

A Shining Mass of Golden Light

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Ken: Dear Ramji, I hope you are not too deluged with dream narratives amidst your other work and can have a look at the dream I describe below. I have made a contribution with this in mind, as the newsletter suggests.

I am sure that countless influences unknown and some known, including Zen, have directed me toward Vedanta. A serious illness caused a lifelong question to return and I realized that I had become lazy and needed to get back to work on it. A few years ago I found ShiningWorld. I have read Ramji's books, listened, watched the videos, etc. They are exactly what I'd wanted without knowing what I wanted. My profound thanks.

Ramji: I love this fortuitous dream. I made comments in bold type at the appropriate places.

Ken: I don't have scary dreams. This dream was rather nice. It came night before last after days of my reading and contemplating Vedanta materials. I had just downloaded *The Narada Bhakti Sutras from the Vision of Vedanta*. It may have had little to do with the dream, I don't know, but it made a strong impression on me, filling a gap in my understanding about desireless, selfless *bhakti*.

Ramji: The inquiry – *Bhakti Sutras* – probably stimulated *Isvara* to generate this charming and informative dream.

Ken: The dream appears to take place in the small North Dakota town near the farm where I spent a glorious boyhood growing up in a big, happy family. I have arrived in the town to meet Natalia, a grim, kindly Ukrainian woman who cuts my hair these days. We meet in the back of a store **[the causal body, the unconscious mind, the ancient place where your hardwired past lives]** in the town (it seems to be the revered, ancient hardware store). **[Natalia is an anima figure, the feminine, loving part of your mind. She represents *Isvara*, the self.]**

She tells me I am expected to assume the permanent care of a little girl from Russia where the child's caretakers know of me. I don't know who they are, but they expect this of me, I'm told, and believe that I can do much for the girl in the years to come. No name or reason is given.

Ramji: In this vignette she morphs into a little girl. The self is pure and innocent, and you are its "permanent caretaker," meaning you have to cultivate your self-knowledge as long as you live. *Isvara* is addressing the issue of your spiritual slacking. Now that your career is behind you, self-knowledge should occupy your mind. The mind needs noble work. From the *jiva's* perspective, the self is often a foreign (Russia) land.

Ken: It appears they have the mistaken notion that I have some importance and can help her in her future, but I say nothing. Natalia asks me to come back the next day to meet the child. When I return there are several people with Natalia. They bring forward the little girl **[the self is becoming more prominent in the last part of your life, rising up in your consciousness]**. I ask and am told that she is about three years old. Her name is not given. Her face is mostly hidden **[the self is nameless and faceless, i.e. impersonal. It is “great.” In Sanskrit it is called *brahman*, which means “vast, great, expansive.” It is a stunning, brilliant, valuable, i.e. golden – light]** by a great mound of stunning, brilliant, golden hair, far more than one would see on a small girl **[much more than your small human self]**.

My attention centers on it also because it is permed in a dense pattern of water-like, parallel waves.

Ramji: It is a golden ocean of light that is in a parallel and different order of reality (*satya*) from the world (*mithya*), which is also permanent, i.e. “permed” into habitual patterns of thought and feeling.

Ken: The girl says nothing **[the self is beyond speech]**, but then I find she is standing beside me **[it is “nearer than the near,” to quote an *Upanishad*]**, hugging my lower leg tightly. It feels lovely, and I warm to her instantly **[the self loves your lower self, i.e. Ken, who moves (legs) in the world]**.

No one but me seems to notice she is doing this **[my teacher used to say that the spiritual path was going all alone to the alone (the all-one)]**. Your inquiry is only relevant to you.

She is taken away and Natalia asks me to arrange for the girl’s lifetime care **[the self is always with us and needs to be looked after for one’s whole life]** or preferably, she says, to raise the girl as my daughter.

Ramji: Raising the self (cultivating it) as a daughter probably refers the most suitable “stance” an inquirer can take. It is called *vatsalya bhava*, worshipping the self, in the parental mode, meaning with understanding, protecting the scripture by meditating on it. It is a rare form of worship. Most spiritual and religious types see *Isvara* as a father or mother, which tends to keep the devotee locked into an immature form of *bhakti*.

Ken: I protest that my wife and I are too old to start again raising children, but I agree to return home and talk to her about it (I should add here that I am in the 20th year of a second marriage to a lovely woman who is not a seeker and we get along fine with her lack of interest in Vedanta or in a religious belief). In the dream I try two times in different locations to explain to my wife about the little girl, but both times just as the conversation starts it is stopped by the arrival of a woman she knows and needs to greet and speak to. The dream ends without our having had the needed conversation but with me knowing, without having said so, that I will raise the child as my daughter.

Ramji: Same idea in this paragraph. *Isvara* usually repeats the same idea several times in

dreams for emphasis. It is saying that you now have perfect circumstances to pursue any unfinished spiritual business. You have emotional support and your wife is also fine with your inquiry (no need to talk about it). Furthermore, you have no worldly distractions, as your career is over. And *Isvara* has already given you what you need to complete your spiritual work, Vedanta. As you say, Vedanta “is exactly what I’d wanted without knowing what I wanted.” Vedanta comes to you when you are ready. You have good *karma* (*punya*). You came into this life with good *karma* – a happy childhood. This is a wonderful, reassuring dream. The most arresting symbol is the golden hair appearing in dense patterns. In the Vedic world the apparent reality, i.e. the world, was sometimes referred to as *ritam*, the “rhythmic” patterns of nature.

Ken: I remember dreams very little, at best they are just confused fragments. This dream was unusually clear and complete. When I awoke, I felt that I should try to understand it, whether or not it has something to do with Vedanta. As the *bhakti* text says, what a wonder it is to be in this knowledge, in this form, with this teaching and this teacher in this rare moment. If this dream does bear some relevance to Vedanta and you have time to review it, it will be yet a further blessing.