

A Full-Blown Panic Attack

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Hey there, Ram! I wanted to drop you a note, not for a response, but to voice what happened recently. With all the “sunshine and lolly-pop” spirituality out there, nothing helps one handle the nitty-gritty of life than the real perspective of Vedanta. In a recent email you commented about life after realization and how the trials and tribulations of this world don’t simply vanish in a puff of smoke, and you cautioned me not to succumb to fear and doubt as one does before self-realization.

This week I was faced with a perceived threat and by and large handled it quite objectively. I found myself in a full-blown panic attack. I was surprised by this because, well, hey, I am spiritually advanced and I am just waiting for the songbirds to come land on my shoulder and chirp happy tunes until my final days. ☺ What this event did was trigger a fear for my, well, circumstantial well-being. It is a low-grade fear that simmers in the background and shows itself from time to time, but this time came forth with a vengeance. It is a fear for what might happen, and along with it was the fear that perhaps I have simply got all this spiritual stuff wrong.

In the midst of this attack I stopped before I blew a gasket and questioned what is true: the “what ifs” causing the anxiety or the fact that I know that I am not what I am aware of (the problem)? Rather I am that because of which I am aware or what I am aware of, i.e. awareness itself. If the latter is true... and I see that it is... why should I suffer a panic attack unless my identity (what is real) is still entangled with what is happening, i.e. with events in the body/world? I understand that this doesn’t mean I ignore what is happening and not take care of what needs taking care of, but it is a question of the relationship between me as awareness and the body/world.

This inquiry did not totally eradicate the effects of the episode... I had gotten too worked up... but it sure laid it down significantly. It is clear now to me what is meant by “hard and fast knowledge” as my default identity. The real has to be seen up against the unreal so the unreal is known to be unreal and the real is known to be real. Chirp! Chirp! ☺