

Vedanta Is the Life Vest

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2013-10-22

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1257>

Porter: Hi, Ted. I wanted to ask you about “the dark night of the soul.” James talks about it in one of the talks recently and mentioned Adyashanti’s book *The End of Your World*... I’ve followed Adyashanti since about 2005 and read *The End*... this is how I feel... like my world has ended but I’m not sure what is coming to take its place... I definitely feel like I’m in the dark night...

Ted: This is because you are viewing the world from Porter’s perspective. Notice your language. Comments like “...this is how I feel...” and “...my world has ended...” indicate that you still identify Porter as “I” and imbue him with a sense of ownership. The ego, the apparent individual’s I-sense, is experiencing a dark night because its very existence is being threatened. But the truth is that the ego is only an apparent entity. There is nothing wrong with recognizing an associated I-sense as long as you understand its apparent nature. In other words, you don’t have to kill the ego, which is another erroneous notion propagated by many teachers from various paths, for the ego is necessary in order to transact within the context of the apparent reality. But identifying with it (i.e. assuming it as your identity) is the basis of all suffering and existential angst.

The truth is that your world has not ended. There is no world to end. The world only appears in the light of the awareness you are, and whatever world appears is nothing other than you. You are all there is. And you can never end, for even the notions of existence and non-existent appear in you, i.e. non-existence can only be known by virtue of the existence of the awareness by which it is known. Moreover, nothing is coming to take its place, for there exists nothing other than you, which is it, who are already and ever always here, not that there actually is a specific time or place you can be, since you are eternal and all-pervasive. ☺

The bottom line is that it is simply going to take some time for the conditioning to wear away. Keep practicing *karma yoga* and doing self-inquiry. Eventually these practices will erode the dull overcoat with which the ego has shellacked the mind, and the radiant light that is your true nature will shine forth.

Porter: I see the truth of Vedanta, and have known since I was about 24 that the conventional way of viewing reality wasn’t going to do it for me (I’m 45 now). I kind of feel like a stuck pig. I know no outward pursuit is going to do it for me (I’ve tried everything) and I know no inward/spiritual pursuit is going to do it for me (I feel like I’ve tried everything). I really feel like I’ve been checkmated or red-carded.

Ted: It sounds like you’re qualified for self-inquiry.

Porter: There’s a fair amount of negative emotion surrounding this realization. I’m curious whether you went through this and how to resolve it. I know there must be a resolution. I’m not sure if it is a question of time and allowing the phase to pass or what to do. I’d love to hear your

thoughts or experience on this matter. It seems to me no one would come to Vedanta unless they had tried and pursued all other possibilities first.

Ted: Everybody experiences this initial phase of negativity. It is just another ploy by the infantile ego to try to keep you identified with it and under its control. But you are the one witnessing the poor sod who is so distraught and disillusioned by the dead end it has reached despite all its disciplined efforts down through the years. It's a bunch of boo-hoo bullshit. But what to do? It's a phase no different from the "terrible twos" or "teenagerism." Just got to get through it. But have faith. You've finally come to the right place. Vedanta is the life vest that will keep you from drowning.

My advice is to read James' book and put into practice the *yogas* that serve to purify the mind. These don't in themselves produce "enlightenment," or liberation, but they do prepare the mind for the assimilation of the knowledge that does. I also recommend purchasing the full set of Vedanta teachings that is available in both audio and video form at the ShiningWorld website. If it is too expensive then start with the Toronto talks. They follow the chapters of his book and are a great complement to the written text, i.e. traditionally Vedanta has been passed on orally from teacher to student, so it is really great to hear the teachings as well as read them. And of course if you have any questions along the way don't hesitate to contact me so we can clear up any doubts that keep you from standing with full conviction in the knowledge of your true nature as whole and complete, limitless, actionless, ordinary, unborn, ever-present, all-pervasive, non-dual awareness.

Porter: Thanks for your help...

~ Take care, Porter

Ted: My pleasure.