshadri (is that his name?) was 10 years older than Ramana Maharshi whom Ramana called his 'older brother'. He was a crazy, enlightened man. He owned only the filthy lungi he wore. There are numerous stories that he would walk into shops and just throw merchandise around. The shopkeepers that objected would have poor sales; the ones who smiled would have much prosperity. It is said that he could be at two places at one time.

The Sri Sivashakthi Ammaiyyar Ashram is exactly 83 steps down my relatively quiet lane in the opposite



direction. Sivashakthi was first described to me as an old enlightened woman, but I wonder if I'm not older than she is; and, she could be 80 - I don't know - it's very hard for me to tell. Her skin is smooth; the glint in her eye is colossal. Darshan is every morning from 10am to 10:15am. There are always about 50 people sitting in the hall. She walks downstairs and silently into the hall; sits for five minutes or so; then gets up and walks around to everyone, slowly and deliberately with very soft, small steps, pausing frequently, namaste'-ing with immense love in her eyes.

Have never heard her talk, let alone make a sound, but you know that you have been blessed.



People come from all over India to visit the temples in this town; many of them frequently. Many of them tower over the buildings; most are linghams; i.e. penis of God inspired, dating back to at least the 9th century.

This is one of the hotter places on Earth. The sweat drips off you all day, even through the night. I have a fan, but the electricity is off every day from 12pm to 3pm and several times, not necessarily expectedly, for a half hour or more, throughout every 24 hours. Sometimes, I have had to use my flashlight to remove my contact lenses at night.

All of the residents here are poor. For the most part, they are humble, happy, kind and sincere. Cows roams freely (throughout this country?). They are not owned by anybody.

This is the off-season - most people have the sense to come this far south during cooler months. Still, there are lots of 'pilgrims' from the West, many with fake, 'spiritual' smiles. Nonetheless, the natural, interior silence, here, is definitely palpable.

This is a barefoot town. Got a haircut a few days ago and even for that had to remove my shoes; but, my feet have healed. They itch still, though not nearly as bad as they did in Mumbai.

Generally, it has been my policy not to give to beggars. A lot of them are aggressive, and, of course, there is no end of them. There have been two or three exceptions lately. Two days ago there was a man who just sat there with the countenance of a king on his throne. He made me feel like a King. Yesterday, there was an old woman who gave me a beautiful smile. Also, I pushed a crippled guy on his cart, mostly uphill for 1/3rd of a km or so in the mid-afternoon Sun, so he could get to a better location.

Been living a solitary, contemplative existence, constantly remembering that there is no "I"; reading occasionally - a book by Mooji and one on the fundamentals of *Jyotish*. And, it is dawning on me that I love it here.

It is twilight time and I realize that I am typing in the dark. In a few minutes, I will go out and explore a new place to have dinner. My fan has just come back on.

Jabalpur is about as handy to me, as, say, Wheeling, West Virginia from where I came from. Perhaps, I will skip that leg of my journey and remain in Tiruvannamalai longer; probably, at the beginning yet of this Mercury Retrograde, I will pull some more cards.

I *do* love it here.

Tiruvannamalai, March 18, 2012

Obviously, as you know, Hell is just in the mind.

"I" is The Seductive Devil. No "I" is Heaven.

You don't have to physically die to have no "I".

You don't have to physically live to have one, as you're not even (merely) physically living right now.

In fact, if you die with an "I", you'll just dream up a new magnificent Hell.
Outside of fantasy, the only Reality is silence and peace and freedom and bliss and loving Heaven.
Easy to say. Easier than easy to be.
It is what you are. It is what everyone is; even the dolphins and the whales and the elephants and
cockroaches and amoebas and rocks and the aliens. It is what God is.
And, only God exists.
It is obvious, isn't it?

Only imagination creates the savior Satan Claus in the sky. and imagination is definitively not real.
What is outside of fantasy? The witness of the fantasizer, which is just a hint of what's really going on.
There is no time. There is no space.
There is no train wreck that is about to happen. There is no train and there is no destination.
We are already here now. We have never been anywhere or anytime other than here now.
Here Now is not a time and/or a place.

It is the Reality.
It is the only God.
It is the only "I"; and, it doesn't have a name.
Empty of identity or boundary, It is FULL with whatever IS.
The entire fantasy universe comes after IT.

Obviously a Universe cannot even be perceived without a perceiver; and, even the particular perceiver is a
fantasy. Take a look. It disappears as soon as you do.

What is there to cling to or resist; i.e. cause any suffering?

You don't make the blood course through the veins. You don't make the breath breathe. You don't bring
the thoughts or emotions or sensations in front of the perception.

Take a look right Now. IT is delicious, isn't it?



What is underneath the doubt; what is underneath the All; what's indisputably
REAL is only 'miraculous' DIVINITY, telling "me" to accept what is and know
that God only Loves.

I am You; You are Me, just in another apparent incarnation.

You are released. "I" is released.

"I" REST my case.

Sorry. "I"m not enlightened; "I"m just babbling to my Self before Arunachala
on this Glorious Sunday afternoon. Please Disregard Everything "I've" said.

"I" love you.

"I"me sorry.

Please forgive me.

Thank you.

Tiruvannamalai, March 26, 2012

Well, I didn't make it to Jabulpur on the 21st; didn't even pull any more cards about it. Tiruvannamalai is
hard to leave. For one thing, it really is a holy place.

Instead, I started a 3 week *panchakarma* clean-out last Tuesday, the 20th. The
ayurvedic clinic is literally 10 seconds away at a 45° angle across the road, outside
my door.

First week is *Virechan* - middle abdomen purgation; second week is *Vasthi* - colon
cleanse; third week is *Nasyam* - lungs to head nasal therapy. There are 2-1/2 hour
treatment sessions every day, either at noon or 6pm, which always seem to include
full body ayurvedic massages (*abhyanga*), usually ending with a 20-25 minute steam
bath (*svedana*). Being as you're in a box with just the head poking out the top, there
is more of a claustrophobic feeling than in a spa steam bath or a sweat lodge, and I'm always quite
relieved when Arun's assistant, Salvam, who actually does all of the work on me, comes over and lets me



out; feeling that I'm near about at the limit I think I can stand.

So far, I've also had one session of *shiro dhara* - oil stream therapy to the forehead; two sessions of *karnapura* - oil therapy for the ears; and, one of *netra vasthi* - oil therapy for the eyes, which I expected to be soothing, but found nearly intolerable - there will be two more of those, but not until the last week. Before it is all through, I will also experience *Uduwartnam* (powder massage), *Hrudya Vasthi* (chest oil therapy), *Kati Vasthi* (lower back oil therapy), *Takradhara* (buttermilk steam therapy), *Navara Kizhi* (navara rice bundle massage), *Elakizhi* (herbal leave massage), mud bath, ayurvedic facial and several medicated enemas - don't know their Hindu names. At any rate, I've decided to clean my body and my mind out, a little ahead of the schedule I had been anticipating

This first week, I've also had to report across the road first thing every morning with an empty stomach and drink increasing amounts of ghee. It started with 40ml, which was not all that pleasant. Today is the last day of the first third of my 'retreat'; this morning was my last ordeal of drinking ghee (200ml); and, Hallelujah! to that.

My diet is pretty limited, for the duration; usually, fruit salad at 10am or so; a bowl of kicharee, a salad and a glass of buttermilk, in the mid to late afternoon. This menu has been easy as I hardly have any appetite, anyway - I've already lost about 15 pounds since leaving the U.S., which was just a month and a half ago. Just realized - I'm exactly in the middle of my trip if I leave my ticket as it is; just now leaving my Mercury-Ketu-Jupiter *dasa bhukti* period in vedic astrology; entering the Mercury-Ketu-Saturn chapter for the remainder of my trip. Saturn being in an exalted position in my *rasi* (birthchart), I'm expecting the next couple of months to be auspicious in positive ways.

'Course, there's been no beer on this cleanse; and actually, very little the entire time here. In Mumbai, I had one large beer every late afternoon, except on the three day election and on Sundays, before I figured out how to procure it on Sundays. Getting beer in Tiruvannamalai is a major operation. It's a Rs120 rickshaw ride to one of the very few sleazy hotels, where deep in its bowels is a dark, smoky room filled with drunk Indians, who, unlike the vast, vast majority everywhere else, seem cantankerous almost to wanting to fight. In the dim light, some of them have stared or needlessly bumped into me as I walked in or out with my purchase; and, I've only had five bottles of beer since arriving in this nearly utterly angelic town.

What else am I doing? Mostly, a whole lot of nothin'; occasionally, slightly alarmingly so. Have wondered a few times if I'm in a deep depression; just not acknowledging it.

A week ago, I did my first of what was to be regular exercise sessions - sprinted out on the road early in the morning before it got too hot; did sit-ups, squats (awkwardly, with my luggage on my back), very difficult pull-ups on a ledge in my room, then pushups - have yet to do it again, since. With the cleanse and the heat, I've just had very little energy.



Haven't even walked that much, lately. One exception to this - two mornings ago, I hiked up to the 'cave' in which Ramana lived the first seven years after he arrived here (1915 to 1922). With my low energy level and the fact it was already 8am and getting hot when I started, I'm ashamed to say it was brutal for me, especially as I neglected to bring any water and it's almost all uphill. A funny thing happened just as I made it to the cave. A lot of monkeys congregate there, and one on a limb just a few feet above me tried to pee on me as I walked underneath him. Fortunately, my intuition kicked in and I spied him out of the upward corner of my eyes and I leapt out of the way just in time. Just like the incident with the dog on *Pradakshina* night, two Indian men saw it all and yelled some expletives at the monkey who was visibly pissed that he missed me.

Yesterday, a very good friend, who coincidentally had recently been here, emailed me: "Enjoy and be mindful of any bananas you might be carrying up the mountain. You probably already know how much the monkeys love them

and will come running! - One day only I saw a band of a different kind of monkey, black-faced. Beautiful. I watched for awhile as they began from afar to head through the trees, crossed the pathway just ahead of me on foot, and on to eat the fruits of some trees. Later I was warned to not look them directly in the eye as they can be aggressive. Fortunately there was no problem." Glad I didn't have any bananas.

Every other day or so, I walk to the Ramana ashram in the morning or evening and sit in the main hall and listen to the chanting for a little while or, occasionally, a longer while. Just as often, I walk around my neighborhood, usually with a simple mission like getting toilet paper while getting a little Sun.

Today, without trying, I found a gorgeous 23-1/2" high bronze Ganesh I may not be able to live without. Umar quoted a price of Rs65,000 and told me that they had had three, all handmade and that two had sold; also that he would be closing his shop next month until the Fall. As this is the off-season, I'm confident he'll give me a lot better deal than he initially offered. Told him that I'd come back on April 4th or 5th (once Mercury is forward again) and he said he would be waiting for me. If my car sells...

Juggling around electricity cutoffs with my laptop, which only gets about 2 hours on a charge, I've been keeping my websites reasonably up to date.

Been doing a lot of staring at the ceiling in the shade of my room; mulling over my divorce and the apparent failings and losses of my life; watching the thoughts and moods come and go. Today, for instance, for five minutes I watched a tiny millipede make its way all the way across the floor of my room. Before the thought came: 'how does he keep track of all those legs?', I noticed he was alone; like me; perhaps with a firmer idea where he was going; and, perhaps not.



[Nisargadatta](#) says: "To reach the deeper layers of suffering you must go to its roots and uncover their vast underground network, where fear and desire are closely interwoven and the currents of life's energy oppose, obstruct and destroy each other.

By being with yourself, the 'I am'; by watching yourself in your daily life with alert interest, with the intention to understand rather than to judge, in full acceptance of whatever may emerge, because it is there, you encourage the deep to come to the surface and enrich your life and consciousness with its captive energies. This is the great work of awareness; it removes obstacles and releases energies by understanding the nature of life and mind. Intelligence is the door to freedom and alert attention is the mother of intelligence."

It's only fair to mention, also, that I do regularly manage to come back to here now reality where it is evident that all is well and divine.

This past Wednesday, I asked: 'How can I be most productive the rest of my time here?' and got the **Black&Red** card again, which I suppose means to me that my business here is to wake up; or, at least find out where I am and where I should be. Also, having been very reclusive up to then - how many whole days have I spoken less than 100 words to anyone and everyone? - I also asked: 'Should I just accept my [aloneness](#)? OR Should I make an effort to get out and about and relate more?' and got the Prince of Disks and then the Ace.

On the roof of my guest house, just one floor directly above me, is what might be called a hippiesh, healthy food type restaurant which caters mostly to 'westerners'. Night before last, I went up after my treatment and ordered a goji juice shake and sat near three woman, all fairly attractive to me, who were discussing their plans and I heard one remark that it was too bad that they didn't have any tarot cards and someone to read them.

Of course, I told them that I do, and went back downstairs and got my cards before my juice arrived. Sarala, who made the remark (and I found out later is a Sagittarian born in 1966 just like my now ex-wife),

and Jeri are both from New Zealand; Meagan is from Canada; all having come for temporary visits and then not leaving over a year ago. Being as this is the off-season, I am learning that a lot of the westerners who are still here are actually residents; some for many years. They all said that, despite the heat, they like the off-season the best as the tons of tourists are mostly gone.

During our conversation, I remarked that I was liking it here, but that a lot of the time, I didn't know what to do with myself. Sarala and Jeri had similar replies. Sarala said: "You don't come to Arunachala to do anything, but just to be; isn't it so?". Jeri said: "Tiruvannamalai is the end of the line, you know? Whether you know it or not, you come here to wake up or die". Made me think of my favorite movie: *Dead Man*. Meagan, the only one with a job - assistant managing in the restaurant we were in - agreed with them.

They all raved about the tarot readings I gave them; and, with much enthusiasm suggested that I put a flier up at Shanti Cafe advertising them.

Meagan's main question had been about her upcoming trip to visit friends in Israel for three or four months, leaving on April 6th. Near the end of our evening, she described her flat, which sounded very charming, and offered to sublet it to me during the months she will be gone for Rs3000 (about \$62) per month! I asked her if I could let her know on the 5th and she said sure; that she is going to keep the flat anyway.

Day after tomorrow (Wednesday) is her day off and I will meet her there sometime in the late afternoon, before my treatment, to take a look at it. Suddenly, a whole new excitement presents itself!

I figure - All I 'need' is: A nice place to live; a gym; or at least a good way to get and stay fit and strong again; and, internet access.

Today I found out that there isn't any good gym here. This evening, Arun informed me that there is one crappy gym called International Gymnasium or International something like that over by the huge temple on the other side, nearer where I lived the first days I got here - he said I wouldn't like it though. I know I'll go check it out anyway; and, I'm sure I can set something up for myself in a space I control and may finally be actually unpacked in.



It's certainly tempting. Adding in Ganesh, there's now at least two things luring me and there's still over another week left of Mercury Retrograde that I will have to wait through - if they are mine, they'll be there, waiting for me, then. Eventually, I still want to get to Varanasi and Rishikesh and an elephant sanctuary somewhere around here too.

Anyway, this should satisfy the couple of friends who've emailed me recently, asking what I've been doing with my days, lately, along with everyone else on my list who reads my updates and whose email settings don't protect them from my messages; all with a link; most of them with a jpg attachment as well.

Varanasi, April 12, 2012

Usually, I watch the final round of the Masters on Easter Sunday. This past Sunday, instead, I went to visit the temple elephant and said goodbye. His name is [Ruku](#). He is huge - 10' high and he weighs over four tons. He's on duty in the temple in the morning and then again after 3pm - I got there about 1:30pm, so he was in his living quarters on the temple grounds, 50 yards or so outside of the temple.

He mostly stood in one place, eating; picking up plants from a small pile in front of him with his snout. For about a half an hour, I got to sit with him with no one else around.

As I start this report, it has been exactly 24 hours since I



arrived in this great holy city of Lord Shiva.

Yesterday, at 1am, I left Tiruvannamalai via taxi to Chennai; at 7am, I took a flight to Delhi; then another flight, reaching Varanasi at 4 in the afternoon. (So, there was no sleep on this day.)

Thank God! I got here when there was still a couple of hours of daylight left. Even as it has been, this last day was duly recorded in the *Akashic* records as one of the extreme experiences of my life.

In the [Lonely Plant Guide to India](#), I learned that Varanasi has "the worst reputations for hassles, touts, crazed rickshaw drivers following you around and sundry scams" and it is best to know where you are going and insist that whichever taxi driver you first employ actually takes you there. My research gave me the names of a few good budget hotels, so I felt prepared and picked one.

When I first came to India, back in February of 1980 - naive as could be - I was initially quite horrified, crying mentally and emotionally for my Mommy; and, it probably took at least a month for this feeling to wear off enough to where I really started appreciating this amazing and ancient culture; and, with experience and hindsight, that was NOTHING compared to this.

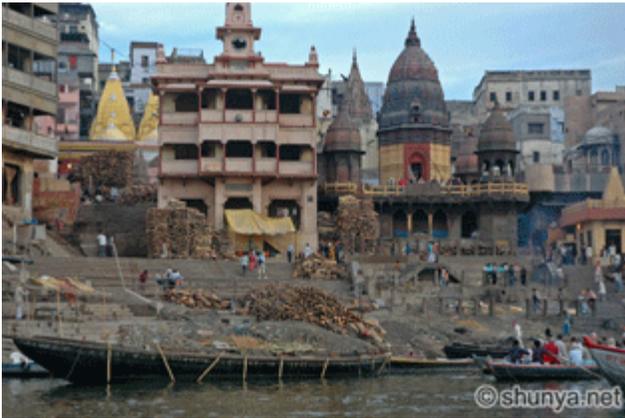
The *Lonely Plant Guide* says: "Few places in India are as colourful, charismatic or spiritual as the bathing ghats lining the Ganges in Varanasi...It has always been an auspicious place to die, since expiring here offers moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). The city is the beating heart of the Hindu universe, a crossing place between the physical and spiritual worlds, and the Ganges is viewed as a river of salvation, an everlasting symbol of hope to past, present and future generations. The magical but sometimes overwhelming city is where the most intimate rituals of life and death take place in public on the city's [80 or so] ghats. The accessibility to the practices of an ancient but still living religious tradition is what captivates many visitors, and a walk along the ghats or a boat ride on the river is one of India's most absorbing experiences."

It turned out to be an utter blessing that, after making a cell phone call, my taxi driver inexplicably picked up a young Indian guy along the way to where I had told him to go; and, after about an hour, he deposited both of us at the entrance to "the most interesting part of the city - the tangle of narrow streets back from the *ghats* along the Ganges River"; twilight 'narrow streets' soon turning into darkness and artificially lit, fantastic five to eight feet wide to maybe, at times, in some places, 10' wide twisting and turning tunnel maze lanes, carved out of what seemed like one huge structure, which takes you back to the far, distant Past and/or the deeper *Bardo* planes of human existence.

Rickshaws won't fit here, let alone taxis, but there are still plenty of motorbikes and cows and human walkers and seated beggars and sadhus and vendors and their piles of merchandise; of all kinds; here and there, the sounds of recorded hindu chanting and music or the chatter of inhabitants or what sounded like occasional firecrackers going off, etc.; odors more varying and intense than I almost could stand - the usual incenses, frying foods, animal excrement, human piss; and, at the root of it all, some subtle to occasionally overwhelming smell, which, when I couldn't help but linger upon it, induced in me the concerns that I was going to puke or perhaps pass out. Sensory overload to the max.

Rolling my heavier luggage behind him, once in a while meticulously lifting it up and over a pile of shit or something indefinable and more instinctively disgusting; sometimes, without turning around, motioning with one arm to me behind him, that I should particularly hug one wall or the other due to the honks of a motorbike coming from behind us, a sound of which I could not have hoped to separate from all the other noises going on, my Beloved Guide 'Sunny' (nickname of Deepak Verme) led me, me carrying my backpack on my left shoulder, my laptop on my right, on the twenty minute urban trek which Fellini, at most, could only have hoped and dreamed to film; or, like a really powerful *Daimon* work with thousands and thousands of people, all of them handling the power well, while I constantly looked to the ground, in case of collapse;

finally, to the Mishra Guest House, 50 yards from *Manikarnika*, the main burning *ghat*, my resting place for my first night. 20 minutes may not seem like much, but it's similar to a hanging curveball or, more so, the few seconds of watching your life pass before you when you are facing your death; only it took about 20 minutes. At least twice along the way, we passed a group of six men, three on a side, carrying a wrapped, dead human body to the *ghat* to be burned.



By myself, without preparation and a map, how could I ever have purposely made this journey, let alone twice more before this night would be over? [My forecast is that I'll probably know this route into and out of this heart of the city well enough to confidently do it on my own by the time I leave here in slightly less than a couple of weeks.] Wanting to rest for a little while, I asked Sunny to come back in a couple of hours and take me to a restaurant where I could have a good meal and also my first beer in about a month.

My room was far from ideal - like probably all 'mid-range' or 'budget' rooms in India and in fact, all of India itself - many things didn't work; plus, it was remarkably deficient in providing anyplace to put things other than on the floor, but it was essentially relatively clean and decent. After unpacking the few items I would need this night, I hooked up my computer on the single small 18" high table that was nearly covered by the laptop with just a little bit of room for the mouse and well below the level of my knees when sitting on the only chair I could place before it - I made sure I could connect to the internet and quickly checked my emails. Then, I 'napped' without actually sleeping for a half hour or so before Sunny returned.

At dinner, in a restaurant that was a Rs20, 10 minute manual (non-motorized, bicycle-type) rickshaw ride from the edge of the 'interior' - Sunny, who speaks wonderful English - he had a beer but didn't eat - explained to me that he was an independent, non-government licensed guide, which is considered very illegal in this city. Once in his 2-1/2 year career, he had to pay a cop much *baksheesh* to stay out of jail. With obvious sincerity, he also told me that he could show me much more of Varanasi than any government agent would; and, he wasn't referring to vices or any other illegal activities. My response was that I definitely liked non-government agents the best.

Unrelated, but another thing I can remember him explaining to me is that the burning goes on 24 hours per day, continuously; and that there are four categories of corpses that are not burned:

1. Babies and other children who died prior to five years of age;
2. Pregnant women;
3. Victims of cobra bite; and
4. Holy men. "Real holy men", he said.

These four categories are simply floated down the river. All the rest are burned.

After what was a good meal and beer, we made it back to near enough to my hotel that I could see where it was at about 9pm. Sunny left me there after agreeing to come back and meet me again at 10 o'clock in the morning. At this point, I still had not paid him anything, despite having asked a couple of times in different ways; him always replying that he couldn't say, but he would be happy with whatever amount I chose to pay him; that this was entirely up to me.

My room had a back door which I hadn't yet inspected, so before taking out my contact lenses and brushing my teeth, I discovered that this door went out to a private two by three foot 'balcony' overlooking the Ganges down the way below on the right, with various levels of rooftops and walls in front and to the left. Among the many other mostly soft sounds that filled the night, a young voice shouted "Hello" and then "Hello, Sir", a couple of times before I registered that it was calling to me. Slightly to the right, across and a couple of stories up, I spotted what looked like the silhouette of an eight or a 10 year old boy, his head popping up above the low wall of his roof. Again he shouted down to me "Hello Sir - *Namaste*". I replied "*Namaste*!". His head disappeared. I returned to my room and fairly quickly went to bed and to sleep.

It was a good sleep and I awoke this morning at 8 o'clock, a normal hour for me these days. Surveying my immediate surroundings, from the roof, in daylight for the first time, I discovered a rooftop 'restaurant' not far away and managed to go down and find my way there to have a leisurely and satisfying, nearly western-style omelet, toast and coffee breakfast. Afterwards, necessarily being careful not to get lost, I walked around a bit before meeting Sunny at our agreed upon time and place; my agenda today being to find another place to live and then to cash in my last gold coin which should handle my remaining expenses, plus, for the rest of my trip.

Just a week ago, my other gold coin paid for my Ganesh - which I haggled Rs20,000 down from the initially stated price - and also, my airline bookings to here; from here to Dehradun, from where I will take a taxi to Rishikesh, upcoming on the 24th; and, my ticket back to Mumbai just in time for my flight out of this country.

It took a few hours, but we succeeded well regarding both my set tasks, without leaving the interior part of the city. I was hoping for Rs86,000 for the Kruggerand, but happily settled with Rs84,000 from the third gold dealer we took it too - I could easily make this adventure an interesting report in itself, but in this moment I don't find the energy to actually do it.

Also, in three tries, I decided that the Hotel Alka, a Rs150 increase from the Rs500 I paid at Mishra Guest House, was my good move, and this we accomplished in about an hour prior to dealing with the gold.

This room is a little smaller; but, it is a little neater and cleaner; though it directly overlooks the Ganges, it is a little further away from any burning ghats and the view from my balcony is almost beyond belief; it has a towel rack, a little ledge in the 'bathroom' where I can place my toothbrush and such; there is a small, cracked mirror, which I can use to shave; I have hot water for the first time since Mumbai; and, there is a little shelf in the main room upon which my laptop can securely sit, even as it juts past its edge a couple of inches, and, from where, sitting on my bed, I can type on it in a much more comfortable position than I could the night before.

My internet is slow, here, but it works; and electricity is on almost all of every day; unlike in Tiruvannamalai, where, in addition to the occasional unscheduled outages, the electricity was off every day from noon to 3pm, along with four or five scheduled half hour or hour power outages.

It was hard for me to leave peaceful Tiru. Had I not already bought my ticket from here, I can already see that it might otherwise have been difficult to leave this surreal place, as well. Probably, I'll have a highly stimulating, crammed couple of weeks.

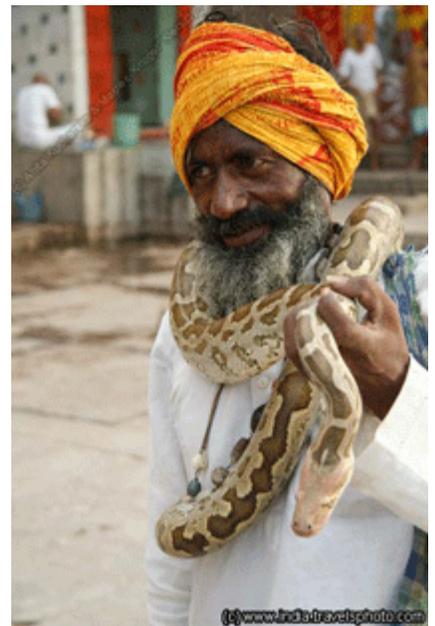
Varanasi was previously named Benares and Kashi (City of Life) - it was renamed after the Varuna and Asi Rivers, which meet here. Mark Twain wrote that "Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together". It is at least a 3,500 year old city and I live in the very oldest part of it.

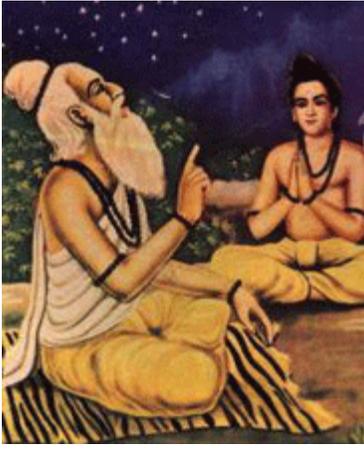
Varanasi, April 17, 2012

For quite a while, I had just been sitting in the shady spot on my balcony on this, what feels from here, a relatively tranquil afternoon; watching the walkers and talkers, boats and bathers along the river Ganga below; there were a few kite fliers too.

It is very hot. My energy is low and I am having intermittent gut spasms from the chicken curry, I think, from the night before. So, I figure all I can do is read or write and I don't have anything I feel like reading.

Varanasi is the heart and soul of (at least) the northern Indian *Jyotish* (vedic





astrology) tradition, so my single, what I thought to be modest goal, here, has been to get a good vedic astrology reading. Half way through my stay thus far, my attempts have not met with what I would call success.

As I already reported, my guide, when I want his services, in this surreal city of life & death, is named Sunny and I can't help but notice the coincidence that my only name up to the age of six was 'Sonny', a name that I hold dear to my heart.

Anyway, Sunny said his father knew of a good vedic astrologer, so he got the astrologer's information and took me to see him on Friday, here in the 'interior', not far away.

The signs were not good from the get-go. I didn't know where we were going and was surprised when we were there so soon. Before I realized that we were there, right outside the shop, a big blob of a man expectorated right next to me and I had to do a quick jump out of the way so none of it splattered onto me. The open air shop was empty, and I was shocked that it was the big blob who followed us in, as he turned out to be the so-called jyotish holy man.

Among his first words to me were: "So, how do you like *my* [not *our*] India?" Right away, I didn't like him and after looking at his expensive and what seemed to me pretentious and airy-fairy price list, I thanked him and we left.

Did some more research on the internet that evening, yet I was not finding this an task easy. There were lots of internet ads, but none seemed to give me enough hint as to how worthwhile they were.

After a while, it occurred to me that maybe my best first step would be to find the best college that teaches astrology and get a recommendation there. To my surprised amazement, this turned out to be *Sampurnanand Sanskrit University!* Either I am on the right track, I thought, or I am again and always participating in God's great divine joke, or both.

At noon on Saturday, Sunny and I went there, but found out that the entire university was closed due to a holiday. There are so many holidays in this country, I don't know how anybody keeps track of them - it might be easier to keep track of the non-holidays. At any rate, I got lucky and was given clear instructions as to where the Head of the *Jyotish* Department lived. We went to his home; he was not there, but we were told to come back after 6pm. I got his card which is all in Hindu lettering.

When we returned in the evening, the astrologer's daughter helped Sunny translate. I loved them all right away. He told me to write down my birth information and my questions, so I wrote: "Just wanting a competent *Jyotish* reading or recommendation as to who can provide me one in the next few days. My wife just left me. I am at a crossroad in life. Am looking now for where to go? Where to live? What to do?"

He immediately did a horary chart [4/14/12, 6:40pm] and told me all will be well for me, especially from June through December this year.

He said I should stay in America and do what I am already doing. The north or northeast are good directions for me, especially if I want a job. Shockingly, he said that a woman will enter (or, perhaps, re-enter) my life between June 13th and the end of the year, and she will never leave me.

He also said that I should worship Lord Shiva, chant *Om Namah Shivaya* and acquire a gold ring with a bright yellow topaz and wear it on my right index finger every Thursday. Then he told me to come back tomorrow (two nights ago) at the same time, with my *rasi* (birthchart) and *navamsha* charts, which I did.

All day, I had looked forward to finally getting the reading I was after, but the night's focus turned out not to be on my charts or *dasa* periods, but just an extension of the previous night's 'discussion'. It was difficult to communicate and it was the professor's point of view that he had already given me what I had come for.

He advised only that I come back again with a picture of my ex-wife & me and some rice, and he would do some hocus-pocus that would insure that it would be her that would come back to me; cost would be Rs21,000 that I could wire him when I get back to the States.

My interest was not in finding a way to bend the universe toward my limited view and ends. Rather, my intention was to get further glimpse as to what Reality is and may have in store for me. It reminded me of the Native American Fire Ceremony, my wife and I had put on for ourselves several months ago, where all of the facilitators and participants, other than me and possibly my wife, were praying for the health and continuation of our marriage.

It seems strange that I actually twice got to sit with the Dean of the astrology department of the oldest and most respected university in Varanasi and he presumed that I only wanted to get my wife back - and I was unable to communicate otherwise; just another indication, as if I didn't already know, that I haven't let go yet.

Because, believe it or not, I have relatively little doubt that the professor can do what he says he can do, I see this as a spiritual test; a choice between black magic or accepting and surrendering to an ultimately deeper truth.

My guide, who will argue a Rs30 rickshaw ride down to Rs20 for me, has no doubt; neither, of course, does the professor and his family - they acted like he does this sort of thing, 100% successfully, all of the time.

The truth is, it is easy, in this matter, for me to choose the 'white' choice. Maybe I haven't totally let go yet, but I'm at least at 99%, and the momentum is kicking up. I'm done with sucking for love.

[Nisargadatta](#) whispers: "It is not necessary to know what is coming. How can anybody tell you what you shall become when there is no becoming? Merely discover what you are. Think neither of the past nor of the future; just be. Concentrate totally on the now, be concerned only with your response to every movement of life as it happens.

Finish with your accumulation of experience and your roaming around. It is all a dream and not real. In less than a few years your stay in India will appear as a dream to you. You will dream some other dream at that time. To find your self you need not take a single step.

Dreams appear real only because you believe in them. When you are in love with somebody, you give it reality - you imagine your love to be all-powerful and everlasting. When it comes to an end, you say: 'I thought it was real, but it wasn't'. What is limited in time and space, and applicable to one person only, is not real.

There is nothing to do, nor to find out - no climbing mountains or sitting in caves. Having seen that you are neither the 'outer' world of perceivables, nor the 'inner' world of thinkables, that you are neither body nor mind - to discover reality, it is necessary only to be."

Rishikesh, April 29, 2012

Well, I never did get adept at finding my way in and out of the 'interior' of Varanasi. There was no need, anyway, as I never found any places I liked to eat, in or out. Other than in my room, I endured most of my time in the shadowy 'interior', where it was at least a little cooler than in the exterior.

It was hot in south India, but it was scorching in Varanasi. In Tiru, I walked an hour in just my cutoffs and flip-flops and NY Yankees baseball hat in the sun almost every day and never got burnt. In an hour in the sunny exterior of Varanasi, I once got sunburned even through my t-shirt. Daily temperatures were pretty much always in the 40s celsius, whatever that means in fahrenheit. So, I put up with the additional constant stench of the 'inside'.

It was very hard on my body and I was there way too long - no offense to the sweet people I met there,

but it was a descent into Hell for me. Never did I really get what I would call sick, but I did go through a tremendous amount of toilet paper and I felt and appeared in the mirror as if I was wasting away - pity, in a way, that this came after all my panchakarma, rather than before; and, on the other hand, perhaps my clean-out better enabled me to survive what was to come. Those of you who see me in the next few weeks will be shocked at how skinny my body has become.

One afternoon a couple of days before I left, a band of monkeys suddenly appeared on my deck and one bold one bolted into my room, while I was at my computer. Thank God, nothing valuable was right near my door, because in seconds he trashed what was. Instinctively, I screamed and flailed my puny arms at him, eventually driving him out, but I think he contemplated at least for a moment (or two) that he could take me on. Truth is, I probably didn't stand a chance against him, let alone if one or two of his buddies had been able to help. He succeeded in escaping with only my bag of oranges and didn't end up doing any real damage - a good reminder for me to be vigilant and alert.



This is my fifth day in beautiful Rishikesh, the "Gateway to the Himalayas"; 700km up the same river Ganges, to near its headwaters; from the dirtiest place I've ever imagined to the cleanest town I've ever visited in India, especially the far northern portion of it where all of the ashrams are and I am. This is a different India - hilly, COOL, green, lush - a backpackers paradise and the perfect place for me to get rejuvenated on the last leg of my Indian journey. I can eat again.

This is where Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was when the Beatles visited him in the '60's; another spiritual town.

You don't come to India if you like to drink a beer. Here, in Rishikesh, it's actually illegal. It's possible to get it in Raiwalla, 25km south, but I was told that if they catch you trying to smuggle it in, they will take whatever money they find on you, if you want not to be hauled in. Anyway, by now I've pretty much lost the habit.

So far, I haven't had any noteworthy adventures; and, if and when they come, I can only expect them to be pleasant. Mostly, I walk around; enjoy the many good restaurants; occasionally haggle with a vendor or two; and, above all, enjoy the feeling of vitality coming back into my body.

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं । भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि, धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

To say India has its charms is an absurd understatement, yet I know from past experience that it may take a while to acknowledge a lot of them; some may not even be taken note of until well after India has already become a distant memory that one can look back on and see how all of life has changed.

This time, I came to India, because I felt that unwelcome change had been thrust upon me and I didn't know how to cope with it from where I was. I had loved my family and the comfort of my life, but one day it was there; and the next day it was gone. The rug (or the plug) had been pulled and what had looked familiar to me for so long, suddenly looked utterly foreign. So, I guess I finally figured that I may as well go with the chaos, like relaxing in a whirlpool and allowing it to thrust me out of it, rather than resisting, only to drown.

A few people said: "You'll be amazed at how much India has changed", yet my perception is that, other than prices which are higher, computers and cell phones (74% of India's population, 880 million people, have cell phones; whereas, less than a quarter of them have toilets) and bottled water (a profound and positive change), India hasn't changed much at all, as I had expected. How could it? It is too big and too old and too poor to change too much or too fast. What to a mouse may be earth shattering, may not affect an elephant at all.

India still makes no sense. On one hand, just as it was years ago, nothing works; and, on the other hand,

still, everything works. Just a few of the countless examples:

On the street, it won't take long to observe, hundreds of times, a vehicle coming within a half an inch of another vehicle or pedestrian or cow or man pulling a cart - and yet, it is very rare to witness an accident.

Only women carry anything - and they carry it on their head. At construction sites, which there are several on any random city block, women dressed in saris carry buckets of dirt or rock or cement on their heads; as if a wheelbarrow has never been conceived of.

There is so much that could be done, starting with cleaning the place up; yet, there are (hundreds of) millions of people who appear to do almost nothing, all day, every day. There is surely much bustling about, but whatever is done, is done very, very slowly.

It's like Mercury Retrograde every day in India. Whatever you think should only take one step, will most likely take you five. Whatever you think should take five minutes, you had better reserve at least an hour for it, or two, or a couple of days...

So many Indians see a westerner as a potentially easy mark, and yet they love you at the same time. Almost everyone is absolutely poor; yet I don't know if you'll find happier people anywhere.

The Indian mind may seem very controlled to an unsympathetic westerner - in fact, India may appear to be an utterly brainwashed society. In case you've never comprehended it so simply, politics everywhere is about power addiction and pathological control of the masses; and, whereas, more and more Europeans and Americans are becoming wise to the government ('protection' at gunpoint) con, all Indians seem to unquestionably believe in their political system and its leaders.

Of course, all organized religion is primarily about societal control, as well; and, one obvious Indian example is the caste system, which almost all Indians adhere to and believe in. Even today, 90% of all Indian marriages are arranged, always within caste. (Interestingly, divorce is practically unheard of.) Even Ramana Maharshi, who was an enlightened man, insisted that the various main castes be segregated in the ashram that built up around him.

Given all this, one crucial difference between the west and all of the east is that underneath the sociopathic basis of religious control in the east (and medical and other controls, for that matter - it can be easily argued that nature is less illegal in this half of the planet), it is pure.

Western religions, such as Judaism and Christianity, are all about morality and/or, in the more liberal sects, self-esteem - pseudo pursuits, which split the mind between what is and what ought to be, creating shallow, superficial, easily shepherdable people by the powers that be and their politicians and their priests.

By comparison, Hinduism, like the other main eastern religions, Buddhism and Taoism, are, at their core, about spiritual enlightenment; waking up; authenticity. Buddhism flowered even farther east, of course, but was it was born in India - I visited Sarnath, where Buddha began teaching five weeks after his enlightenment in Bodhgaya (which I didn't get to, 200km to the east of Sarnath).

99.9999% of Indians are not enlightened, but many at least acknowledge the possibility, even if they barely understand what it means. Almost the entirety of the western world doesn't even acknowledge it as a possibility or a goal. Historically, a hundred times as many Indians have gotten enlightened probably than all other societies on earth combined; enlightenment being the final, total, beyond mental understanding that there really is no existence as a separate person; that existence is impersonal; that everything perceived is mere illusion; that all self-identity is contrived; that everybody who thinks that they know who they are just hasn't looked; that underneath all of the pretensions and presumptions, we are spacelessly, timelessly, unfathomably, unherdably conscious and Free.

One of the many, ultimately inexpressible implications of this is: you were Buddha in one of your past lives - you are me in one of your current incarnations - we really are One. Certainly, one of the

reasons I came to India, was to be reminded more deeply of this.

In truth, the main reason I came to India was because I was so devastated that I didn't want to start over again. After my three months in India, I will be returning ready and excited to begin again; in fact, I already am.

Paris, May 11, 2012

In the first half of 1982, I lived in London and look back on it with very fond memories. Blessed I was to have a three floor flat in Hampstead, not so far from the Heath, a tube station ride from just about everywhere I could think of to go, with my walkman and BBC Radio #1.

One day I took a tube ride and then a bus to Stonehenge. Two old ladies in front of me in the near empty bus discussed 19th century literature for most of the way and then complained how modern society, including Stonehenge, has gotten so commercial, producing images of Holidays Inns and restaurants and gas stations in my inner eyes. Coming over the last rise; seeing the huge, upright rocks in the distance and nothing else, positively, shocked me.

Got to hang out in Amsterdam for a week or two in warm, comfortable weather several years ago when you could still buy a wide variety of God's green herbs in the city center cafes; when you could still purchase a variety of excellent product in the magic mushroom stores. At all hours, I walked all over that incredible city and could have walked much more. On my last day, everyone turned into highly interactive, sophisticated, humorous cartoons or caricatures of their wonderful selves, painted by Van Gogh.



My experience of Springtime in Paris in the year 2012? I've died and gone to Heaven. No, really - almost:). Paris is Dessert on your birthday; when each differently colored candle still means something and there are balloons in the sky, and accordion players and clowns and card trick artists on many corners and metro trains.

Of the 1564 hotels I researched on the internet from Rishikesh, only a couple hundred were under \$100 per night, American money; none in the Latin Quarter where I imagined that I wanted to go; finally chose a cheap hotel in Montmartre, after picking the Ace of Disks. It was the right one.

There is a cute sink in the corner of my small room, a shared floor toilet, a hotel-wide shared shower on the street level floor.

It got generally good customer ratings on the sites I looked at, especially regarding location, but there were a few complaints about the old, cramped rooms from people who should go to India for a day. This is comfort and luxury. The electricity never goes off. The sink works, even the hot water.

There's a mirror and a towel rack; a bed with blankets. Oh, it is so nice to be sleeping with blankets again and without mosquitos.

There are dozens of cafes within a hundred yards of my door, that all, as far as I've experienced, serve the tastiest, most enjoyable meals in the world. As of late, I had gotten so tired of choosing between standard rothi and palak paneer - in, so far, only three days (!) here I have had scrumptious shrimp



(just on the street, on the way to somewhere, when I didn't need a meal but couldn't resist), delicious escargot, the best omelette I've ever had; some other foods that I didn't know what they were; great coffee, great beer, great wine.

The men are interested and engaging; the women are forthright and gorgeous in their painted on pants and high heeled shoes and exquisite perfumes. Everyone is friendly and un-snobbish, though there is an air that they know that they are the hippest people on planet Earth.



Victor Hugo didn't live too far from where I am; neither did Ezra Pound or Ernest Hemingway or Oscar Wilde or Isadora Duncan or Pablo Picasso, for a while.

Moulin Rouge is 10 minutes away. La Basilique du Sacré Coeur is a 15 minute walk on the opposite side. On my first day, I was unexpectedly blown away by it.



As a result of my last report, I've recently had a back and forth email conversation with a friend, where I was mostly taking a jaded position regarding Christianity. Sacré Coeur affected me a little like the Taj Mahal did years ago. It is so immensely and divinely beautiful! I'm not receiving how to express this to my satisfaction, but I found myself feeling such awe of Christ and appreciation of true Christian devotion - I sat in one of the pews for quite a while, taking as much of it in as I could.

Synchronicities continue, unabated.

My absolute favorite song when I was nine was "[End of the World](#)" by [Skeeter Davis](#) - I loved sappy, soulful songs in those days. That's the song that was playing over the local airport sound system in the last moment my ex-wife and I looked at each other and waved goodbye as I was in line with my bags, at the very beginning of this trip.

Just a few days ago, she sent me "[Somebody That I Used to Know](#)" ("No hidden meanings at all. It's just so awesome!") by [Gotye](#), and it is, and appropriate, as well. It's the only English spoken song I've noticed in my neighborhood meanderings here - yesterday it was playing loudly at a cafe I ate outside of. ("Hello, Dolly" has played multiple places and times, but only instrumental - I keep playing "[Somebody That I Used to Know](#)" to keep it out of my head.

Climbed the Arc de Triomphe and walked down the Champs Elysées, yesterday. Today I visited Notre Dame; then walked to and around the Quartiere Latin; then, over to the Louvre; then, in honor of my aunt, La Madeleine. Of all the sites, my favorite is just hanging out in my own neighborhood. After the last couple of months, when my protein intake dropped by, probably, 80%, I have had to discipline myself, knowing, no matter how delicious they are, I can only enjoy so many treats in a day.

India is already a distance dream. Paris is here today, but it will be gone almost tomorrow.

Thanks to Craig's List and the internet, I already have a new home to return to, which turns out to be the other half of a duplex, which was the last place I lived before moving in with the new family I so happily married into, one Uranian 'month' or over seven years ago! The landlady remembered me so she didn't even require a new application, which is fortunate, because I haven't had a job in going on a decade; I haven't paid any income tax since long before that; and,

I have no credit references as I haven't used credit since 1978 and I don't even have a bank account. Soon, I will be back to the future, and I have no idea what fortunes it will bring. All I know is that I dare to accept whatever rewards it may offer.

Ashland, May 23, 2012

[You didn't think I would stop at #10, did you?]



Well, somehow, I made it through all the border patrols, customs checkpoints, TSA, DHS, President's Hit List, etc.; never went through their high radiation x-ray machines; got felt up a lot, but that's all right... Apparently, none of their machines could tell them what I was thinking; and, I never let on...

Returned to my new home going on a week and a half ago. Have almost actually unpacked now, for the first time in months; got internet right away; a phone just yesterday (I haven't called anyone yet); going to start working out again, tomorrow; going to try to make a living and sense of this life, again, soon after that - one foot after the other; one step at a time.

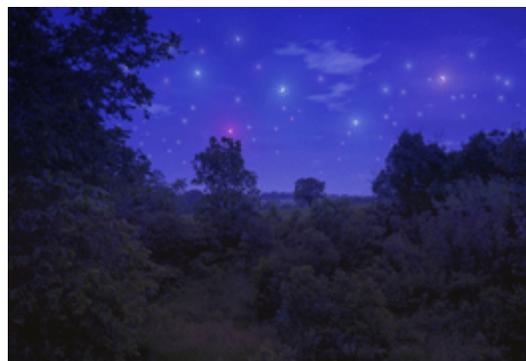
Attended my daughter's school year ending musical play "[As Time Goes By](#)" this evening, almost just like the past several years. She's practically a teenager now. I haven't seen her enough since I've been back and more than I had expected, I feel her having missed me - and it makes me miss her even more. Clearly, there's nothing to do but continue to release the grief and sadness, but it's obvious I've got to feel it some more, first. I think she really likes the *sari* I brought for her and I look forward to seeing her so beautiful self in it.

My wife and I have been working together this week, cleaning out our old house in time for change of tenancy at the end of the month. It's been good. In many ways we get along just as we always used to. As always, I very much enjoy hanging out with her, even as it is. Makes me wonder: If I'm not supposed still to love her, why do I? Garage sale will be Saturday. The only thing left on our list, other than that, will be for us to do our own private, little ending ceremony.

The heartbreak is still there. Time will tell if I accomplished anything by going to India for three months, but I do believe I have. Perhaps life's deep current has been gentle with me, since I've landed, thus far; but, at least, I'm not struggling to hold against it anymore.

Surely, it's all still just an unfolding dream, but I am grateful for the cool, clean comfort and calm.

That will be all, I guess. Thank you for caring and listening. Thank you for being here.



Ashland, September 6, 2012

This report is about all of the feminine contact in my life this year (which is practically none.) In and of itself, this is not significant regarding warranting yet another Personal Report. What's interesting are the continuing coincidences; hence the posting to this particular webpage. This report is also about a couple of homes.

Near the end of [Report #10](#), from Paris, I stated that - thanks to Craig's List and the internet - the new home I would soon be 'returning' to, interestingly enough, was the other half of the very same duplex I had lived in just prior to moving in with my eventual wife and daughter, seven or eight years before.

Also, as already reported, my Indian adventure was pretty solitary. Always, I was hoping that a good love affair would present itself, but the closest one came was a couple of walks and dinners that I shared with a beautiful woman from New Zealand, who happened to have been *born in the same month and year (and astrological sign - Sagittarius) as my wife*. (See [here](#) in Report#6.) Occasionally, I look back wistfully on that time with Tiru; wondering how it may have been, had I been less internally conflicted; further on in the mental and emotional processing of my divorce.

In the months since I've been back, I've settled well into my 'new' place - new routine is pretty similar to the old routine - and have handled most of the major things on my list of things to do to get my life together: My weight and strength and vitality are back up to where they were before I left on my trip... A new feline companion is my pride and joy... still missing, however, having a woman in my life.



So, a month or so ago, I registered on one of the more well know internet dating sites, which has, thus far, resulted in three dates.

The first was 2-1/2 weeks ago with a local beautician in which it was evident right off to both of us that we were no match. Her birthday is a different year, but the *exact same date* as my wife, aka ex-wife.

The second - weekend before last - was a little more pleasant, but again, clear to me that this relationship would not be going anywhere either. It's just worth noting that she, too, is a Sagittarian - the third in a row - fourth, if you count my wife (with no other Sun signs represented) - which shows how well I had gotten her out of my system, I suppose.

Earlier this evening was my third date, which I knew beforehand was *not* with another Sagittarian. Actually, I had been kind of reserving this evening to potentially audition at this season's first rehearsal of the town 'Peace Choir', but decided to skip that once my date emailed me that for her it was a good evening to meet. I can hardly imagine myself getting involved in something as politically correct as peace, anyway - a town 'Freedom Choir' would be way more up my alley.

This date also will probably not go anywhere, either - she's a dog person, whereas I'm a cat person; she likes to think of herself "as someone who embraces all religions equally", whereas I'm more likely to reject them, not necessarily equally- but, for sure, it *was* the best one yet. Before our meeting, I read her profile again and noticed for the first time that she mentioned that she owns "a casual cafe based on healthy Food, Organics, and Sustainability"; and, wondered which cafe it was.



We had agreed to meet at the lower duck pond, the one nearest the square at the center of town where lots of shops and eateries are. It is not an easy place to find parking, especially at the dinner hour, but I happily spotted an immediate parking place as I pulled into the vicinity, directly in front of the restaurant I would find out, a few minutes later, is the exact restaurant that the woman I was soon to meet owns. Oddly, it had not been one that had come to my mind as I was driving to our date.

As I said, we hit it off fairly well. We walked and related to each other the recent stories of our lives. Along the trail, occasionally there are benches, most or all of them having some town resident-who-has-died's name inscribed on them. One of the first things she said was we were on the lookout for Dave's bench; explaining to me that she had been in the Ashland Peace Choir for five years up until a couple of years ago, when Dave, the choirmaster during those years, died from Mad Cow's disease. Also, before my turn to say much, she told me that she had, just in the last two or three months, moved to a new house, out of town a short distance; having had to sell her old house as part of her recent divorce.

Now I have to back up for a minute.

My wife and daughter and I had been blessed to rent and live in what was, for me, a luxurious home, up a hill a ways, with a great view of much of this town of 25,000 people or so. Shortly after I returned from my trip, to my new 'old' much more humble home, my wife closed escrow on her new home - one block over and one block down from where we had lived for five years and where she and daughter had continued to live until then. Anyway, much of my first two weeks back in the country was spent helping my wife clean out our old house as she moved in to her new one.

My date asked me where I had lived; and, when I told her, she remarked: "Well, that's a coincidence - that's just a block over from my house which I had to sell".

It turns out, of course, that the very house my wife and daughter own and live in now, is the same house that my date this evening called home for seven years, until selling it to them!

As if to add an exclamation to the moment; just five seconds or less after our shared realization - ahead of us on the path, coming from the other direction, we ran into Kristen, a friend of mine who I hadn't run into since at least last year some time, who's first words after calling my name, yet from some distance away, were: "well, how *synchronicitous* it is running into you..." and proceeded to tell me how she and a mutual friend, Jyothi (who I saw once, briefly, this year, since I've been back, and is interjected to [here](#) in Report #3 and alluded to [here](#) in Report #6) had talked about me earlier in the day.

Sometimes, all you can do is shrug and shake your head.

Only now do I recall that my wife had told me, three months ago when we were cleaning out our old house, who she bought her new house from. Not really knowing the parties involved, it hadn't fully registered in my mind at the time. Most definitely, it has now.

Postscript (a few days later): Nah, none of my dates led to more dates. I give up trying to push the river.