

# Do You Want Ignorance Back?

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I got a letter from a person today whose search ended. This is what he said:

“I read your book. A funny thing happened. Still enjoy reading, but the 30-year search is over. It is true that self-knowledge ends the search. Once you know, you don’t have to think about it or try and keep it. It is the background of everything. I only say background rather than foreground because there is a body, a mind and a personality still here and it has things it needs to do. Although peace is always here, despite the stress of work, etc., it is not bliss. In fact, there is somewhat of a depression as there had been a lot of ego and joy in the search. There is sort of a paradox, as at some point I realized that it didn’t matter if ‘I’ got it or not, as I was already It, whether I realized It or not. I accept the depression. I know it is due to no longer having that drive, that effort, that occupation of The Search! When one knows, one can accept others as they are but it is difficult to find many I can share this with. This understanding is just too outside the paradigm of ‘normal.’ I know that life is meaningful even if I am not experiencing it personally as meaningful, since it is not up to me personally anyway. But there is a pull towards a more meaningful life in regard to incorporating this knowing in daily life. For example, most of my day is spent writing for a large corporation. Not much personal sharing. So although concentration is easy for me due to having a very quiet, almost thoughtless, mind, at the end of the day, riding home on the bus, I get the feeling of not having done anything meaningful as regards the Knowing. Also, on my blog I wrote several entries based on what I gleaned from your book but I am not feeling any more urge to write – or rather, what can one say? It is what it is, and it is known. This seems to be in contrast to a very early drive towards ‘wisdom’ and wanting to share it, once I had wisdom. Now that I know, it is more like silence and not being able to put it into words anyhow. Actually, sharing does not need to happen, because ultimately it makes no difference anyhow; awareness is, and it is the doer, and everything is already okay. I think you can see my dilemma. There is no drive in Knowing like there was in the search. Awareness just is. Yet the person wants to do something or feel something, at least help others along the path or at least relieve suffering. And like I said, there is more of a depression at the loss of a goal rather than bliss. I can rest with this but if you can wrap some clarity around this, it would be helpful.

“Just as it is said ‘When the student is ready, the teacher will appear,’ so it can be said ‘When the teacher is ready, the students will appear.’ Would you agree?”

And I replied, “You would be surprised how often I hear this story when people realize who they are and the search finishes. There is a kind of letdown. Not to worry. It will pass. One of my friends was in a kind of depression for almost two years – not a depression requiring medication or psychotherapy – when self-knowledge became steady and the seeking stopped. She was a bit negative, thinking about how things would never be the same and at times even wished the ignorance would come back. But you can never go back. As it says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, ‘Once you go there, you never return.’

“The problem lies with the way the ego is interpreting the end of seeking. It is grieving about what was lost, not what was gained. It is quite normal, although this did not happen to me because I

have always been a very optimistic, desire-oriented person and I have always only done only what I wanted to do and I have always been ready to live on the streets. One time I found myself living in a van in the dead of winter and it did not bother me at all. I never had a regular job in my life and I always saw to it that I had enough money to move into something more appealing if I got bored with what I was into at the time. So I never found myself in situations where I was controlled and I could not express myself freely. And in Vedanta I discovered a love that would never end, so I just quit talking about me and my search – what a relief! – and started writing about the self and developing the ability to communicate it to others. It did not really matter (as you now know) and I could just as well have gone fishing – which I did for years because I had a cabin the Rocky Mountains in Montana. And my *guru* was an amazingly inspiring role model – he was extremely happy even thirty years after his enlightenment – because he was doing what he wanted. So it never occurred to me that there would be a downside to enlightenment. But over the years quite a few people – more than you would imagine – finished their seeking with Vedanta and I often hear this story immediately after the fact.

“How should the ego interpret enlightenment? It should discover the upside. And that is what? FREEDOM! If you are no longer bound to seeking, you are free to be what you want to be as a human being. There is no reason why you cannot express yourself fully. Before you were constrained by the seeking. It defined you. But now you need a new definition, ‘meaning,’ as you say. Before, ignorance was giving your life meaning, but now you cannot rely on it to make things meaningful. You have to be creative or wait until this feeling passes – which it will because it is just a feeling. You are undoubtedly familiar with the ‘before enlightenment, after enlightenment quote’ which says in essence that nothing changes in the apparent reality.

“Now we can leave enlightenment out of the picture. It was just an idea that proved hollow in the end like every idea. Now we are faced with psychology, the nature of the mind. And the truth about the mind is this: it needs something inspiring and uplifting to pursue if it is going to be happy. It need not be happy. That is up to you. You would be surprised how many grumpy, grouchy, cranky old *mahatmas* I met in India! I know it sounds ridiculous because we have all been suckered by the smiley-face version of enlightenment. Everyone thinks they will end up like the radiant hugging saint. ‘That’s the real enlightenment!’ they think, ‘That’s what I want!’ She is not happy because she is enlightened, she is happy because she likes giving hugs to people. Personally, it is not my idea of happiness, although I can give a pretty decent hug.

“But the fact is that if you really are the self it does not matter one bit what your ego is going through. A happy ego has equal value to a grouchy ego. It would have to be that way because the self sees everything equally, with total dispassion. So you have to think about what kind of a life you want to live – or not. You can just as well run off the existing *karma* and put up with this feeling of loss, which I mentioned will pass. You can dive into the peace and discover that it is really radiant bliss.

“It seems you tend toward the idea of teaching others. That is very good. There is a great satisfaction in helping if you have that kind of nature. If you don’t, it will not work. So you can work on developing your communication skills, which are probably pretty refined already considering your occupation. If you haven’t seen my videos, you can get them to see how I teach. You can, of course, develop your own style but you should follow the methodology if you want to be successful. For want of a proper teaching, most of these Johnny-come-lately *gurus* cause a lot of long term trouble for seekers even as they give them a bit of immediate relief in the short term.

“Actually, you can do anything you want. That is the meaning of freedom. Happiness is self-actualization, working out your relative nature. It is for the ego. This is why in the *Bhagavad Gita* Krishna, speaking as a realized person, someone who is not seeking meaning in life, says, ‘I am the desire that is not opposed to *dharma*.’ This means that you can follow your desires and not worry that you will break the rules of life.”