

# Introduction

**W**hat would your life feel like if you could let go of the past to be completely present and at peace in the moment? What if you had a method to do this on an ongoing basis, to heal a wounded perception that hampers your full spiritual potential? This book will show you how. It is the result of more than thirty years exploring the mind, psychology, and spirituality, as well as my own process of self-discovery, mystical experiences, and professional work helping clients around the world gain emotional and spiritual freedom.

It is not about being a healer in the traditional sense but about healing yourself by realizing that you have everything you need to experience happiness and peace, because your original, divine nature is happiness and peace. It is for you if you are a spiritual seeker ready to delve deeply within to leave the past behind and remove the painful limitations of your mind. Now, it is not about manifesting all your desires or attracting everything you want, which seem to be prevailing themes these days. On the contrary, it will help you see why there is no real fulfillment in such external pursuits, only more bondage leading to suffering.

I will guide you to unravel the codependent patterns that enslave you to all kinds of illusions and expectations, keeping you in a polarizing delusion of duality that causes dissatisfaction

and pain. I will show you a path toward emotional and spiritual freedom, but what you gain from this book will depend on where you are on your journey and how much you are willing to invest in your own liberation. If you are a sincere seeker, it can completely transform your perception and experience of life by revealing the paradoxical forces that shape your reality, while helping you peel away what blocks your divinity. You don't have to control or fix anything, but you must take full responsibility to clear your path.

My own spiritual adventure started in my late twenties, after difficult relationships with family, partners, and friends had led me to several years of psychoanalysis. At some point during this process, I felt compelled to cut off from the world almost completely, to go further within, in the hopes of getting to the root of my discontent. Unexpected circumstances allowed me to do this for almost four years without worrying about financial or social responsibilities, so I immersed myself in a continuous self-exploration while focusing on various creative projects. Little did I know this would bring about a spiritual awakening and launch me into a lifelong quest for Divine Consciousness!

You see, I had rejected anything that even smelled like religion from a very early age, arguing with my mother to avoid going to Sunday school as a child. In spite of her Catholic faith and family expectations, she was an intellectual woman liberal enough to spare me any traditional rituals. My father was a staunch atheist, angry at God and the world, so he didn't care either way. To me, God was portrayed as an authority figure I couldn't accept, but I perceived life as energy and always felt guided from within. I had no understanding of any of this until this "personal retreat" completely changed me. There are no

words to describe my experience. All I can say is that the Divine cracked me open like a nut to reveal itself as the eternal Presence pervading life—in me and all around me. Nothing ever felt more real than that, and my resistance to God immediately vanished.

A subtler doorway into myself spontaneously opened, leading to memories of past lives, for which I had no conceptual background, since all of this was new to me. A veil was pulled away, giving me access to higher dimensions of existence and prodding me to accept my highly sensitive and intuitive nature, which I had always seen as a burden. I began observing how my reality reflected what I was processing and discovering in myself, which would come to be a fundamental aspect of my spiritual work later in life. Being in solitude also made clear that my unhappiness had nothing to do with anyone or anything external; it was the result of my own perception and choices, both past and present, crystallizing as my reality and coloring—or rather, distorting—my experience of life.

I began meditating without intending to, or even knowing what I was doing, which eventually turned into a more disciplined, daily practice of sitting still. I got a few books on Buddhism and Taoism, hoping to get some direction and a better understanding of the mystical realms in which I often found myself. I didn't actualize those teachings until a few years later, when I was drawn to a forty-day Vipassana retreat with an enlightened Theravada master from Thailand, who initiated me as a nun.

With shaved head and eyebrows, dressed in a simple white robe, I followed a very austere, mindful lifestyle that quickly transformed Buddha's teachings from mere concepts into real experiences. I began to comprehend the nature of the mind, as

well as how to silence it, which allowed me to get a taste of the superconsciousness state known as *nirvana*. However, the Buddhist path proved a bit too austere and hard on my body, so I left it behind once I moved to the United States to study music, where I was guided to a few liberated gurus who initiated me into their Vedic traditions and practices.

Life blessed me with the presence of several saints, trips to Thailand and India, and a wealth of retreats and transcendental states. On one occasion, while in India, at the ashram of one of my teachers, I spontaneously experienced a full awakening. It was not a trancelike, superconscious state (such as *samadhi* or *nirvana*), which I had had in deep meditation, where I would go out completely and come back feeling clearer and renewed. This happened while I was in the kitchen putting my dishes away, as I did every day. An intense force suddenly took over me, and I became Pure Awareness, One-With-All, watching life from a plane of no-mind, of complete inner silence and peace. It is not possible to describe this, for everything looked the same but my *experience* of it was absolutely different. The usual sense of separation from people and objects was gone, there was no self-consciousness or self-centeredness, and the world didn't have its familiar, painful density!

It wasn't a permanent state, and falling back into ordinary consciousness proved to be the most excruciating moment of my life. I felt so trapped by the mind and physical body that I wanted to die. In a harrowing contrast with the complete spiritual freedom I had just tasted, this felt as if my soul was being squished into a constrictive container of suffering. I cried and cried from a fathomless despair until I couldn't cry anymore, out of exhaustion. This event left a deep imprint and fueled the de-

sire to find the way back to that purity of being. It also made clear that this feeling of entrapment, separation, and loss is the constant suffering of the human condition underlying every experience—what we all try to escape or buffer with all sorts of distractions, addictions, and fleeting moments of pleasure.

In time, after many years of spiritual transmissions, techniques, insights, visions, and profound states of dispassion and bliss—as well as the joys and struggles of family, social and spiritual groups, marriage, motherhood, divorce, and personal rebirth—I felt increasingly drawn toward solitude and silence again. My internal process, spiritual practices, and studies in yoga philosophy finally led me to the non-dual path of Self-knowledge or spiritual wisdom (*jnana yoga*) and the practice of self-inquiry. This book aims to take you on a similar path, from a dual to a non-dual perception of life.

You will learn the Swan Method, a personal healing system that congealed as a result of the knowledge acquired throughout the years; it empowered me to turn my life around after a series of painful events. Having all the rugs pulled from under me forced me to further investigate the nature of reality. I have integrated ancient philosophical teachings with some of the tools I have learned or developed over more than thirty years through my self-exploration, spiritual practices, and working with clients from all walks of life. Since I use the yoga and Advaita Vedanta philosophical schools as the foundation to explore the mind and the path to enlightenment, I have included informal transliterations of Sanskrit terms to clarify certain concepts, which can also be found in the Glossary.

I consider this ancient wisdom essential to frame a truly transformative process, but I also offer practical, step-by-step

instructions to unravel the mental patterns that distort your self-perception and experience of life. This requires a clear view of the ego-mind, which is the source of your suffering, and therefore the central focus of the book. I have distilled perennial knowledge into an ongoing method to remove the sense of separation the ego creates, using the more complex, paradoxical notions around it as guidelines for self-knowledge. However, as you learn to turn the mind inward to know yourself, all these mental concepts lose their usefulness and should be dropped to transcend the mind. They are like a boat you rely on to cross a river but that you no longer need to carry once you get to the other side.

I will take you through an internal process to recognize what makes your journey difficult and what you are here to learn, so you may navigate life more gracefully toward your final destination: the mystical re-union or *yoga* with your true Self (God) that is beyond time, space, and sensory perception. As you cultivate self-awareness to leave the past behind, you will be able to relinquish your unconscious attachment to pain arising from false, yet deeply ingrained beliefs about yourself, as well as the negative dynamics inherent in your ego-mind.

The clearest expression of the Divine is inner peace. It has nothing to do with religion, for it is your essence, emerging spontaneously as you clear a perception tainted with illusions, fears, and unconscious guilt. It prevails behind your mental-emotional fluctuations as the backdrop of all your experiences. At some point, your suffering compels you to seek something more permanent and real to hold on to, until you are able to remove the delusions that obstruct your true nature. You cannot force this process, for it unfolds on its own as you clear your

mind of ego. Reject any ideas of where you think you *should* be and start where you are. I encourage you to remain open as you move forward, to uncover deeper aspects of yourself and new possibilities of being.

This guide will help you release the past and dissolve the false identifications distorting your experience of reality. Once you recognize the illusion of *otherness* through which you continuously perceive and judge yourself, you begin to break free from the patterns of codependency and deception produced by your ego that keep you stuck in the past. If you follow the Swan Method with discipline and continuity, your life will become the journey of self-discovery it is meant to be, rather than something to control or fix. In turn, this will effect a real transformation, liberating you from the bondage of your limiting beliefs and mental fluctuations.

I think it is important to read this book in order, to assimilate its concepts and practice the exercises provided; they have been carefully chosen to help you implement the Swan Method on a daily basis and develop increasing self-awareness. They are simple but also meant to diminish the aspects of the mind hampering real growth. This multilayered, integrative approach will help you dissolve the imaginary differences between you, others, and the Divine, which are the real cause of your sorrow. I have used it to rebuild my life after emotional, legal, financial, and physical struggles, experiencing greater peace and many miracles along the way, as well as a much clearer spiritual direction.

Concepts alone will not take you far unless you actualize them in your reality, so practice and repetition are essential! As you will learn shortly, the ego is very elusive; it hides behind your identifications to prevent you from knowing yourself. But it loses

its grip as you delve within in search of the truth, eventually disappearing in the immensity of the eternal Self you really are.

I have organized the process in five main sections:

1. In **THE PREMISE: ONENESS**, I explore the paradoxical essence of Divine Consciousness dreaming a cosmic dream and appearing in a great multiplicity of forms through the elements and qualities of nature. I describe the nature of the soul as an individualized spark of Consciousness wrapped in energy layers, transmigrating from one physical body to another. These are the vehicles through which the Supreme Self experiences itself through its human appearances while innately drawing them to seek liberation from all experience.
2. In **THE REVELATION: A DIVINE PLAY**, I explain how past actions determine the unfolding of both individual and collective reality; how the various elements of the psyche shape it; and how your experience of it results from your perception, which is invariably tainted with past impressions and the issues and desires your soul reincarnates to resolve. I compare this individual journey to climbing a Love-Consciousness Pyramid and explore the shape-shifting and revolving quality of the ego-mind that brings you to the lower, painful levels of the Pyramid by controlling your mental-emotional states and behavior.
3. In **THE PROCESS: INDIVIDUATION IN DUALITY**, I delve more deeply into the elusive nature of the ego and its projection as the external world through what I call your *sense of otherness*, the main aspect that maintains the delusion of

duality, separation, and opposition causing power dynamics and pain. I describe its various stages of development in your perception and how it gets reflected in your life, which is a personal projection (or movie) of past karma, impressions, and desires in need of resolution.

4. In *THE SWAN METHOD: FROM OTHERNESS TO SELF*, I shed light onto the codependent patterns and power dynamics of ego that trap you in the past—in a wounded child archetype—thus preventing you from embracing life as it is, fully present in the moment. I take you step by step through my Method to heal the past by exploring the present to uncover the true meaning behind the situations you encounter. I show you how to pierce through the illusion of *otherness* that holds you back by disrupting your individuation and growth, as you develop dispassion and reclaim the power to redirect the mind toward your Inner Self.
5. Finally, in *THE GOAL: SPIRITUAL FREEDOM*, I help you take your process of self-exploration even further by dropping all the labels and concepts that keep you in the ordinary ego consciousness that creates suffering, so that you may break free from your own mental entrapment. By embracing life as a mirror and investigating the ego-mind through self-awareness and self-inquiry, you will gradually dissolve your false identifications and abide in the stillness of the Pure Awareness you really are, reaching the ultimate goal of your human experience.

The Swan Method will help you develop self-awareness and take spiritual responsibility for your reality, which in turn will organically shift, as you transform your perception and let go of

## YOU ARE YOUR HEALER

the egoic need to control life that causes painful emotions. If you keep your mind directed inward, not only will you leave the past behind to be fully present, anchored in the flow of life; you will also give way to the light and love of the eternal Presence you are and have always been, finally recognizing that everything is perfect the way it is. Enjoy the journey!