

will be, for whom the hour [of ending] shall never strike.”

This Theosophical view is that the relationship between the absolute One and the relative Many is a mystery and a paradox. We are both all one and yet individually distinct. This paradoxical mystery is expressed in a poem by Kabir, a saintly poet from India, who uses a familiar metaphor for it, namely, the relationship between the sea and a drop of water that comes from it: “I went looking for Him / And lost myself; / The drop merged with the Sea — / Who can find it now? / Looking and looking for Him, / I lost myself; / The Sea merged with the drop — / Who can find it now?”

On the one hand, we can say that we are drops of water which come from the sea and are finally merged into it, so that we, as separate realities, are lost in the sea, returning to our source and ceasing to be, as separate units: “Who can find it [the separate drop] now?” But, on the other hand, we can also say that when we find that Ultimate Reality for which we are searching, it becomes us. We do not lose our sense of identity, but instead are immeasurably and inconceivably enriched by the knowledge (the gnosis) that we and it are one. In this sense, the drop does not merge into the sea; rather the sea merges into the drop and thus realizes its identity, both One and Many, both united and distinct. “Who can find it [the sea separate from the drop] now?”

This Theosophical view thus resolves the dichotomy of the Hindu teaching that at the core of our being there is an “atma” or self and the Buddhist teaching that at our core there is only *anātman* or no (*an-*) self (*ātman*). Both are true, but in different ways. We are not ultimately and absolutely separate from the One Reality (the only Ultimate and Absolute), so there is no separate self, but only *anātman*. However, we are an individualized expression in the relative world of the ultimate and absolute Reality, so there is a Self at the heart of our being — the same Self as at the heart of every other being, though expressed in relatively different ways in each of us. The paradox is that these apparently contradictory statements are both true: We are the Self, and we have no self.

Eastern, and especially Indic, thought is full of paradoxes like this. Another related one is the teaching of Buddhism that all life is *duhkha*, usually translated “pain” or “suffering” but perhaps more adequately rendered as “frustration,” “insecurity,” or “dissatisfaction,” versus the Hindu teaching that all