

THE LIFE MODEL OF NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ AS INTERPRETED BY RAMESH BALSEKAR

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Received May 12 2015 • Revised July 1 2015 • Accepted July 3 2015

ABSTRACT

Ramesh Balsekar (1917–2009) was a disciple of Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897–1981). Nisargadatta Maharaj lived in Bombay and taught what he realized: For doing our *dharma* everything is provided for us. Thus we can focus our attention on discovering “Who one is” and let life flow. In 1996 the author of this article had a short conversation with Ramesh Balsekar, who presented his way of understanding the teaching of Nisargadatta Maharaj.

Key words

Nisargadatta Maharaj, Ramesh Balsekar, submission to God, Self-enquiry, life flow

1 Introduction

Usually we consider “free will” to be granted. The level of freedom in applying free will differs from school to school, but is usually the motivation towards making effort related to achieving the aims of life. It is specially so, if the aim of life is defined as to get to “know one-self”. Ramesh Balsekar shows a different approach. Life (*prarabdha karma*) puts us at a given moment to a family, situates us at a given place in a given time. It also gives us a certain personality and the greater en-

vironment, where we have to participate in life processes. On the way, we either move along without creating new *karma* by following our *dharma*, or we pave our way with a lot of new karma that are related to differences between the ideal dharmic activity and acting in a way that does not take into consideration one’s dharma.

Yoga, for that matter, developed an amazing set of processes that could help soothing our tendencies and get sufficient energy for stilling the mind and achieving Self-realization. It defines the principles of *yama* and *niyama*, which could form a basis for interpersonal interactions. It assumes, that with effort we can change also our life circumstances and eliminate also our various counter-produc-

tive mental tendencies (*vāsanās*).

Nisargadatta Maharaj, however, feels differently (Nisargadatta 1994). What he realized upon practicing “*ātma vichara*” as given to him by his Master Siddharameshwar Maharaj, is that the Universe provides everything that we need for life – be it a famous, rich, average life, or life in poverty. Thus we should have faith in the universal system, which provides us with exactly what we need or deserve. If we accept it, then our energy can be fully invested into Self-discovery.

The need to know our Self (*Ātman*) as a goal of life is not a new notion, as even the basic Indian life model assumes that apart from living in accordance with the concept of dharma, having appropriate degree of wealth, and having suitable enjoyments, one has to achieve also *moksha* – “liberation” (Self knowledge). But as regards reliance in God’s provision, Ramesh Balsekar conveyed a model that is not easy to put into practice.

2 The dialogue

The original English sound track on a cassette got lost and so the text given below is retranslated to English from the Czech translation of the dialogue by Ivo Sedláček.

The dialogue happened during the visit of Gejza [Geza] M. Timčák (Q) and Ivo Sedláček at the home of Ramesh Balsekar (A) in Bombay, India. We are both grateful to Ramesh Balsekar for his willingness to have this dialogue. Regretfully, Ramesh Balsekar is no longer with us, so we could not consult him further, regarding the points that were raised by him.

A There is one single basic question: whose will prevail in your own life (forget the rest of the world). Was it your will or God’s will? All is directed to this basic question. It cannot be that it is your will a bit and a bit of Divine will. This cannot happen. [Laughter] You cannot bargain with God – like that he will have a 80% will and I a 20% will. It is either your will or God’s will.

Q **But surely there exist something that could be called grace of God.**

A Yes.

Q **But this is like a lottery – one can win or one does not win.**

A Absolutely correct. Look for example to this: You were born in Czechoslovakia. [Note: I was not born in Czechoslovakia, but from the point of view of this conversation it is irrelevant.] Still for that matter, you could have been born in Ethiopia and be hungry.

Q **Naturally, it could have happened.**

A But instead of being hungry you have a quite comfortable life in Czechoslovakia. And I also have a quite comfortable life in India.

Q **It is true. Nevertheless, in order to win a jackpot in a lottery, one would have to buy a lottery ticket. Thus one has to do at least something in order to open this potential possibility.**

A Yes, yes. But tell me frankly: does everyone buy lottery tickets?

Q **Of course not.**

A So, even if someone buys a lottery ticket, it is a matter of his predestination or fate. Is it not so? [Laughter] Whether he gets a winning

ticket or not is another issue, but even the purchase of the ticket is a part of his path. Buying a lottery ticket itself is a grace of God. To phrase it differently – more than the grace of God, it is a part of your destiny. If you have to buy the ticket, you will buy it whether you want it or not. If you are to win the first prize, buying a ticket is a part of your destiny.

Q Still, if we take the grace as something that is outside the usual logical life process of the Universe, then there is a certain unpredictability...

A Yes – unpredictability is the very basis of all life. Nothing really is predictable. This is also a finding of modern science – like *the uncertainty principle* (see Heisenberg's uncertainty principle; Clark 2015), when describing the path of atoms and electrons. The scientists declared that everything should be predictable; every movement of elementary particles within an atom, the world would not exist.

Q But the practical question is: Is it possible to attract Grace?

A If it is to happen, why not?

Q Still, Grace does not belong to the deterministic processes, and it is more a probabilistic process.

A Yes. But first of all, there should be someone, who should get this Grace. Geza should get God's grace. But is there a Geza? This is the key problem. Everything that exists here, is an organism formed of body and mind. It is in a way programmed according to its natural characteristics. This organism is in its essence a programmed device. And how could a programmed device get Grace? If you would

make a computer and fit it with a programme, how could that computer, which you have programmed in an exact way obtain or not obtain your grace? It is impossible. It is impossible to attract grace. The only thing you can do is to pray. Nevertheless, you cannot know, whether your prayer will be successful or not. Thus the only thing that is open to you is to pray, to ask. But whether your prayer will result in God's grace will depend on your destiny or predestination. So finally we arrive to the conclusion that God's will and God's grace depends on your destiny and predestination. Some seek power, others money. Others still seek God. What I want to say is this: it is only because God wants you to seek him that you seek him. Seeking God and wisdom was not your choice. Even the one who seeks money does so not because it is his decision. He collects money because God wants him to collect money. Someone wants to have power, because it is God's will that he strives for power. And it is the will of God that you seek spiritual things, that you seek the Truth or God, as God wants you to do that. When one understands this, one can tell only that: I seek God, but because of this I do not look at others, who seek worldly things as standing at a lower level. Should you think that you seek God and that it is your choice, then you would say: the others opted for money or power and so I can look at them from above. But as I know that the others do things that God wants them to do, I cannot consider them as ulterior, but have to consider them as fully equal. All are tools in the hands of God. You can call that God, Highest Consciousness, Absolute, the Highest or in whichever way – it does not matter.

The only real path to real Knowledge and comprehension is to fully subject oneself to – and to accept God’s will. To subject yourself, give your “free” will to God. I accept the fact that I am only a miniscule part of the infinite non-personal Consciousness. This is one way – *jñāna*. The other way is *bhakti*: “O God, I am nothing, you are all.” Do what You want through me – this is the ultimate submission to the Will of God. But if you pray for something, then it is only a conditional submission. It is more of a bargaining with God: “O Lord, I now pray to you, but you have to do for me this or that.” Thus this would be a bargaining, not submission. Only a full submission would create the conditions for real inner wisdom to happen.

Q It looks as if this would be the easiest thing to do, but it is the most difficult one.

A It is not easy. But for whom is it not easy? Geza, understand please what I want to say: God does everything. Why should I even to want something? Why should I want to get the ultimate knowledge? If the ultimate realization is to happen, surely it will happen. The best thing I can do is to walk through life and to accept all that it brings to me, to be grateful to God for all the good that I have, for the favourable conditions that were given by Him and which others – for example in Ethiopia – do not have. Indeed I can say: “O God, you gave me life, you gave me a certain role to play, and I simply accept this role, and I play it, and move within the given limits. You placed me into certain conditions, relationships and situations. And I live within these limits in a way, which this frame enables me to live.” Everyone of us plays, and

has to play a role. If we accept this role as the will of God, then there is no real problem. Life becomes simple. I do not say that it becomes easier. Every life contains a number of difficulties and usual problems. Nevertheless, it becomes simple inasmuch I will understand that I cannot do anything else than to float along the flow of life. If I am able to live in this way, the mind is unable to create problems.

How does the mind create problems? There is a certain situation. The mind starts creating problem within this situation. The situation itself allows one to pass through it the best way possible. Then there is no problem. Really, it is only the mind that can make the situation worse.

Q Yes, in a way it is certainly easier, as the mind creates a lot of unnecessary problems.

A There has been a research project in this direction. The results have shown that 93% of all worries that we have, never materialize. 93%! If we accept the will of God and tell to ourselves: “O Lord, do what you consider fit to do,” then try to imagine the amount of energy you save. 93% of mental energy is consumed for forming imaginary problems. Only 7% of our worries will materialize. Let them happen. What if they happen? We will solve them. When the problem appears, we will start seeking a solution.

But why should we create non-existing problems in our mind? What is the principle of creating problems in our mind? It is drawing something from the past and projecting it to the future. Problems in the mind relate only to the future. The present moment does not contain many problems. All the problems

created by the mind relate to the imaginary future. If we fully accept that, which is in the present moment, life becomes incomparably easier. If there is a problem in the present, OK, we shall deal with it. We should not, however create problems through imagining the future. Let us live in the present moment. To live in God and to live with God means to live in the present. If we live in the present moment, the "I" or the ego ceases to function. The ego and the individual mind can function only in connection with the past or future. It is only when all the present moments are horizontally linked into time that the mind starts to exist. But if we exist only in the present, where is the ego and where the mind?

3 Discussion

At a first glance, the proposition of Balsekar looks fatalistic. [Note: It may have been influenced also by experiments of Benjamin Libet in 1981.] It looks like some of the modern *mahāvākyas*: "Do not do anything, just be." But in reality, it is like the case of monkeys in the Skinner boxes – the one that was nervous as it wanted to avoid the mild electric shock by pressing a lever at a right (but random) moment, died early of stress. The one that did not have the possibility to try to avoid that shock, got used to it. Even this is not a full implementation of the presented model as it also advises to use the provided resources that are granted for achieving our mission on Earth.

What is our mission? It can be known only moment to moment and it may change, so no simple model would be able to describe

it. So that "mission part" is to be dealt with, which the flow of life brings to us. We can strive for getting to know the Absolute, but the success depends on the provision of conditions, which depends on the will of God, and also on our karma. The karma is created through departure from dharma. But are we responsible if it is the will of God that puts us into the life situations? Well, we are responsible for our responses. We are responsible for the problems that the mind creates when our attention does not rest in the Present. Giving up our "free will" in favour of God in situations when we are not the masters of the processes is fuzzy as at moments, when those 7% of problems arise, we have to apply our mind, and thus we seem to have to depart from staying in the present moment. Sri Ramakrishna asked a disciple of him [note: Girish Chandra Ghosh], who was not able to do his spiritual practices regularly, to give him the power of attorney. He will do the spiritual practices for him, but under the condition that in every step of his life, he will cease to do, speak or think in the way "I will do it" and instead, he was asked to do it like "I will do it, if it is the will of God". The disciple acknowledged, that he thought it would make his life simpler, but giving up his "will" was one of the most difficult tasks of his life. Nevertheless, he did not regret it (Saradananda 1952, 328–329; Nikhilananda 1965, 956). A similar idea is expressed also in the *Tragedy of Man* (Madách 1962), where in the tenth scene, it is acknowledged that humans are subtly forced to do the Will of God. The final advice of God to humans represented by Adam is: "I told you, man: strive, be trustful and trust," meaning that whatever life brings

us, we have to get through it, subtly listening to the silent voice of God (i.e. devoid of life expressions).

Baleskar's comparing a man to a "robot" is incomplete, as robots do not have consciousness, whilst men have. In the *Vicharasangraha* (Maharshi 1994, 2–3), Ramana Maharshi when asked: "How to enquire 'Who am I,'" recommended the following: "making the corpse-body [note: devoid of life expressions] remain as a corpse, and not even uttering the word 'I', one should enquire keenly thus: What is it that rises as 'I'?" In this case, even though the body is regarded as "dead", i.e. a robot-like, the conscious choice of the *sādhaka* is to do this enquiry with mind kept unmoving, and when pure Consciousness is experienced, it causes the "ego" to "get destroyed" [note: which means, it will lose its dominance and will only serve as needed by life situations]. It means that if the karma of the *sādhaka* allows it, he/she can recognize the body as a "robot" and the Source of life as shining Consciousness.

Further, the prayer may be called meditation, if it does not formulate any personal wish except, e.g., that of being able to merge with the absolute Consciousness. So the areas that are difficult to cross are the individual wishes that we would direct to God for getting them fulfilled, whilst the wish to be able to realize the Absolute through staying in the Present, and thus out of reach of ego, mind, and time, seems to have a higher probability to happen. The individual karma, however would do as much as possible to prevent this from happening.

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*This article is published in Spirituality Studies 1 (2) Fall 2015.
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