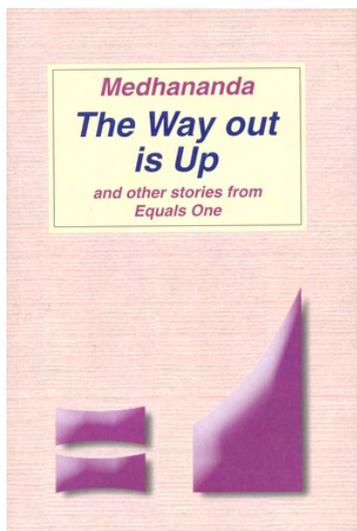


BOOK EXCERPT



Medhananda¹

*The Way Out is Up
and other stories from Equals One*

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1 The Tree of Life

The angel took Adam and Eve on to a high mountain and showed them the forests and grasslands full of game and the fertile fields along the river.

“All this is yours,” he said.

“How?” asked Adam, thinking of the wild animals and looking at his bare hands which were all he had — no claws, no horns, no teeth with which to fight them.

“I will give you the greatest weapon of all.”

“Will it make me master over the mountain lions and cave bears and the sabre-toothed tigers?”

“Yes,” answered the angel.

“All right, Adam replied, “show me that weapon.”

“It is not a weapon of earth. It is invisible. It is called intelligence. It is a weapon of the gods.”

1 With this offering of seven delightful stories of wisdom, we celebrate the birth centenary of Medhananda, which took place on February 5th, 2008. For information about Medhananda see his article “Buried in the Sands of Time: The Gospel according to Thomas” in *AntiMatters* 1 (2) ↗ or visit his website <http://www.medhananda.com> ↗.

“Will I be like the gods then?” Adam asked, unbelieving. “No,” the angel replied. “Your body is an earthly body, and earthly bodies die. The gods are immortal. But the gift which is given to you, intelligence, won’t die. You will be able to pass it on, living, to your children. Intelligence and reason, when they are passed on from generation to generation, are called culture.”

“I don’t want to die, and I’m not interested in your intelligence,” Adam insisted.

But Eve, who had been looking at the land and found it beautiful, and in the eye of her heart saw it peopled with the children of her children, nudged Adam and said, “Accept the land and take the weapon of the gods.” But Adam remained adamant.

“I don’t want to die,” he persisted. The angel smiled. “Perhaps you won’t die,” he said.

“How?” asked Adam, with sudden interest.

“You are not merely a body, you are more. There is something in you which does not die.”

Adam shook his head. “That’s not enough. I want to be that which doesn’t die.”

“That is another gift of the gods,” said the angel, hesitatingly, “Another world to conquer. And they might not give it to you so easily. But there is a way, it is called yoga.”

“We’ll take both,” said Eve.

2 The Way Out is Up

Man: (*picking up telephone*) Please give me God.

God: God speaking

Man: Look, we are getting too crowded on this planet. What shall we do?

God: I told you to be fruitful and multiply.

Man: Yes, that’s just the trouble. We have been doing that for too long. There is hardly a lake or a river which is not polluted. Forests are mostly gone, almost no animals left, only men – still multiplying.

God: You like multiplying?

Man: Yes. . . but. . . soon there’ll only be standing room here.

God: Don’t worry, go on, multiply; it’s your birthright! (*hangs up*)

Man: (*shaking telephone*) Hello, Hello!

Exchange: Exchange.

Man: What kind of God did you give me just now?

Exchange: Why, yours of course.

Man: Mine? What do you mean, mine!

Exchange: Your tribal God – the god of your fathers.

Man: It's a long time we have no tribes here anymore.

Exchange: Well, whose God do you want?

Man: Isn't there a God of the whole ecosystem? Of the biosphere, of planet Earth?

Exchange: I see. I'll connect you with Mother Earth.

Mother Earth: Mother speaking.

Man: Mother, it's me, your child – man.

Mother: It's a long time you didn't call me "mother."

Man: I know, but we need you. We have become too many here.

Mother: The last time I met you, you spoke about conquering Nature, meaning me.

Man: I am sorry, but you must help us.

Mother: What do you want me to do? Send a flood, an earthquake, an ice age, a magnetic pole-reversal?

Man: No, not that. Too drastic. Have a heart!

Mother: Perhaps an epidemic? I have been preparing something new.

Man: Don't: be crude now.

Mother: You want me to be subtle?

Man: If you can, please.

Mother: I could do something psychological.

Man: Yes?

Mother: How about a suicide wave? I am doing that with the lemmings, you know.

Man: If that's what you call subtle. . .

Mother: I could turn you all into homosexuals or something like that?

Man: Is that all you can offer as help?

Mother: Look, you spoke about conquering nature, why don't you conquer yours and simply stop multiplying? (*hangs up*)

Man: (*shakes the telephone*)

Exchange: Exchange.

Man: Isn't there a higher authority than Earth that I can ask for information?

Exchange: I can give you Galactic Cybernetics.

Man: Yes, please.

Galactic Cybernetics: Galactic Cybernetics speaking.

Man: I am man. Earthman. We have a problem. Suddenly we have become too many. How to stop multiplying?

Galactic Cybernetics: You are a biologically evolving being, a dominant species with no natural enemies left but yourself. You can stop yourself multiplying only by evolving further.

Man: How to evolve?

Galactic Cybernetics: Stop being man.

Man: How can I stop being what I am?

Galactic Cybernetics: Become superman. As man you are doomed.

Man: I still don't see how that can be done.

Galactic Cybernetics: The programme for that is already in you; find the programme and follow it.

Man: There is no other way?

Galactic Cybernetics: No.

3 Insignia of Greatness

At the far end of time two archangels stood on the borders of the worlds like two luminous suns on the horizon of a planet and watched the absorption of the universe from the mystery of being into the mystery of non-being. In their shimmering bodies a million times brighter than the massed hearts of all the galaxies, so bright that the background of the universe was no longer black but a blinding whiteness, their godlike intellects penetrated and encompassed all they saw. It was a strange contrast, the calm faces of the angels and the dazzling spectacle of the exploding universes with all their millions of suns as they swiftly acquired the speed of light and disappeared in a burst of glory into the mysterium magnum of transcendence.

Seeing a trace of wistfulness on the luminous countenance of the other angel, the one said to his brother,

“Seven times I have seen the universe come and go, and it is always as beautiful as the first time. But this one lasted longer than the other.”

“Yes,” said the second angel, “it was an evolving universe, and therefore it lasted longer. It gave me birth, and some part of me is still there, in the holocaust. After all, I am not entirely like you in every respect, for I was born on a planet.”

Then slowly, with a reminiscent smile, he opened his robe of light so that his amazed companion saw on that shining, translucent body the unmistakable insignia of his earthly adventure — a navel.

4 H₂O = 1

Imagine yourself in some far away future time, travelling in a space ship. You come into a world where there are beings similar to men, but in their world there is no chemically free water. After you describe your home planet, with its oceans and rivers, its waterfalls and glaciers, its rain and snow and clouds, you are still asked: "What is water?"

You think you could start by explaining H₂O. Then you consider for a moment offering them a cup of the re-cycled water in your space ship. But finally you realize that words cannot tell your new friends what water is. They have to experience it. And so you say:

"If you really want to know what water is, you will have to be born on earth. You will have to work as a peasant in a rice field the whole day under a pitiless tropical sun. And in the evening when you come home you will take the water jug and pour the cool water on to your face, into your mouth, and let the rest run over your body. At that moment you will know what water is. Then there is only water and you. You have become water. It is part of your being. And only then will you understand what Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "The freshness of water — that's Me."

Yet there are still people who try to tell other people what God is!

5 Why Flying Saucers?

Why would visitors in flying saucers come to our earth from other planets?

To profit from the wisdom of homo sapiens? To contact our customs authorities, our police, our courts, our prisons?

To take over this overpopulated and underdeveloped planet, when there are trillions of other planets to choose from?

To refill their depleted water or air tanks with our contaminated, polluted stuff?

To start some educational or developmental service for the benefit of mankind?

If that is the case, why don't they come forward and make our acquaintance? We see only their ships, never their navigators. Of course, our lovable, friendly character, our hospitality to either living species must be well-known by now around our galactic neighborhood. Perhaps that is why they put those Van Allen belts around the earth, to warn off casual tourists.

But seriously, why do you think anyone would want to visit earth? What is the rarest thing they could find here to export through the light-years or parsecs of space? Some exotic metal, some handful of diamonds? The metals are the same all over the universe, and diamonds any space-travelling technology could produce by the shovelful.

No, there is something here much more important, hundreds of magnitudes more precious, something which our planet has taken billions of years to evolve and which is

unique to Earth. It is the millions of species of living beings, the great variety of plants and animals which our world possesses.

It is true that few human beings have recognized the worth or cherished the beauty, the loveliness, the grandeur, the uniqueness of Earth's flora and fauna, most of which are now threatened by extinction. There is hardly a place for them here any more, and that might be why ships come from distant parts of the galaxy, through the emptiness of space and time, to take home these splendid treasures where they will be appreciated and cared for by more evolved civilisations than ours.

Luckily, the more a civilisation evolves, the more it likes beautiful plants and animals. And luckily there can be no dearth of such civilisations in the vastnesses of space. We may hypothesize that catalogues of Earth animals are circulated from star system to star system, orders for them coming through the space-waves. And naturally, the last thing an importer would do is to ask permission of Earth's aggressive and dominant species: man. They quietly come to collect and preserve our priceless resources: the magnificent giant squirrel, ratufa indica, the shy silenus of India, the paradisaical colobus of Africa, and also the red kangaroo and the maki makoko, the pink flamingo, the breathtaking white heron, the lyre-bird in nuptial plumage, and a thousand plant species, each one lovable, each one enchanting and each unique and irreplaceable in the vastness of space.

What could be more worthwhile to possess than a pair of cheetahs? What would be a better addition to a rich planet which already has everything than the beauty of the peacock or the tender song of the bulbul? What would make a better gift to a space queen than an elegant mouse deer or an Amazonian parrot? No Noah's ark is needed for transport. The cargo arrives in the form of plant seeds, fertilized eggs or frozen spermatozoids; so a droplet from a pipette may contain the living earthly treasure.

The captains of the space galleons have to hurry because in a few years the last of these evolutionary masterpieces will be extinct, shot by sportsmen or poisoned by dollar-hungry peasants, both of whom think of themselves as sapiens and of all other life forms as dumb animals or useless vermin. It has taken nature millions of years to perfect our glorious furred and feathered animals, our beautiful plants and flowers. If our natural marvels have little value for man, at least they may be treasured by those beyond our earthly bounds.

6 So many times

Only a soft light was burning in the emergency room for heart cases when he opened his eyes. The pain was gone, or almost gone, but he felt tired. The doctor, on his way out, had shaken his head and whispered something to the nurse, and in answer to her question had merely shrugged his shoulders as he disappeared through the door. The nurse had taped some electric wiring to the patient's chest and then she too had left the room. Now he was tired, but the pain continued to diminish. Perhaps he would be

able to sleep. . . that would be fine. . . provided the pain didn't come back. He closed his eyes.

Suddenly he sensed through his closed eyelids that the light had changed. He opened his eyes to find a shining figure in white standing before him. It was not a nurse, not a doctor, not a human being at all. The man was frightened, but the being smiled at him.

"I have come to free you," it said.

"What do you mean, free me?"

"To set you free, to liberate you from pain and fear."

"How?"

"You must leave your body now."

"No, no! That's all I have. I don't want to be without a body!"

"I'll give you another one. The one you have is old and worn out."

"I know who you are — you are Death. Go away; I don't want to die!"

"I am not Death — there is no such thing. I am Life. That is why I have come — to give you a new life."

"What else will you take away from me besides my body?" asked the man, clasping the bedcover. "I am a rich man. I have a business, a house, a family, a car, a dog. . . I love that dog — I can't leave all my things. . . my. . ."

"They are not yours really, and they will be all right — don't worry. I bring you peace, and your next life will bring you new things."

"I don't want peace. I want. . . I want. . ." he fell limp.

"What do you want?" asked the shining figure with a friendly nod.

"I want to be me. I need this body, this being to be myself."

"Don't be afraid — you will get a better being and a better body."

"I don't want better ones. All my memories belong to this body."

"That's true. But if there is one you want to take along with you, you may take it. Tell me which memories you would like to keep forever."

The man began to look for something worthwhile in his store of memories.

His first success in business? No. Anything in his youth? Perhaps, but no. . . ah yes, back — back — as a child there must certainly have been something worthwhile. . . wait a moment. . . He suddenly remembered the salt breeze and the tar smell when he had seen the ocean for the first time, and then the full moon on a quiet lake. . . and the campfire he had looked into for long hours. . . The angel nodded.

"Yes, all that you may take with you and remember in your next life when you see it

again.”

“And my first love, you know? I really loved her. I remember when we met on that evening in spring. And I always want to remember her shining eyes, the smell of her hair, and our first kiss. . .”

“Yes,” nodded the angel again. “That too you won’t forget.”

“Will I met her again?”

“We separate only in order to meet again as different people and in a different way.”

“You promise there will be no pain?”

“None, if you don’t hold on to things which don’t belong to you.”

“What must I do?”

“Just let go,” the angel answered him with a warm motherly smile. “Come on, it’s the easiest thing in the world. You have done it so many times. . .”

7 The Old Shop

It stood in the oldest part of the town in a little lane winding away from the market place and under the very shadow of the gothic cathedral. From outside it looked just like all the other dusty little shops on the same street.

Over the door the word “OCCULTISM” was written, and in the little show-window lay thousands of small heteroclite objects, some medieval and some modern in appearance: old books, old bottles, little carved or inlaid caskets, talismans, strange Tibetan prayer wheels, copper yantras.

An old-fashioned chime sounded on the door when I entered, and surprisingly the dark shop, not at all small, was crowded with people, both buyers and sellers, pressing around the counters. It was full of heavy medieval and oriental furniture: tables and chairs of gothic woodwork and chests with heavy iron locks; full to the ceiling with the strangest things: Talmudic books, African fetishes, shrunken heads of South American Jivaros, North American medicine bags, Shamanic cups, tikis from the South Seas, music stones from Australia, Arabic amulets, Egyptian scarabs. . .

Not much interested in these things, I turned into a side room. Here too the furniture was heavy and carved, and here also were many people, and everybody was busy bargaining. I looked at the merchandise offered: seven-league boots, mandrakes, helbanes, and dried herbs hanging from the ceiling. On the shelves I read the labels of the medicine bottles: salves to make you invisible, quintessentia for long life, syrups of power, sleeping pills, pandora boxes, seven materials for the black mass, dream pills, aphrodisiacs, etc. etc.

Then I discovered the entrance to a third room. In it were shelves and shelves of books: books with Latin names, Greek names, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Chinese; books of formulas,

holy mantras of knowledge, books written on birch bark, books of magic bound in white pigskin, "Lemegeton" the book of conjuration, the "Malleus Maleficorum" by Henry Kramer, the 1489 edition of "King Solomon's Ring," the "Legomerva."

Beyond this was still another room, the first of a long series; less furniture now, fewer people: magic drums, magic mirrors, crystals for crystal gazers. . . apparently no end to the rooms. A few 'tables-serve-me', a few 'open sesames', a whole panel of magic keys, in the corner a pile of magic wings, on the walls brooms to ride upon. Then came dark passages leading apparently deep underground.

There, dark and musty, was a stable, the home of innumerable animals: geese with golden eggs, hounds of heaven, an old tired Pegasus, a pair of centaurs. Then came a huge underground laboratory of alchemy. The wooden shelves lining the walls were filled with alembics, phials, filters, copper vessels, and in the centre of the room were ovens with attached bellows.

Beyond it was a cellar with sealed amphoras labeled "serviceable spirits, clean and unclean": alrauns, alspiels, afrets, imps, kobolds, lamiae, incubi and succubi, lep-rechauns.

And now for the first time the prices indicated were no longer in currency but in service: 2-year service, 7-year service, etc. Here I found the needle which sews everything, the knife which can cut anything, the sword which protects against everybody, magic wands, each with its price: 2-year, 3-year service, or labours to be accomplished: cleaning of a stable, killing of a dragon, hunting a deer, were the prices asked. An old fashioned spyglass was there, "the glass with which to see hidden things," a helmet of invisibility, a cap to change yourself into an animal, an old-fashioned glass phial with a drop of dragon blood which you have to put on your tongue to understand what the birds sing.

I went deeper and deeper. Wooden furniture had disappeared, now there were only stone tables. A kind of tin-opener was labeled: 'Opener of the third eye'; price: breathing exercises for ten years, ten hours a day. The 'sword of discernment' cuts everything, even the toughest knots; price: 30 years of solitude. A Phoenician bottle with the water of life stood alone in an underground Egyptian temple. No price visible.

In a dark empty cave, glowing by the light of a single oil lamp, were golden fruits, apples of the Garden of the Hesperides, the apples of immortality; price: ego. The holy grail and the holy blood on an altar in a romanesque chapel together with the holy spear and its healing power; price: perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. In another room the philosophers' stone which transforms any base metal into pure gold, a bargain for 49 years of apprentice labour in an alchemy laboratory.

Mistletoe cut by the golden sickle of a druid priest on one of the twelve nights, conferring eternal love; price: baptism by fire.

All alone in a deep underground vault glittered Odin's ring of commandment; price: to accept the curse of corruption. In another underground crypt, alone on a stone table, a

cup, the cup of knowledge; price: one eye. In another room Aladdin's lamp; price: peace (simply that).

By this time the rooms had become smaller, more and more austere, more and more tomblake, and the passages between them narrower. In one was an empty sarcophagus, the broken cover lying beside it. "Resurrection," proclaimed the inscription; the price: life.

Suddenly I was almost overwhelmed by a feeling of claustrophobia and started to look for an exit. I found a door. Before it sat an old man in the lotus pose. He looked at me, and I asked him, "May I go out?"

"Yes," he said. "You were wise, my son. You didn't buy anything. Not only can you go out here, but from now on all the riches of the store belong to you. You will enjoy them all because you did not desire any. Go in peace. You have paid the price for everything: Renunciation."