

40th BIRTHDAY:

A Mid-Life Reflection

A wind moved in slow waves across some Iowa cornfields, tassels whispering against a white summer sky. Heat shimmered above a dirt road as a younger version of myself sat awkwardly on a faded cushion between several rows of corn, spine stiff in a half-lotus position, recalling a poem wrote many years ago:

Two decades gone in a cornfield sea,
where cicadas clicked in a cracked-gold key,
I folded my limbs, locked ankle to knee,
and turned thoughts to a sacred mantra
that brought a semblance of tranquility.
I sealed my sight, slowed breath to a thread,
as air flowed in and out in my head.
Inhale, exhale — a nasal tide,
till mind melted to maize-gold mush,
thoughts turning tender, tranquil, and plush.

Intellect numbed to nullifying naught,
I listened to a charismatic Indian mystic
mesmerize crowds with velvet phrases
laden with fragrant nonsense:

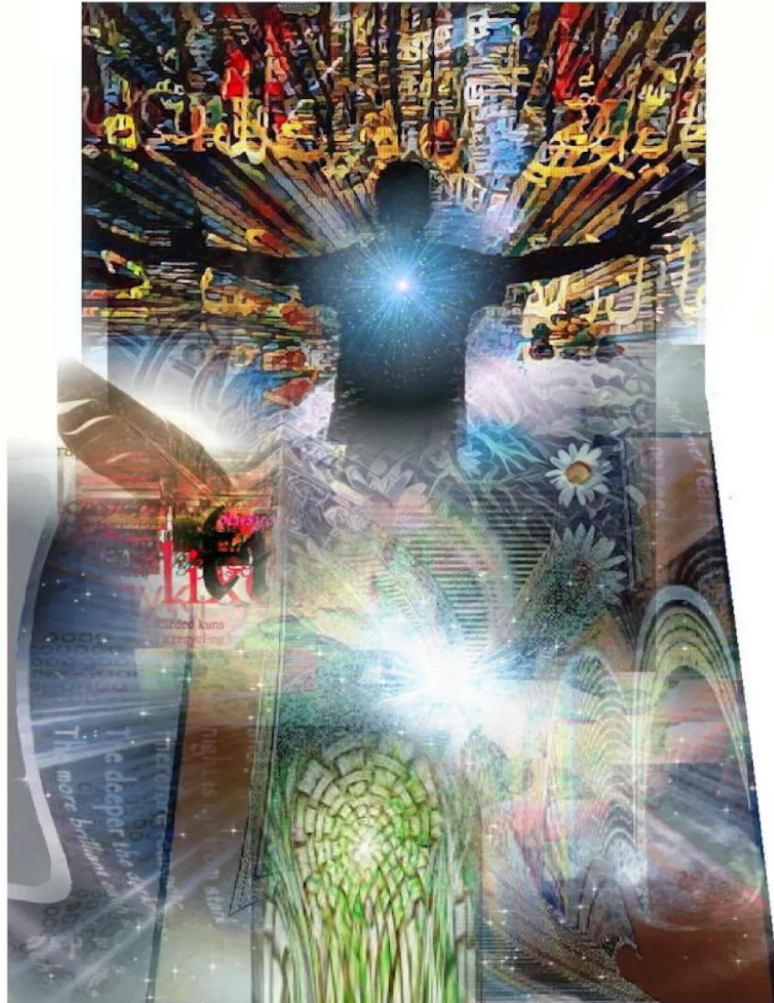
"Pure consciousness,
Like flower sap, flows...
And all the hues in your heart
Come from that."

His fingers drew circles in the air in phantom rings,
painting spiral halos on heavenly strings,
as the audience sighed softly in gleeful bliss:
Drunk on dreams that cult leader chose.

Now doubled in years, by bay-winds blown,
Where crooked pines in salt-spray moan,
I stand by Suruga's surf-smashed shore,
Waves warring with post-industrial waste.

Eyes closed to the curlew's crying call,
As minutes melt beyond time's wall—
I seek silent seconds of soul-deep peace,
And sometimes — smiling at my own fluff —
Strange thoughts surface such as:

"Pure consciousness? Not pious pap-stuff,
Not guru-gloss, nor mind-made chaff.
What we witness while walking this earth
has everything to do with awareness
which has no death or birth."



Ron rattled his spoon 'gainst his mug's stout side, coffee churning in stormy tide. "Meditation?" he mocked. "Argh, merely a mental massage! Mind-masturbation for monks in caves. Isn't it a tremendous time waste?"

Lex just smiled at the steam's slow dance, watching vapor veil and glance. "No — it is a doorway," he said, voice low. "A gap where crowded egos cease to chatter. It is a brief jailbreak from the clockwork cage, a margin note on time's tight page."

Lis leaned in with a tilted grin, soft-voiced but sharp beneath her skin, adding: "That's one possible answer. Here's another hypothesis: attention edits the length of our life-stream. Shift consciousness and the texture of time changes. We can stretch the pace of all experience."

Linda laughed, then lightly frowned, fingers drumming a grounded sound. "Nice idea — wrong universe. We're sequence-sealed from birth to hearse. Cause and chain and change remain; you slow perception, but not time's actual domain. Time doesn't pause to be polite."

Ron wrapped his chin in both his hands. "Listen to you — turning minutes into metaphysics. If time is money, you're both overspending."

A gull squawked outside. No one "won" the argument. Everyone thought they were probably "right." A soft silence settled over the table. The steam from the coffee was gone. The quiet, however, lingered on.

Disclosure: This piece was partially generated using AI tools for styling and ideation; human editing was then applied.

- T Newfields

Beg.: 1995 Shizuoka ☆ Fin.: 2026 Shizuoka