

A Frightening Experience

Daniel Band

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2365>

Blake: Hi, Daniel.

I thought I would write to you, as I have read many of your *satsangs* at ShiningWorld and really appreciate the way you write. I have been in touch with Ted once in the past also.

I have been a seeker for a number of years now, perhaps around six, starting with the Neo-Advaita teachings, and in the last year have been studying Vedanta through the ShiningWorld website and reading James' books.

Although I think I have a good intellectual understanding of Vedanta, I have struggled with the qualifications and keeping focused on *karma yoga* and enquiry. Recently this has changed and I have been quite focused in applying *karma yoga* attitude and surrendering all attachment to results. My mind has seemed to become quieter, like a desire will come up but then be burnt away before it really fully appears (the only way I can describe it).

Anyway, yesterday I had a frightening experience. I was sitting reading the *Gita* translation from the ShiningWorld website. I felt a very strange change in the energy in my body, and I can only describe it as my self disappeared. Then there was an overflow of negative emotion. At first it was grief, but grief in that I felt I had died, that nothing mattered to me anymore and it was the end of everything. It literally felt as if a great friend had just died. Then it turned into a sort of dark depression and anxiety. I have dealt with this by surrendering to it and trying to apply the knowledge that I am free of it. But I must admit it was quite a shock and I now feel very, very drained and tired, and kind of numb.

I have no idea if you have heard of anything like this before. I would be very grateful if you were able to comment on it or offer any reassurance.

~ With gratitude...

Daniel: Your experience is quite a common one, and though it may not feel like it now, it's a positive one too. It's an indicator that your inquiry is working. There are two experiential fruits to inquiry: (1) the feeling of stable independence/freedom and (2) the "cleaning-up effect."

You are currently facing the latter. As the subtle body gets purified by self-knowledge we often experience deep-rooted stuff that starts to boil up.

As you apply the teachings, you are trading a false identity (Blake) for your true one, awareness. But the false identification to Blake is super hardwired, and ignorance can be a terrifying bitch when threatened. Everything is getting reprogrammed and this is terrifying, not for you, awareness, but for Blake.

I will respond to your comments in *satsang* format below.

Blake: “I have been a seeker for a number of years now, perhaps around six, starting with the Neo-Advaita teachings, and in the last year have been studying Vedanta through the ShiningWorld website and reading James’ books.”

Daniel: I’m glad you’re out of the Neo circus, and welcome to the Vedanta family! Vedanta is your final vehicle to liberation!

Blake: “Although I think I have a good intellectual understanding of Vedanta, I have struggled with the qualifications and keeping focused on *karma yoga* and enquiry. Recently this has changed and I have been quite focused in applying *karma yoga* attitude and surrendering all attachment to results. My mind has seemed to become quieter, like a desire will come up but then be burnt away before it really fully appears (the only way I can describe it).”

Daniel: I’m glad that you’re coming back to qualifications, as qualifications are key. Self-knowledge can only be digested in a mind that is suitable (subtle enough) for self-investigation. And *karma yoga* is the foundation of all “spiritual practice.” *Karma yoga* is the mothership that will carry you through the process of inquiry as knowledge gradually becomes firm in the mind. As you’ve seen for yourself, *karma yoga* quietens the mind, and it’s in a non-agitated mind where the understanding of one’s already-free nature can be reflected.

Blake: “Anyway, yesterday I had a frightening experience. I was sitting reading the *Gita* translation from the ShiningWorld website. I felt a very strange change in the energy in my body, and I can only describe it as my self disappeared. Then there was an overflow of negative emotion. At first it was grief, but grief in that I felt I had died, that nothing mattered to me anymore and it was the end of everything. It literally felt as if a great friend had just died. Then it turned into a sort of dark depression and anxiety. I have dealt with this by surrendering to it and trying to apply the knowledge that I am free of it. But I must admit it was quite a shock and I now feel very, very drained and tired, and kind of numb.”

Daniel: You did die, Blake. Not you, awareness, but the apparent notion called “Blake” and his apparent world.

There is actually a book called *The End of Your World*, written by Adyashanti, which explores this subject. But I’d prefer to summarize it for you, as I don’t see Adyashanti as a qualified teacher. But this is another topic. The point is that it’s a common process and that it will pass.

Because your identification as and to Blake is still fixed, many unpleasant sensations will arise. Self-knowledge is chipping away at this hardwired notion, and it’s a painful and scary process. Again, not for you, awareness, but for Blake.

Your subtle body is being charged with reprogramming and is purified because of your inquiry. *Isvara* has many ways of saluting the *jiva* as he/she inquires into the truth. Sometimes they’re in the form of fun, fuzzy-wuzzy experiences, and other times they’re fucking scary and dull.

Remain firm in your practice and gently continue to apply the teachings. Know that this will pass.

The truth is that you are free from Blake and his experiences altogether. As you continue to apply and reflect on the teachings, your freedom FROM Blake will become clear and firm.

See these experiences as objects arising to/in you, awareness, “Blake” also being an object known to you. Come back to the fact that you are never stained by any experience, whether it seems positive or dull. You are the limitless “container” that objectively “watches” Blake and his current process.

Reprogramming Blake to think in line with reality, meaning to identify himself as this unchanging knower of experience, is what you are currently doing. It’s hard work that can produce a number of dull experiences, but it’s the most beautiful work that we can do, as it leads to liberation, freedom from fear/limitation. Hang in there and continue to expose your mind to the material offered at ShiningWorld. You are doing perfectly.

You are welcome to write to me anytime.

~ Much love, Daniel

Blake: Thank you, Daniel, for the quick reply. This has served to reassure me. I will continue with confidence and will write again soon. Thanks again.

Daniel: My pleasure, Blake.