

This Knowledge Is Love Itself

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Dick: Dear James, season's greetings to you both. After our last communication, 23.10, where you said, "...you stuck with it and now you enjoy the fruit of inquiry. I respect you a lot for your devotion to the truth," it caused me to go into reflection on the self or perhaps more accurately "self-reflection" – What might self-respect be? What or who is there to respect?

This inquiry appears to be the opposite of "contemplating oneself" as a teenager and honestly, for many years after that. It's rather observing everything that used to be outside of what used to be "me" and instead respecting that as "also me."

The pain is brief – like someone pulling out a splinter when I was a kid – awful for days, the fear of it getting cut out and then, "woop," it's out! The trepidation the ego has felt of going this far with the knowledge is similar: it has been on the way but also the gnawing, fruitless efforts to still try and pretend to "make life work" on the ego's terms (making the pain worse, always) all the while the knowledge is getting closer.

Before finding you and Vedanta there were random bits of knowledge with little direction – then comes this systematic brilliance of the teaching and your help. The briefly painful message it brings to the doer: "Your drives and hungers are now going to get thrown into stark relief," like a light being thrown on them, the news is that "it will never get those things it always wanted." Oh, God, it knows that now, like seeing the tweezers get nearer to the splinter, but it's fine. The infection hurts more.

With it comes the knowledge (now the splinter is being dragged out) "I never wanted those things anyhow! I surrender the list! A girl, love, career, success, money..." for themselves but, incredibly, just as a means to get some tangible acknowledgment that the ego just exists, is worthy, valuable somehow! Any means, in any arena, as long as the "narrative" can still be bent to fit how it was causal in doing so (how embarrassing). And even then, if "successful"? Utter dependence on whatever deigned to acknowledge it. There must be a price. Hell on earth.

It seems the doer's greatest fear was disappearance whilst still being alive. This can be felt – the huge indifference as it feels it from the universe, people, everything. Such loneliness, cold. Such an odd contradiction when analysed. A person "of no means" and, "having tried so hard but now not recognized in any circumstance, society or culture. Person, doer, ego, without any respect whatsoever from anything or anyone." Like some school report being read aloud (in heaven or hell, or here – it would all be quite funny).

But it is a contradiction: I am here and just the same as I was when born, no different and nothing changed whatsoever. The ego, the doer now gets that. Now we are staring at each other in a reflection and all is quiet. The certainty is palpable. This knowledge is love itself, like your mother calmly touching your head, after some mad thing done as a kid – "It's okay, what were you thinking?" (Smiling, you smile back through tears.) "You didn't need to, it's fine. Just go out and play. It will be fine."

So there it is, the ego stuck in mid-air, in the light. As we observe ourselves (can that be said? Both the self and the doer/ego in there?) I can reflect on the universe, everything vibrant as if I have never seen it before outside of my ego. Previously, I could look up at a starry night and “wonder,” but never really let it in. When I meet people (it needs continual practice), I see them, the surroundings and me all in one beautiful picture with no difference.

Just crossing the street – I can see all these *jivas*, me included – busy, specific, knowing that some of them also see what I see; we could even say hello from that standpoint and there is no difference between any of us. Even though with this comes also the knowledge all this will pass soon, it is okay. The self is always there, watching, unaffected, completely happy.

If I forget this, the self tries to recreate itself in a lonely miniature version it seems(?) it could be lifetimes of turbulence until it pops out again in the clear. I don't mean to get all esoteric, but this seems plausible now.

As a result, I only just now start to understand *karma yoga* and the way you have so diligently described it. I was earlier aware, somehow, of *dharma* (but just felt like I kept banging my head into walls, knowing there were rules but feeling like a ball in a pinball machine). *Karma yoga* is not a penance or tithe I pay for a better life later, as I now understand it, rather a recognition of the field all life is in. From this knowledge I then “do” accordingly.

I admit this all feels still new but also clear – Vedanta is such a wonderful thing – at points there are doors and, after having passed through, they disappear in a puff of smoke. Where the door frame was is a *guru* with a box of matches grinning, pointing towards a next door in the distance.

~ Much love and thanks, Dick