

THE  
THREE JEWELS  
OF THE NEW  
ENLIGHTENMENT

REIMAGINING THE BUDDHA, DHARMA,  
AND SANGHA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



THE NONDUAL TEACHINGS OF  
ANDREW COHEN

EDITED AND COMPILED BY  
HANS PLASQUI



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# The Power of the Triple Gem

## **The Seductive Allure of Spiritual Awakening**

Consider this striking reality: Those who have experienced spiritual awakening or self-transcendence invariably regard it as the most captivating and transformative experience of their lives - leaving a lasting impact, changing them forever. Many insist that it was the defining milestone on their path. They assert that who they were before and who they are after is not the same person. Such bold pronouncements are quite telling. They unequivocally reveal that self-transcendence is one of the most compelling experiences our human awareness is capable of. The variety of spiritual experiences is vast. But whether they manifest as a profound state of mystical union, a sense of seamless oneness with nature, an experience of ecstasy or love-bliss, a radiant vision, or simply a state where the mind is completely still - free from the ordinary self and its endless stream of thoughts and emotions - their profundity is such that they feel infinitely more real than anything we have ever known.

In its ultimate form, the experience of self-transcendence catapults us straight into the Ground of Being. In that state, every trace of thought and feeling, time and world, self and other has vanished;

and only Consciousness Itself remains – pure radiant Emptiness. For a moment you know for a fact that there is only One Reality. It is ever-present, infinite, bright – and you *are* That. You know that you are plunged into the actual part of you that is beyond birth and death, and remains untouched by the flow of time. This is irresistibly attractive because you intuitively sense that this is actually your own most intimate True Nature.

Experiences like this are so awe-inspiring that they shake us to the core and leave no doubt that there exists an Absolute Reality beyond time and space. The radical release into the seamless oneness of the Ground of All-Being is the most thoroughly transformative shift a human being can go through. And most often, it is a pivotal reference point that redefines the meaning and purpose of our entire existence.

For most of us, however, the experience soon fades, leaving us wondering: Would it be possible to remain anchored in such a depth of being - not just briefly touching base with it during fleeting moments, but truly *live* from it in an enduring way? And thus, we often find ourselves in a predicament. Despite having glimpsed our awakened Self beyond ego, we continue to oscillate between states of awakened awareness and forgetfulness. And soon the most fundamental challenge of our spiritual lives becomes: How do we remain continuously aware of our True Self - the Radiant Brightness of Absolute Spirit - that has been revealed to us in our most enlightened moments?

## **The Sacred Synergy: the Buddha Enlightens, the Dharma Instructs, the Sangha Supports**

The Great Traditions have given us a compelling answer to this question. After his enlightenment beneath the Bodhi Tree 2500 years ago, the Buddha rose up from his deep meditation, journeyed to Sarnath and delivered his iconic first sermon to the five ascetics. In this historic inaugural teaching, he laid down the foundations of the Three Jewels of Enlightenment: the Buddha (the enlightened teacher), the Dharma (the teachings or sacred wisdom), and the Sangha (the community of practitioners) - establishing what is now known as the Triple Gem.

Ever since that defining moment in our spiritual history the Triple Gem has been considered the most optimum support-structure for spiritual practice; the most conducive setting to awaken to the ultimate gift of Enlightened Awareness, remain in touch with it, and allow it to most fully come alive and shine forth into this world.

So why is it that the formula of the Triple Gem is such a well-spring of transformational power? The reason is simple, but also somewhat mysterious. Together, these Three Jewels create a potent sacred synergy that quickens awakening: the Buddha enlightens, the Dharma instructs, and the Sangha supports. When the Three Jewels are sparkling together, working side by side, alchemically joined in an ongoing dynamic interplay, their transformational power is unleashed most fully – creating the most favorable conditions for enlightenment to be transmitted, realized, sustained, and embodied within a community of practitioners. And thus, through the echoes of history, it has been understood that engaging spiritual

practice within a Triple Gem framework is the most reliable way to stay intimately connected to the divine aliveness of our own awakened awareness - our best chance of stabilizing our experiences of self-transcendence and glimpses of spiritual awakening.

With our spiritual community, Manifest Nirvana, we have created a vibrant environment where the sacred synergy of the Three Jewels of Enlightenment is alive. We have set up a space dedicated to radical transformation and deep inner awakening, where the enlightened exemplar offers guidance on the path, the wisdom of the teaching helps us navigate our spiritual practice, and the community of practitioners supports and nurtures - together creating the ideal conditions for intensifying and quickening our awakening process.

But what makes our offering unique is that, while we fully embrace the precious gift of Traditional Enlightenment – awakening to the timeless, formless Ground of All-Being - we have also integrated several key understandings revealed by modern-day science. Among them, insights of which none of the Great Traditions were aware, most notably the theory of evolution, which was discovered around one hundred fifty years ago. This has led us to develop our groundbreaking new teaching, called *Evolutionary Enlightenment*.

Since the birth of the universe, the mysterious force of evolution has produced a continuous outpouring of creative novelty across every single domain of the cosmos - from matter, to life, to consciousness – organizing them into ever more advanced levels of complexity, wholeness, inclusion, and embrace. The field of spirituality is no exception; and integrating the reality of evolution into it is nothing short of a gamechanger. Here's why: The principle of

evolution holds far-reaching implications for the way we conduct our spiritual lives, and even changes our understanding of the nature of enlightenment itself – points we will return to shortly.

Yet despite its groundbreaking character, the full impact of evolution is still all too often poorly understood by most practitioners who are treading the time-honored path of classical enlightenment. This is somewhat unfortunate, as engaging directly with the mysterious force of evolution in our spiritual practice has actually enriched and revolutionized each of the Three Jewels of Enlightenment. It has opened up surprising new pathways to make our spiritual practice more potent and its results more whole.

So let's explore this more closely... How exactly did the force of evolution advance and enrich the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha?



# The Dharma: Evolutionary Enlightenment

## **Brahman is the World**

Let us begin our consideration with the Dharma Jewel of the Triple Gem. It is an intriguing fact that, even though the Dharma is often referred to as ‘eternal truth,’ it has, throughout the ages, undergone a few major evolutionary changes. Its continued evolution has, at times, uncovered groundbreaking new understandings about the nature of reality that have had significant consequences for our spiritual lives. So, it is well worth taking a moment to explore how the Eastern Dharma has evolved as it made its way through history and moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century – especially in its attitude toward the manifest world, the world in which evolution occurs.

All throughout the ancient world many Great Spiritual Traditions of the East, such as Theravada Buddhism, viewed the manifest world as a dreadful illusion, a prison cell one needs to escape from. The ultimate goal was to get off the wheel of birth and death, escape this hellish world of suffering called *Samsara*, and attain the enlightened state of eternal peace, emptiness, and bliss in the heavenly realm called *Nirvana*. This orientation however, is essentially dualistic. Nirvana was seen as being separate from Samsara;

the world of form was felt to be divorced from formlessness.

In the second century, however, the philosopher-sage Nagarjuna, who founded the Madhyamaka school of Mahayana Buddhism, caused nothing short of a revolution in Buddhism as he began to object to the peculiar duality between Samsara and Nirvana. He pointed out that emptiness and form are not-two, and that reality was actually nondual – a breakthrough perhaps most strikingly summarized by the famous verse from The Heart Sutra: “That which is Form is not other than Emptiness, that which is Emptiness is not other than Form.” This new insight did not only emerge in Buddhism. It is present in other traditions as well, such as Kashmir Shaivism, Advaita Vedanta, Vajrayana Buddhism, and Tantra. In our own day and age Ramana Maharshi, echoing Advaita Vedanta’s founding father Shankara, offered us a similar insight when he said: “The world is illusory; Brahman alone is real; Brahman is the world.” Emptiness and Form, indeed, are not-two.

As the ontological difference between Nirvana and Samsara; Brahman and the world; Emptiness and Form was erased, the form aspect of reality began to be more fully embraced. After all, when Emptiness and Form are recognized as One Single Reality, the world of form reveals itself as a direct expression — a radiant gesture — of the Divine, and needs to be appreciated as such. This radically new orientation swept the ancient world and dramatically changed the way people conducted their spiritual lives. Spirituality was no longer about fleeing one half of reality and hiding in the other, but about uniting both halves. And enlightenment came to mean: the nondual union of Emptiness and Form.

## **Evolutionary Enlightenment is the New Enlightenment**

The next major leap in the evolution of the Dharma came in the modern era when this view of enlightenment as the union of Emptiness and Form coalesced with the modern-day discovery of evolution. As the phenomenon evolution was observed in every dimension of the cosmos – in the world of matter (physiosphere), the world of life (biosphere), and the world of mind (noosphere) - it became clear that the world of form is not a static never-changing whole. All throughout the cosmos, form is in perpetual evolution, and this has major implications for our understanding of the nature of enlightenment, and for the way we conduct our spiritual lives.

So what are these implications? To truly grasp them, let's slow down for a moment... Step into the cosmological vantage point of deep time and big history - and consider, if you will, the awe-inspiring majesty of the evolutionary journey that led to you and me:

Modern cosmology tells us that before the universe was born there was only nothingness – a timeless, formless, primordial singularity. Then, in a massive explosion, the universe burst into existence about 13.7 billion years ago. With the big bang, the world of form was born and an immense evolutionary process began to unfold. The early universe was made up of nothing but a vast expanse of energy and inanimate matter. This primordial substance slowly organized itself over unimaginable stretches of time into the celestial bodies of our solar systems – including somewhere among them our beautiful Earth, which was formed around 4.5 billion years ago from the remains of extinct stars. A billion years later on Earth, in an astounding new emergence, inanimate matter brought forth life. As the first living, single-cell organisms began to grow in

complexity, a dramatic chain of biological evolution was initiated, out of which, around two hundred thousand years ago, we humans eventually emerged. In yet another remarkable creative advance, life had brought forth consciousness and the capacity for self-reflective awareness.

If we stand back for a moment, and contemplate the marvel of our deep-time journey, what else could we feel but awe and wonder? How could something come from nothing? How could dead matter transform into life? And how could life generate something so stunning as our consciousness – a mystery that even to this day our brightest minds cannot adequately explain? How could any of these leaps into novelty actually occur, if there wasn't a creative-evolutionary principle built into every fiber of the cosmos from day one? From its inception, the universe has demonstrated a mysterious capacity for self-organization - a vibrant, ongoing creativity, that tirelessly drives the evolutionary process forward, organizing its creations into ever-greater levels of complexity and structural order. More keeps emerging from less. Primordial slime has given rise to powerfully enlightened sages like Ramana Maharshi. Stardust has transformed into the sonnets of Shakespeare and the sonatas of Bach. The big history of the cosmos is an extraordinary evolutionary tale of creative advance into novelty...

If we then pick up the thread of our majestic evolutionary journey again, we discover that the emergence of human consciousness ushered in a whole new revolution in the further unfolding of the world of form. When the early hominids walked the African savannah, taking their first hesitant bipedal steps, their consciousness was still in a state of undifferentiated fusion with the natural

world. Today, we humans have walked the surface of the moon and humanity has brought forth deeply realized mystics that have radically transcended the natural world.

The long journey of the flowering of our consciousness is an intriguing inner process that we, by now, have researched in great detail. Developmental psychologists have discovered that human beings, in their individual psychology from infancy to adulthood, as well as humanity at large, in its culturally shared values and worldviews, move through a series of concrete observable stages of development. With each new stage a person's self-identity expands, and as it does so, his worldview, values, and perspectives become more inclusive, whole, complex, and embracing. As people mature through the stages, their circles of care, compassion, and concern widen: moving, by any other name, from egocentric, including only oneself; to ethnocentric, including also one's group or community (sometimes called the mythic or traditionalist stage); to worldcentric, including all human beings regardless of race, sex or creed (sometimes called the modern and postmodern stage); to kosmocentric, including all sentient beings. The same evolutionary impulse that created the Great Apes from clay is at work in our own consciousness, advancing and widening it. Since the dawn of humanity, new stages of psychological development and human maturity have continually emerged, and there is no reason to believe that this evolution will ever come to a halt.

And so, the evolutionary picture that emerges by looking through the lens of deep time and big history refines our insights into the nature of enlightenment yet again. Especially the recent discoveries about the evolution of human consciousness and cul-

ture have deeply enriched our understanding of the meaning of enlightenment. Nondual realization remains the union of Emptiness and Form, just as Nagarjuna taught. But the reality of evolution adds an important nuance to this wisdom. It is clear that the Emptiness-aspect of Reality, once realized, doesn't evolve, as it is prior to all form and evolution, but its Form-aspect continues to evolve - and thus, the more accurate interpretation of enlightenment is: the union of Emptiness and *evolving* Form. This is to say that enlightenment itself is evolving! There are always newly emerging stages of consciousness and culture to become one with; always new levels to enclose in your enlightened embrace - and therefore, enlightenment will never be final. The discovery of the evolution of manifest existence turns enlightenment into a moving target – a sliding scale - which prompts the striking conclusion that the New Enlightenment is Evolutionary Enlightenment!

### **God Evolves Through Us**

After having presented a taste of the philosophy of Evolutionary Enlightenment – or the nondual union of Being and Becoming, as we like to say – the time has come to truly get a felt sense of this newly emerging form of enlightened awareness. To feel its actual energetic reality, we need to turn our attention inward and explore the feeling quality of both of its aspects - Being and Becoming – in our own awareness.

So let us pause for a moment, and take a breath... Feel into the depths of your own awareness... and notice...

When you are deeply absorbed in Being, the mind is completely still. Every trace of thought and feeling, time and world, self and

other, is erased, and there is no impetus to do anything whatsoever. Only consciousness itself remains, pristine and untouched. Nothing else exists, but you are still there as pure Being - changeless, spacious, infinite, and utterly transparent. There is only One Single Reality – and you *are* That. This is compellingly attractive because you are immersed in the actual part of yourself that has never been born and never entered the stream of time, and you sense its immortality. You experience perfect everlasting peace, a sense of absolute release into infinite Being, and it radically sets you free. That is what God feels like before the universe was born...

This absolute Ground of All-Being is not only a peaceful place within your own interior, it is also the deepest dimension of Reality Itself - the timeless, formless void out of which the universe was born. It is your own Original Face, the one you had before the big bang. This unqualified voidness, in which nothing ever happened and the universe wasn't even a thought in the mind of God, is called *Nirguna Brahman*, or “God without qualities,” the radically formless Self. But the wisdom traditions also point to another aspect of Ultimate Reality, called *Saguna Brahman*, or “God with qualities”. This is the Self as it begins to meet the world of space and time, and its earliest characteristics begin to emerge. You can actually locate this aspect of the Self in the depths of your own awareness as well...

At times you will experience the deep meditative state of emptiness as endlessly captivating. Even though it is changeless, it is never boring, old, or predictable. The nature of our unborn Self is always fresh and ever-new. If you hone into that mysterious quality, you will notice that what makes emptiness enthralling is that it contains a sense of infinite potential. You can feel its very subtle, yet

endlessly compelling creative vibration, dancing right on the very edge where formlessness and form meet. Nothing has yet occurred, yet everything is possible. This feeling is the living pulse of the first cause. The moment this creative impulse crosses the threshold between the unmanifest and the manifest, it bursts forth into the world of form as an act of creation. That which was once perfect peace in the depths of formless Being now dramatically changes its quality. It morphs into the exhilarating creative vibration of evolutionary Becoming. It shows up as what I call the evolutionary impulse - the energy and intelligence that initiated the creative process and continues to drive it. The feeling quality of the evolutionary impulse is ecstasy and urgency, pure positivity, a big resounding “Yes!” to life.

The wonder of the relationship between Being and Becoming, with their radically different qualities, is that they are in reality one indivisible continuum, an unbroken whole. There is a seamless continuation between both. Being and Becoming are One and not-two. There is always only One without a Second – and as meditation reveals: you *are* that One! You are the One who was present as timeless, formless Being before the big bang; the One who initiated the creative process fourteen billion years ago; and the One who continues to drive its perpetual evolutionary emergence. And thus you wake up to the startling recognition that this is all *your* responsibility. Who else’s could it be...? There *is* no other.

Suddenly it all becomes clear: the universe is actually trying to become more conscious *through you!* This is your project. Your body-mind is a vehicle for the evolution of the interior of the cosmos. It was never really about your personal story. The majestic process that gave rise to your presence here on Earth is waiting for

you to become available for it. It needs your energy and willingness to take its own next step. Its future is wide-open. None of the emerging levels of evolution are already fixed. We are creating their content and structure as we progress. And thus, how the next advance into novelty will manifest literally depends on our choices. The energy and intelligence that created the universe needs us to do its bidding, to be its hands and feet, its mind and heart. The future of this dramatic creative experiment God has ventured into depends upon us - upon the choices we make and the actions we take.

This evolutionary view profoundly challenges the traditional notion that once we have attained the great liberation, we never have to reincarnate into the cycle of birth and death again. Considering what it has taken for this process to get to the point where it has produced conscious beings with the capacity to understand their own role in this glorious evolutionary scheme, it doesn't make sense to conclude that the ultimate purpose of our presence here is final release from this world and freedom from incarnate existence. If the interior of the universe is going to continue to become more conscious through us, then you and I have to want to stay on the ride. If we opt out, the miracle of greater awareness, complexity and embrace is not going to occur. Evolution requires our presence here, right in the midst of the universe process. God's next move depends on us!

As soon as we truly get this, it sets us on fire with a powerful sense of meaning, purpose and directionality. We become serious about being here, passionate to make the right choices here on God's earth, and devoted to liberating our energy, attention, and

awareness so that we can take on the daunting yet thrilling responsibility for how the future turns out. Why else would we be here if not to show up as passionate representatives of the creative principle in the world? What other purpose could be ours but to embrace the awe-inspiring burden of this never-ending creative advance into novelty, which has been ours all along?

This felt sense of being aligned with the future-oriented creative vibrancy of the evolutionary impulse is the essential flavor of Evolutionary Enlightenment – and it is what sets it apart from Traditional Enlightenment. The New Enlightenment generates an entirely different cosmic teleology. Its purpose is not only to awaken to the radiant bliss and radical freedom of timeless formless Being, which is the focus of Traditional Enlightenment, but also to wake up to the ecstatic urgency of evolutionary Becoming. An Evolutionary Enlightenment Dharma is an embodied spiritual vision that embraces an evolving universe and awakens within us a powerful moral imperative to serve its further unfolding. Evolutionary Enlightenment is the ecstatic recognition that God evolves through us!

### **How Shall I Live? – Awakening Your Authentic Self**

Throughout the ages wise minds have always maintained that the two most fundamental questions of life are: *'Who am I?'* and *'How shall I live?'* The Dharma of Evolutionary Enlightenment answers both questions. The answer to the *'Who am I?'* question remains exactly as it has always been, ever since the Great Traditions first revealed it to us: Who you truly are is neither your body nor your mind, but Pure Consciousness – radiant without limitation! But our

answer to the question '*How shall I live?*' is refreshing, compelling, and radically new. If we realize that our body-minds are the instruments through which the universe becomes more conscious of itself; that evolution requires our presence here, right in the midst of life; and that God's next move depends on us, it awakens within us the thrilling sense that life is full of meaning, purpose, and directionality. This is the energetic inspiration guiding us on how to live our lives. But what makes the answer to the question '*How shall I live?*' really concrete for you as a unique individual, is when you truly begin to live from what we call the *Authentic Self*. The Authentic Self is a state in which you are identified with the dynamic, ever-evolving creative principle as it expresses itself through your own heart and mind. This is the self that is always inspired, always sensing the imminence of higher potentials, and always ecstatically striving to create the future. Whereas the True Self is formless, and *prior* to time and space, the Authentic Self is our non-contracted liberated self *within* the relative world of time and space. It is the self that is completely aligned with the evolutionary energy that animates the world of form. Just like timeless, Being, this evolutionary creativity is immortal. The products of evolution are transient, but the evolutionary impulse that gives rise to them is imperishable, unchanging, and indestructible. The evolutionary impulse is the God-Force that perpetually creates new forms. When you are aligned with your Authentic Self, you actually feel the force of evolution coursing through you as a real push to become more conscious and advance the leading edge of the creative process. The pure creative vibrancy of the Authentic Self utterly outshines your egoic resistance to change. This is why

attuning to the evolutionary impulse is instantaneously self-liberating, the same way the realization of the Ground of Being is. The Authentic Self, therefore, is your evolutionarily enlightened self. It is your already fully free and unconditioned self, as it expresses itself creatively, right in the midst of life. And thus in this teaching, living in alignment with your Authentic Self and the evolutionary impulse, vibrating at the very heart of all forms, is how ego-transcendence is achieved while we navigate the world.

The more you awaken to your Authentic Self the more this creative evolutionary drive begins to energize and enliven the innate talents and skills that are unique to your body-mind-personality. As a result, your personal development intensifies and your self-actualization process really kicks into gear. Here is why: Like a knife slicing through butter, the powerful creative vibrancy of the Authentic Self swiftly cuts through the karmic density of the ego's personal and social conditioning – enabling you to shed it more effectively and achieve greater freedom from it. As it clears your egoic obstacles, your deepest potentials, once buried beneath layers of egoic conditioning, are now liberated and begin to blossom. You grow into the positive power of your own uniqueness. You feel lit up by the deep urge to become the most you can be; to pursue your budding aspirations; and to continually evolve as a person.

As your alignment with the Authentic Self deepens, you eventually cross a threshold where the Authentic Self becomes the dominant force in your being, and your ego takes a backseat. This is the turning point that allows your self-actualization to pivot into its highest expression. From here on, your motivation changes dramatically. Actualizing your potentials is no longer purely about

your personal growth, nor is it for your own sake. It is for the sake of the whole. It is no longer an individual right or a private choice, but a powerful moral imperative arising from your felt sense that you are here to serve the evolution of the whole.

And so you feel driven to uncover your innermost personal essence and unique qualities at the deepest possible level – the level of the soul. You feel called to find your true soul-purpose, and bring to fruition your unique gifts and develop the skills that correspond to them, so that you actually have the means to contribute to the evolution of the cosmos. The sense of fulfilment and empowerment that comes along with that is felt to be of secondary importance. It is merely a byproduct of having found your authentic voice in this cosmic orchestra.

When you have awakened to your Authentic Self to such depth and have grown into these advanced stages of self-actualization, the answer to the question *'How shall I live?'* will be plain obvious to you. Your purpose here on God's earth will be self-evident, and the ways in which you are here to serve the further evolution of the cosmos will be crystal clear to you. Such a grace-filled life, awake to the evolutionary impulse, deeply self-actualized, and lit up by the creative vibrancy of the Authentic Self, embodies the essence of the New Enlightenment.

In light of all this, it is clear that living from your Authentic Self and actively applying the skills of your self-actualized potentials in service of a larger goal is the most powerful antidote there is to the sense of nihilism and meaninglessness that has overtaken parts of our culture – a sense that has even become commonplace in some spiritual circles who view life, the self and the world as il-

lusions to be seen through and transcended, rather than ever-evolving expressions of the Divine to be participated in wholeheartedly.

At Manifest Nirvana, we dedicate substantial energy and attention to the all-important process of fostering people's self-actualization and empowerment. We provide an environment where everyone can flourish into the sovereign souls we were always meant to be – a setting where we can show up as creative pioneers, living inspired lives, serving the evolution of consciousness and culture, and co-creating the brave new world we would all love to live in, and would be proud to leave to our children.

### **Being Evolutionarily Enlightened: What Does it Really Mean?**

In the Dharma of Evolutionary Enlightenment, the realization of the Ground of Being, which has been the crown jewel of Traditional Enlightenment throughout the ages, continues to be the cornerstone of this newly emerging path. Yet the New Enlightenment enriches this classic realization of the True Self, which is unborn, and *prior to creation*, by adding a novel dimension to the Dharma that exists entirely *within creation*. It draws our attention to the need to also wake up to our Authentic Self – a state in which we align ourselves with the creative vibrancy of the evolutionary impulse - which was the missing piece in the Traditional Enlightenment schools. And thus in the teachings of Evolutionary Enlightenment the goal is awakening to both timeless, formless Being beyond the world *and* evolutionary Becoming within the world.

So what exactly does it mean, then, to be evolutionarily enlightened? We define it as the ability to transition effortlessly between the peace and bliss of Being – the goal of Traditional

Enlightenment, and the ecstatic urgency and creative vibrancy of evolutionary Becoming – the goal of the New Enlightenment. When you are capable of moving seamlessly and fluidly between both, that's when you know that evolutionary enlightenment has awakened in you.

This smooth movement between Being and Becoming is a spiritual skill. It magnifies as you realize more and more deeply what is perhaps the most profound mystery of all: that at the deepest possible level Being and Becoming are not-two. The more you live your life based on this radical nonduality of Being and Becoming, the more you become aware that Being and Becoming are fully and simultaneously present in every single moment of existence. They are two aspects of One Ultimate Reality - two sides of the same coin. The creative impulse is always inherently present in the transcendental depths of the Unborn, where it exists as infinite potential, just as the Ground of Being is always present in every move of this dance of creation as its Divine Source.

And so, as a practitioner of Evolutionary Enlightenment, when you sit in meditation, you are consciously aware of the timeless stillness and blissful peace of Being. But the moment you get into action you are instantly attuned to the ecstatic urgency of Becoming and its boundless evolutionary creativity – yet always without compromising your rootedness in the Transcendental Source Condition. You know that the God-Force is sometimes experienced as transcendent peace *beyond* the cosmos, and sometimes as ecstatic urgency *within* it. The ability to move gracefully, naturally and effortlessly between these apparently paradoxical expressions of the God-Force is the essence of living an evolutionarily enlightened

life.

The profundity of this realization, however, only becomes truly whole, potent and complete if we live it together with others. So let us transition now, to the Sangha Jewel of the Triple Gem and explore how we can live an evolutionarily enlightened life not just individually, but also *relationally*!

# The Sangha: Intersubjective Nonduality

## **The Whole of the Holy Life.**

When the Buddha's long-time personal attendant Ananda asked him: "Is association with like-minded people part of the holy life?", the Buddha's reported answer was surprising: "Not so, Ananda! Not so! Association with like-minded people is actually *the whole* of the holy life."

For as long as we can remember, the third Jewel of Enlightenment - the Sangha, or the community of practitioners - has always been viewed as vital – like a lifeline - for those who aspire to advance on the path to enlightenment. Those who have engaged the path have often testified that genuine spiritual life can be a difficult ordeal and is not without its periods of trial by fire. At times, it is like walking the razor's edge. Yet, being in the company of those who share the highest human aspiration of living an enlightened life can help us navigate and overcome the spiritual challenges we will inevitably run into. Our dharma sisters and brothers provide us with a robust support structure. They serve as a mirror in which we can see our progress or stagnation, and their presence and dedication to practice both challenge and support us. And so, sharing our

journey with inspired spiritual friends and walking the talk of the Dharma together is more transformative than going it alone.

When I first arrived in India in 1984, I went to Rishikesh to visit the Swami Shivananda Ashram. One evening, Swami Krishnananda, one of Shivananda's successors, was giving satsang. In the midst of his talk, seemingly out of the blue, he uttered a few striking phrases that still echo in my soul to this day: "There is a drone in the air... Can you hear it...? It is coming from God! It is saying: Come together, come together. In unity there is strength. Come together... Can you hear it?" Hearing these intriguing words from this extraordinary Saint catapulted me into a deep state of ecstatic intoxication, and I barely managed to walk out of the room. It infused my soul with the essential flavor of what we later came to call 'Intersubjective Nonduality' – a breakthrough spiritual state that enriches the meaning of 'Sangha' as we have always known it, by bringing to it an entirely fresh capacity to live awakening *relationally*.

### **Living Awakening Relationally**

The state of Intersubjective Nonduality is one of the most remarkable discoveries that emerged from our spiritual engagement together as a Sangha. Its emergence came to us gradually as the result of extensive pioneering efforts, fueled by my long-held utopian vision of the extraordinary transformative potential that I intuited could be unleashed, if we all came together in a context where nonduality would be the foundation of our relationships. Over the course of many years, we had devoted a substantial amount of energy and attention to exploring ways to be together

beyond ego and relate to one another from the deepest possible basis: the indivisible oneness of our True Nature. But, the actual breakthrough moment in our spiritual experiment occurred on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001, during an explosive eruption of collective enlightenment among a group of my students that lasted for several months. It was the most significant development in our work as a Sangha – and I consider it one of our signature contributions to the world of spirituality. It marked the true beginning of the project we had been working toward since I first began to teach.

What we found was intriguing and nothing short of groundbreaking: Enlightened awareness can not only come alive in the interior of an individual – as a ‘Higher I’ – but also in the interior of a collective – as a ‘Higher We’. We discovered that when committed people come together beyond ego, the Enlightened Mind itself can emerge *between* them. Whenever this occurs, the direct recognition of their Prior Union becomes the ground of their relationships.

Being in this shared state of enlightened unity together is beyond exhilarating! Whenever such an awakened We-field comes alive between people, the self-contraction drops and they leap beyond their separate self-sense. From there, a profound state of intimate communion with one another emerges, often accompanied by a mysterious and powerful current of enlightened awareness that fills the room – blissful and ecstatic – engulfing everyone present. This naturally ushers in a sense of perfect coherence, absolute trust, great love and unimaginable intimacy among everybody in the group.

What is so groundbreaking about this mysterious new kind of

enlightenment is that it expresses itself in the space *between* us – it is no longer only the *subjective* experience of the individuals in the group, but effectively becomes the *inter-subjective* experience of the whole group. This is why we came to call it Intersubjective Nonduality; or Collective Enlightenment, or simply a Higher We.

As we deepened our capacity to come together in this shared consciousness in which the One Reality is the ground of people's relationships, we discovered that whatever is being expressed and shared in this state no longer comes from accumulated knowledge. It bubbles up from the Creative Source Itself – from the very edge where formlessness and form meet; the place where nothing has yet occurred, yet everything is possible. When people come together in this Higher We, collective intelligence blossoms. Surprising novelty and original insights arise, and express themselves through the group, uplifting people's dialogues, and generating new answers to old conundrums - insights that cannot easily be found in isolation, yet seem to emerge quite effortlessly through the rich tapestry of awakened collective awareness. As a result of these thrilling observations, it soon began to dawn on us that if nonduality could become the foundation of our shared human experience - the ground upon which we meet – the world could be a radically different place.

Cultivating this Higher We is how we, at Manifest Nirvana, aspire to build a truly evolutionarily enlightened Sangha - a community of finders adept in the art of living awakening relationally!

## **The Delight of Intersubjective Dialogue**

The central practice for catalyzing this Higher We is called 'in-

tersubjective dialogue’ or ‘enlightened communication’. This is a form of deep self-reflective group conversation in which we step beyond our ego and its ordinary tendencies of self-absorption and self-concern, and relate to one another with awakened awareness. In this trans-egoic state, we move into dialogue with each other, which can be about any topic related to the human condition. While communicating, we make room for the emergence of an interpersonal intelligence – a presence in itself, wiser than any single individual in the group – and allow it to express itself through all of us.

The power of this practice is that participants aspire to speak from their Authentic Self. And so, whenever the dialogue is successful, it feels as if an ecstatic surge of evolutionary creativity erupts from the depths of the Creative Source Itself, speaking through every person directly and spontaneously - as one voice. The One and the Many mysteriously cohere. Everybody is uplifted into a state of transcendental awareness, in which their greater purpose for being alive discloses itself with such clarity that it sets them on fire with the passion to co-create the future. For years, our lived experience disclosed to us that when the unifying power of deep spiritual communion combines with the diversity of our self-actualized uniqueness, collective intelligence thrives. When everybody’s unique differences and perspectives are given free rein to arise from a basis of Prior Unity, the mysterious ascending drive of evolutionary creativity comes alive, and the dialogues between people become a crucible of co-creation.

As we continued to refine the art of creating thriving collaborative ‘we-spaces’ between people, we slowly but surely began to

better understand the dynamics of collective awakening, and we discovered and developed the ground rules that help catalyze the shift from a 'Higher I' to a 'Higher We'.

Here are the basic guidelines for the practice of intersubjective dialogue:

When you listen to your dialogue partners, listen deeply! Deep listening takes you out of your mind and into awakened awareness. While listening, don't try to make sense of what you hear. Don't judge it, don't interpret it, don't put it into a framework. Only listen. Just receive, from a space of non-reactive openness. Simply listening itself is a full practice of attention that can catalyze radical awakeness here and now, open-eyed, right in the midst of life. It opens the door for the Authentic Self to come alive in you.

Choose to stand in the depths of your Authentic Self – the non-contracted, already liberated Self, that is expressing itself as the dynamic, ever-evolving creative principle; the evolutionarily enlightened Self that is one and the same in you and me. Feel this dimension of yourself that is always inspired, always sensing the imminence of higher potentials, and always ecstatically striving to create the future, and let your voice naturally bubble up from there.

When you speak, do so with sincerity, transparency, dignity, and clarity. Don't speak personally nor intellectually. We want our utterances to be transpersonal and transrational - beyond personal opinions, history, preferences and experiences. The Authentic Self always responds spontaneously; it comes from the Creative Source Itself and is, therefore, faster than thought, and prior to our personal history. Even when you are not speaking, stay with the conver-

sation. Remain present and attentive. Do not get lost in your own thoughts. Always lean fully into the dialogue. Our active participation – verbal and non-verbal – is what makes the conversation come alive.

Be more interested in what you don't know yet, than in what you already know. This draws you into a state of deep unselfconscious curiosity. It generates a sense of delightful anticipation, and like nothing else it connects you to the creative potential that is inherent in every single moment. As you listen with radical openness and ceaseless curiosity, sensing the imminence of fresh potentials ready to surface, you become deeply receptive to what *wants* to be said; to the novelty that wants to emerge from the shared field of non-separate intimacy between us.

Whenever you sense the fledgling glimmers of a fresh insight arising in the dialogue, amplify them. Build on each other's contributions. Add to the insight we are collectively co-creating – to the wisdom that is bubbling up from the intersubjective nondual space between us. If you can build on what others say, and allow your own thoughts to be evolved by other people's responses to you, you increase the likelihood for creative novelty to emerge.

As the dialogue gains a natural flow, and you are truly immersed in it, it feels as if the one Authentic Self is actually having a conversation with itself through everybody in the group. Hearing the diverse expressions it creates, through each and every one present, will fill you with a thrilling sense of joy. The mystery of consciousness – so it seems - always delights in its own self-recognition.

## **The Power of Enlightened Communication in our World in Crisis**

The art of enlightened communication is a skill of great value in our complex, globalized world in crisis. If we are to bring back sanity into our polarized public discourse and heal the unbridgeable cultural divides in our broken societies, we need to learn how to master the skill to communicate with one another beyond ego and the games it plays. If we are to create a new culture in which we can have difficult, open conversations that really make a difference; conversations that have the power to open up a portal into the next stage of our evolution, mastering the subtle art of trans-egoic communication based on Intersubjective Nonduality is one of the skills we now need most.

Unless we advance this ability, the power of enlightenment to have any real impact on the evolution of culture and affect deep change in the world will remain inherently limited. Here's the reason. In this newly evolving expression of nonduality, the focus is no longer only on personal enlightenment: the realization of the Ground of Being, contained within the consciousness of the individual; the "enlightened one". In the New Enlightenment, enlightened awareness breaks out of the boundaries of the "I"-space and emerges in the shared We-field between a whole group of individuals. The shift from the traditional ideal of an enlightened "I" to this new capacity of an enlightened "we" opens up a reality of an entirely different order. It's like a burning match turning into a raging forest fire. Why? Because the moment enlightened awareness is released into the We-field, it can begin to flow freely into the world through the Many. As this happens, real collective change

can begin to emerge *from within*, since the We-field is the carrier of the values, perspectives and worldviews we share. It is our collective interior, the domain where culture lives and is advanced. And thus, working with the “we” space within an evolutionary context will uplift our values and widen our perspectives and worldviews. The result is that the power of enlightenment to catalyze cultural evolution and affect change in the world magnifies.

At this point in history, most of our cultural values, beliefs, and perspectives come from the traditional stage, the modern stage, and the postmodern stage, or from a mixture thereof. In most of us, only a fraction of our values and perspectives originate from levels higher than the value sphere of the postmodern stage – and thus, most of our responses to the world’s most pressing sociocultural challenges arise from less than enlightened cultural values and perspectives. But if enough people were to be able to come together in the direct experience of their Prior Unity and awaken to the future-oriented evolutionary vibrancy of their Authentic Self, then the greater wholeness that is disclosed in these Higher We states would begin to inform and create a new and nobler value structure in our culture. Their gatherings would begin to generate truly creative conversations, prompting original solutions, able to more adequately address the highly complex challenges we face in our world in crisis. And thus, at this turbulent moment in history, the emergence of intersubjective evolutionary nonduality carries the power to orient us toward a brighter future.

This is why spiritual communities matter. They function as training grounds for refining the art of human relatedness. When at its best, the Sangha is a crucible for the evolution of both our

individual consciousness and our shared culture – a space where enlightened values are not just discussed, but actualized and lived; where individual and collective growth mutually reinforce each other; and where the shared pursuit of truth creates a powerful field of spiritual transformation.

At Manifest Nirvana, we work to establish an awakened Sangha where participants become adept at creating a living Buddha-field of shared higher consciousness between themselves - an enlightened we-space, brimming with the ecstatic urgency to create a new world. If more of us could learn the art of living awakening *relationally*, more enlightened brightness would flow into the world, and this – we feel - would actually transform it.

How to optimize the art of human relatedness is the all-important koan for our time!

# The Buddha: Portal to your Own True Self

## **The Unique Role of the Guru**

In our postmodern age of egalitarianism, the role of the enlightened teacher, the guru, or the Buddha-aspect is perhaps the most hotly debated dimension of the Triple Gem. Our culture is replete with anti-guru-skepticism, both for very good reasons as well as for truly problematic ones. As the image of the guru in our culture shifted from that of a purely venerated spiritual figure to a more controversial character, it became increasingly more challenging to maintain a balanced perspective on the value of the guru role – one that doesn't throw out the baby with the bathwater.

As a result, many influential voices have boldly declared that the age of the guru is definitively over. Some have reduced the guru-function to that of a spiritual friend, a guide, a mentor, a fellow traveler on the path, or have simply replaced it by one's own inner guru. Others, like the venerated Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, who uttered the visionary words "*The next Buddha may be a Sangha,*" have given voice to the equalizing forces of our post-modern culture by merging the guru with the Sangha and suggesting that the collective wisdom of the community may replace the

singular guru. From this perspective, the Sangha itself becomes the source of spiritual wisdom, and the role of the Buddha is diffused throughout the community – thereby effectively scaling back the significance of one of the three time-tested Jewels of Enlightenment. This, however, begs the question: Can the guru-function, which requires a unique expertise rooted in enlightened awareness, actually be taken over by a community of students?

To shed more light on the answer to this question, let us explore, for a moment, the unique role of the guru within the Triple Gem. The beating heart of the guru role is the direct relationship with a living realizer of enlightened awareness. Such a realized master is able to skillfully guide you through your own unique process of awakening. He or she can help you overcome your obstacles and illuminate your blind spots, so that you can realize your own Enlightened Mind or True Nature. The bedrock of the guru-disciple relationship is the Great Transcendental Mystery that lies far beyond your everyday egoic state and of which the master is a living embodiment.

There are four core functions of the guru role that quicken awakening and inspire the soul – and they are still as relevant today as they were when the Triple Gem was first conceived.

### ***Being the Face of your own True Self***

The true heart and secret of the guru-student relationship is rarely articulated. When you find your true guru, a deep love-relationship spontaneously forms between yourself and him or her. An authentic master who is established in the state of enlightened awareness radiates the grace and beauty of the Divine. You feel magnetically

drawn to her because you recognize her to be a living, breathing embodiment of Spirit. When you are in her presence, you intuitively know that she is the face of your True Self; the portal to your own Source Condition – and you want to be in her company all the time. In due course, a deep bond of love is forged between yourself and your guru that spontaneously turns most other concerns into matters of lesser importance. In the extraordinary intimacy of this devotional relationship, you begin to forget yourself, and the force of love begins to supercharge your awakening process. As a living instrument of Spirit, the relationship with the guru serves as an archetype of the I-Thou relationship. By being in relationship to that which is greater than yourself, the egoic self-sense yields, paving the way for radical ego-transcendence to emerge. The separate self begins to melt, and as it is released, it slowly makes space for the True Self to shine forth.

***Being a clear mirror, reflecting all of who you are***

As you live out this sacred relationship and interact daily with the living divine presence in your guru, you will notice that an authentic master is free and unselfconscious. He or she is like a clear mirror, reflecting back to you all the areas within yourself where you are still unfree. By simply relating to the guru, you sense her liberated condition, and you come up against all your self-contractions, your stuckness and your self-consciousness. But it also reveals to you your own higher possibilities for growth and your infinite potential for liberation. It withholds nothing from you and shows you *all* of who you are, which is why this particular guru-function is called the mirror-principle. And thus, the mirror

mind of the authentic guru, in its all-embracing reach, fires up all important dimensions of your developmental potential.

***Shining a light on where we least want to look...***

The true guru helps us face everything and avoid nothing. A real master will intuit where the student is stuck and when he may not be responding or acting from his own authentic self. The nature of ego is such that there will always be pockets of egoic resistance in ourselves that we don't want to see and tend to avoid at all cost. These are exactly the places where our self-contraction is most dense, where we are most stuck, and, therefore, where our *real* work is located. As Carl Jung poignantly put it, "That which we need the most will be found where we least want to look." Deep down we know that working through these knots will be like painful surgery. And so without the relentless vertical pull of the guru's awakened mind, we would not so easily choose to face our deepest obstacles head on. Instead, we are more likely to subtly and unconsciously – or perhaps even rather overtly - exempt ourselves from such a challenging ordeal. Without the transformational incentive provided by the guru-function, most of us would be more inclined to avoid interventions that would really break the spell of our egoic self-contraction and change us most fundamentally. This is where the role of a real master becomes uniquely valuable.

***Transmitting enlightened awareness directly to you***

But perhaps the most central function of the guru role is spiritual transmission. A true guru, because he or she is rooted in the Di-

vine Self-Condition, has the capacity to directly transmit her own enlightened state to you. When you are completely open and your ego has moved out of the way, the guru's grace self-activates. In that clearing, the deepest part of the guru meets the deepest part of you, and the exhilarating force of the guru's enlightened energy and awareness begins to light up your dormant spiritual potential and wake you up to your higher nature.

In light of the extraordinary efficacy of the spiritual process in the company of a true master, postmodernity's rejection of the guru is unfortunate. Being in direct relationship with a living guru is the most powerful form of spiritual practice we know. None of the aforementioned functions of the guru role can be found in books, received from a meditation instructor, or experienced by merely practicing a collection of Dharma tenets and techniques. They are all faculties of the direct relationship with the enlightened adept, expressing the awakening power of the living Mystery of Reality Itself – and every single one of them is unique, irreplaceable and indispensable.

### **The Man and the Master**

At Manifest Nirvana we fully honor and embrace these four time-honored guru-functions – even as we recognize that some of the traditional ways to execute them have evolved over time. There is no doubt that several aspects of the mythic-traditionalist mindset in which the guru model was embedded when it was first conceived, are no longer relevant or applicable in today's world. Guru Yoga came into practice thousands of years ago, when humanity still believed that the earth was flat and was the center of the uni-

verse, that women were inferior human beings, that homosexuality was a sin, and that slavery was acceptable – even in the monasteries, Hindu and Buddhist alike. At that time, the mythic-traditionalist worldview was the most advanced belief system in existence, and its values of absolutism, fixed hierarchy, and strict authority were the leading edge of human evolution. Modernity hadn't yet emerged, and nobody in the ancient world lost any sleep over futuristic fantasies like the separation of church and state. Consequently, the guru, who was almost always male in those days, was like a God-King – a sovereign endowed with divine attributes like omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and infallibility. It was generally assumed that the guru's attainment of the Great Perfection of enlightenment also guaranteed the perfection of his human body-mind. Because he had realized this state of Absolute Perfection, everything he said and did was therefore also perfect.

Reflecting this godlike perfection, the guru was attributed with absolute authority, and total submission of your autonomy to the spiritual master was considered to be the high road to God. But these mythic-traditionalist times are long gone. Cultural evolution has advanced since that illustrious era, and we have now come to a more refined understanding about the relationship between the guru's enlightened state and his human personality.

In my work as a teacher today, I have come to understand that making a clear distinction between the man and the master is crucial. In the ancient past, the man and the master were considered one and the same – not a glimmer of daylight between them. The guru was viewed as the 'perfected one,' absolutely pure and enlightened through and through. The absence of any division be-

tween the man and the master was the whole point. But the fusion of the man and the master is one of the core fallacies of the mythic guru model. It often occurs quite naturally and almost imperceptibly, because being awake to the Transcendental Brightness of enlightenment is so extraordinarily powerful, whole, full and perfect that it's not a big leap at all, for those fortunate enough to receive this ultimate gift, to assume that they are indeed perfected human beings with unquestionable wisdom – just as traditional lore has it.

At Manifest Nirvana, we view the spiritual master as possessing a dual nature. Every true guru is simultaneously a relative body-mind personality with unique talents and deficiencies, *and* an enlightened being with a significant degree of stabilization in enlightened awareness.

Enlightened awareness itself *is* perfection. But there is no way around the fact that the master always expresses himself through a relative personality structure that is, and will always be, imperfect. Human perfection – so much is clear - is unattainable. Like every human being, the master remains engaged in a continuous process of development and improvement - broadening his capacities and actualizing new growth potentials. And thus, the master's expression of the enlightened state is therefore, paradoxically, always colored and shaped by the condition of the body-mind of the man, both gifts and flaws included, while at the same time, at the deepest possible level, it is also a direct transmission of the uncorrupted purity and perfection of the transcendental essence of Reality Itself. An authentic master, because he is rooted in this Source Condition, is able to transmit a powerful measure of its inherent purity, brightness, and brilliance to his students – and to this day

this remains the most precious gift the true guru brings to the spiritual process. At Manifest Nirvana we fully honor both these truths: the guru's enlightened divinity and the reality of his necessarily imperfect humanity.

The evolutionary gain that has emerged from distinguishing more precisely between the man and the master is that it has liberated the guru-principle from the mythic absolutism in which it has historically been locked up. It has become clear that the ancient presumption that the guru's role is to exercise full authority over every single aspect of the student's life belongs to an era long gone. Differentiating between the man and the master has resulted in a more nuanced approach to enacting the guru-student relationship – one that refines our understanding of the purview of the guru's authority, and simultaneously empowers the student's autonomy in ways that were not addressed within the ancient guru model.

So where exactly does the genuine authority of the guru lie? The realization of the True Self, and all matters related to that process, is the area where you can trust the guru more than you can trust yourself. It is where you surrender to the guru, and where you relate to him or her with reverence and humility, always remembering that the Transcendental Divine Reality is what you have yet to realize. And so, this is the domain where the authority of the guru remains unquestioned.

But even a profoundly enlightened master is not necessarily qualified to help you advance in the wide range of developmental potentials belonging to the relative domain of our human lives – such as your cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence, log-

ical-mathematical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, psycho-sexual intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, or any other kind of human growth capacity – unless she has also mastered any of these particular areas herself. And so, the actual authority, power, and jurisdiction of the guru needs to be restricted to the areas in which she is proficient. Simply put: it should mirror her actual expertise. As the purview of the guru's authority is being reexamined, new space has opened up for students to take more autonomous, self-initiated responsibility for their own developmental process. Rather than submitting every aspect of their lives to a single all-knowing authority, as was characteristic of the mythic guru model, today's students freely determine how much trust they are ready to invest in their guru and how far they wish to go in their journey of spiritual awakening and transformation - even as they are still lovingly invited and wholeheartedly encouraged to embrace this process to its fullest extent. This relationship model, where the extent of the guru's authority is determined by the degree of trust the student is willing to invest, is more suitable for our postmodern era, as it places the basic responsibility for the student's spiritual development in their own hands. The end result is a more balanced and mature relationship, based on mutual trust between two cooperating adults. And this, we suggest, is a significant, as well as an empowering, evolutionary gain that has emerged from distinguishing between the man and the master.

And thus, integrating the authority of the guru and the autonomy of the student, by giving each its rightful place to shine in its own unique domain, captures the new flavor of the guru-student relationship we are exploring at Manifest Nirvana.



# Cocreating Manifest Nirvana

As we reach the end of this exploration, the big picture has now become clear: As the wheel of time turned, enlightenment has evolved. It is no longer just about sitting under the banyan tree or in the mountain cave, absorbed in timeless nirvanic bliss; it has become radically world-embracing and, more remarkably, it *continues* to evolve! As we have entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has become apparent that the evolution of enlightenment across the ages has given rise to groundbreaking new insights, developments, and fresh capacities, propelling each of the Three Jewels of the Triple Gem – The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha – into new realms of possibility. And so, after having explored the evolution of each of the Three Jewels of Enlightenment separately in the previous pages, the time has now come to bring them all together again and envision their powerful potential as a single, unified whole, enriched by these novel evolutionary breakthroughs. Just imagine what the combined force of these evolutions could mean for the transformational efficacy of the Triple Gem – which is, since time immemorial, already considered to be the most optimum structure to wake up to the ultimate gift of Enlightened Awareness... And

what would it mean for your own spiritual life and practice? Clearly, it's already substantial transformational power would magnify even further.

In a Triple Gem of the New Enlightenment, the Buddha would not just enlighten, helping us access the state of timeless, formless Being *prior to* all evolution; he would also set us on fire with the ecstatic urgency of evolutionary Becoming *within* the cosmic process. The Dharma would not just instruct; it would continue to evolve and generate exhilarating, eye-opening new insights as it keeps pushing into new territory. And the Sangha wouldn't just support; it would be a thriving Higher We, adept in the art of living awakening relationally and lit up by the untold potentials of Inter-subjective Nonduality.

The Triple Gem of the New Enlightenment, by virtue of its world-embracing nature and evolved capacities, carries within it an increased power to catalyze positive cultural change, and with that the promise of inching us ever closer to heaven on earth. This bright promise is our bold aspiration at Manifest Nirvana.

We are a group of spiritual explorers, sovereign souls, radical spirits and integral pioneers, dedicated to deep transformational practice. We feel inspired to actualize the still largely untapped potentials of the New Enlightenment and co-create a brighter future for all of us by advancing the evolution of consciousness and culture. Our Sangha is a crucible where enlightened awareness directly informs the values we hold, and where these enlightened values are not just talked about, but lived in our day to day lives. For us, awakening to the radiance of Enlightened Being beyond the mind is not the end, but the entire context within which we can

face the complexities of our lives. Our vision is to *wake up* beyond this world, while still being bold enough to *dream big* within it.



# About Andrew Cohen

Andrew Cohen is a renowned nondual spiritual teacher and author, celebrated for his pioneering work in integral spirituality, what he calls *Evolutionary Enlightenment*. Andrew's transformation was catalyzed with the meeting of his guru H.W.L. Poonja in 1986. Since that time, over the past three decades, he has inspired thousands of spiritual seekers worldwide through his teachings, lectures, and writings. Andrew's approach emphasizes the integration of the traditional awakening to pure *being* with the realization of evolutionary *becoming*. His work explores the frontiers of collective awakening and deep responsibility and connection with the whole of our evolving world.

Andrew has engaged with leading thinkers and teachers exploring *the great questions*, expanding the dialogue on contemporary spirituality. His work demystifies traditional wisdom, making enlightenment relevant and accessible to modern seekers. Andrew's teachings transcend conventional spiritual boundaries, advocating for cultural transformation as essential for shaping a positive future for humanity. His vision for a truly contemporary spirituality continues to inspire and challenge individuals to embrace their role in the collective evolution of consciousness.





REIMAGINING THE BUDDHA, DHARMA,  
AND SANGHA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Awakening to our true nature is among the most captivating and transformative experiences a human can undergo. Across diverse spiritual paths, individuals who experience self-transcendence describe it as a moment that forever changes them, shattering their old selves and leaving behind an unshakable knowing: there is a deeper, ultimate reality that transcends the everyday world of thoughts, emotions, and self. But what if this state of profound oneness with life could be more than a fleeting glimpse? What if it were possible to live anchored in this awareness continuously, truly embodying our highest potential?

In this book you'll explore the ultimate challenge of spiritual life: how to stabilize our moments of awakening and live in sustained awareness of our true self. Drawing on the wisdom of the Buddha's Three Jewels of Enlightenment—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—Cohen reveals how this ancient framework can serve as a powerful catalyst for lasting transformation. But Cohen's approach is also groundbreaking. Integrating insights from evolutionary theory, he proposes a radical new teaching—Evolutionary Enlightenment—which embraces the continuous evolution of consciousness and the world around us. In this compelling and revolutionary vision, enlightenment is not static; it is a process that evolves, just as the cosmos itself evolves.



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