

Ramblings

As I traveled, I was trying to process the flood of sights, sounds, smells and particularly my experiences with both Westerners and the nationals of the countries in which I traveled. I wish that I had the presence of mind at the time to keep a daily journal. It would help to trace my thoughts as they evolved as a result of my experiences. I have the next best thing in letters back to friends. Here's what I wrote in one letter:

"I want to try to give you my impressions of the entire 'scene' here. Of course I'm involved on a lot of levels, so it may not be objective. There are Afghanis living in almost any imaginable condition. There are rich, young Afghanis in good suits and children and beggars in rags asking "bakshish" [a few coins given to a beggar]. Some are clearly in awe of Westerners, and some are very proud and despise us. It's hard to know who to trust. It's hard to communicate with someone you can't trust (real or imagined). The West is destroying them by forcing them into this stance.



'The hippies I meet here are a strange form of humanity [this coming from one of them]. They have overcome the world physically—i.e. not desiring economic or domestic security—but are resting after the great effort. Now, instead, they are free to do unwitting damage at deeper levels. People pay 12afg for Coke instead of 3afg for tea, wear 1000afg coats, smoke 40afg cigarettes, and refuse 1 or 2afg for a beggar. They are arrogant and haggle over things with Afghans as if they were children. Moral: take what you learned at the last level and apply it to this one.

“Existence is the same wherever or at what level. There are rich exploiters and poor exploiters, straight exploiters and hip exploiters. Your level determines what is good for you in relations with the world and in what ways you act to exploit the world. People must learn that economic and social enlightenment are very minor tasks compared to what is needed to transform the entire man. If I could only learn my level

and what my special way of exploiting the world is.”

That is just a sample of the ramblings in my brain at this point in my journey. What you can hear in the midst of those disjointed thoughts is the recognition that true transformation cannot be imposed from without but must flow from a fundamental reorientation at the heart level. What was vague to me at the time was how best to accomplish that radical inner reorientation.