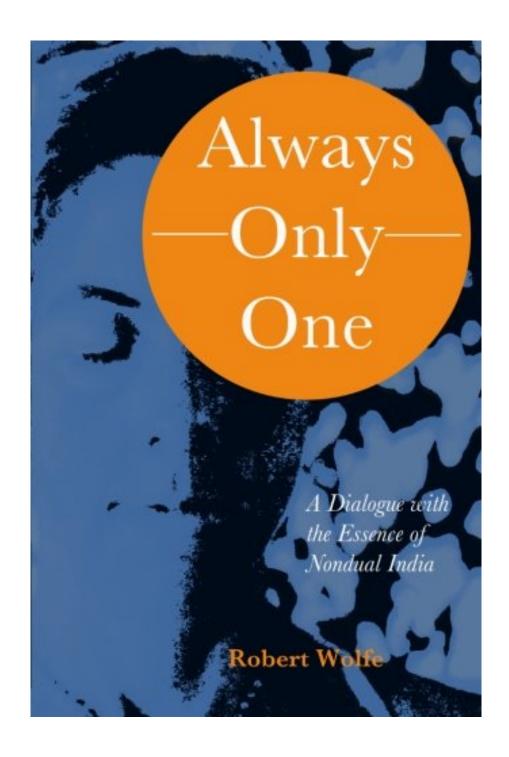


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"The real I is always there. It is here and now. The Self is unlimited, and is not confined to the body. There is always only one, and that is the Self." —Ramana Maharshi

The core of this book is a commentary on the Ashtavakra Gita. Such spiritual luminaries as Ramana Maharshi, Vivekananda and Ramakrishna have dipped from the Ashtavakra Gita's well of wisdom. Neem Karoli Baba deemed it "the purest of scriptures." Always-Only-One also collates the essentials of the teachings of the Diamond Sutra, the Mandukya Upanishad. And, as if in dialogue with the question, How can I be Self-realized?, selectively collates quotes from Ramana Maharshi on several key related themes of his nondual teachings.

It is a condensed dialogue on Self-realization with essential texts from the springs of Indian nondual perceptions by the author of the Amazon bestseller Living Nonduality.

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Simplicity & Clarity

By RafaelStoneman

Who better than Robert Wolfe to offer a fresh and concise expression of the Ashtavakra Gita for the modern reader who is recognizing the essential nature of the nondual reality? Robert does not just write from conceptual comprehension but rather he allows words to arise from the clarity of his own direct nondual recognition. He has a very well developed skill of presenting nondual teachings in the written word and backing them up by his own understanding and with the support of the nondual master Ramana Maharshi. This is a valuable gem for Western readers who enjoy contemplating one of the richest texts from India on the subject of nonduality. I would love to see similar work presented on The Ribhu Gita, which was quite often quoted and recommended by Ramana as a text worthy of contemplation.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Review of some ancient texts on Non-duality

By gwfarmer

Mr. Wolfe reviews three ancient texts pointing out the non-duality teachings expressed in them. These texts are the Ashtavkara Gita, The Diamond Sutra, and the Mandukya Upanishad. He also provides translations of

teachings of Ramana Maharshi which relate to the materials in these ancient texts. I appreciated his presentation because sometimes I get confused by these texts and having a master pull out and explain important parts was very helpful. I recommend this book to anyone interested in non-duality or ancient texts.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

"There is always only one, and that is the Self."

By S. A. Saribay

In "Always Only One," Robert Wolfe aims to provide "an interpretive commentary" on an Ancient Vedic text - the Ashtavakra Gita (henceforth, the Gita)- that is "not intended to be a scholarly treatment." Ashtavakra is actually the name of an enlightened character who holds a conversation with a king named Janaka throughout the Gita. Before taking this up, Wolfe outlines nonduality, starting at the heart of the matter -"a fundamental actuality" that has been given many names (e.g., God, Self, Being, Tao, Brahman, Totality, etc.) in different traditions. The Gita, too, apparently uses different names to describe it. This "fundamental actuality" (whatever it is called) is thought to transcend, precede, and exist independently of everything else; it is unconstrained by time and space, and thus is formless and without beginning or end. As in many other writings, this "fundamental actuality" can also be called the Absolute (which is Wolfe's preferred term), and is in contrast to all else that arises within it as an impermanent form, which can be called relative (or appearance). One way to think about enlightenment (which itself is given many names such as (Self-)realization, awakening, and nondual or Absolute awareness) is that it is the understanding of the inseparability of relative forms (such as one's self) and the Absolute.

In deep non-dream sleep, we are in this kind of state where there are no distinctions, e.g., between self and not-self, and yet we are still present. This is nonduality. The default state of waking life, on the other hand, is dualistic because thought is inherently divisive. However, with the realization of some fundamental facts, nondual awareness can arise and permeate daily life. Furthermore, with it comes a dissolution of self-centered concerns, a re-channelling of the energy previously required to maintain the ego into creative action, and the cessation of inner and outer conflict. This whole series of affairs -nonduality as it is known in modern Western spirituality- is the topic both of Wolfe's present and previous works.

Nonduality is difficult to communicate via language. For one, when reading spiritual texts, there is usually no easy way to identify whether any particular sentence is being spoken from the perspective of the dualistic relative self or the nondualistic Absolute Self; it may switch back and forth frequently. Wolfe notes for instance that in the Ashtavakra Gita, the two main characters use "me" or "I" but because they are both realized, this refers to the Absolute. Such clarifications shine a light onto the Gita for those who are unfamiliar with these pitfalls and want to read the original text without getting unnecessarily confused.

Second, language, being inherently dualistic, can never be sufficient to express nonduality anyway. If duality arises in the realm of thought (and hence, language), reality as experienced prior to thought should be "the truth of actuality" where "nothing exists as `objects'." Why, then, if this ultimate reality is formless is it often described as "one" (as in the title of the book)? Wolfe provides brief but lucid and potent clarifications here: This is "one, without a second." "Always Only One" is a short book (the main body is about 60 pages) focused mainly on the Gita. I cannot help but recommend "Living Nonduality," another book (indeed, a masterpiece) by Robert Wolfe, in which he demonstrates more of his special gift of talking about nonduality while avoiding much of the complications that arise through thought and language.

As Wolfe continues to talk about these and other intricacies of nonduality (e.g., the consequences of nondual awareness), he gives specific references to the Gita, down to which chapter and verse one can find the relevant material, and provides exemplary quotes, relying on Nityaswarupananda's translation.

In later sections of the book, Wolfe touches upon a couple of ancient texts that are similar to the Gita -the Mandukya Upanishad and the Diamond Sutra. Then, arriving at the present era, he introduces Ramana Maharshi, a 20th century Indian sage. The final section is compiled from "Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi." The quotes are well-chosen and they read "as if Ramana were... Ashtavakra replying to Janaka's initial question," with one brief clarification inserted by Wolfe. Upon finishing the book, it is easy (and reassuring) to notice the consistent nature of nondual teachings across these ancient and modern sources. The Self-realized speak the same clear (notwithstanding the potential for confusion inevitably introduced by the dualistic nature of language), coherent, direct, and simple language. Robert Wolfe himself bears the same torch of nonduality and masterfully continues this tradition in the Western world today. "Always Only One" reads wonderfully as a serious yet brief and uncomplicated introduction to nonduality and to the command Wolfe has over the topic as an author himself. For the reader who is more familiar with nonduality, the book is just as valuable as an elegantly written affirmation of the fact that "There is always only one, and that is the Self."

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