

absent

(taken from 'Jnana yoga — advaita vedanta' by Wolter Keers, published with permission from uitgeverij de Driehoek)
photo of Wolter Keers (right) with Jan van Delden (left)

Liberation, enlightenment, is completed when there is no more identification with body, thinking or feeling: when someone has understood that 'the world' is nothing else than a way of thinking, and that thoughts are nothing but Consciousness, than the Essence, Knowingness. When someone has really understood that thoughts cannot understand anything because a thought is nothing more than an object, and when someone has come to experience that there is no such thing as personality, then the deep silence in which all thoughts dissolve, and thus also the world, breaks through.

Whoever has come so far with the directions of a competent instructor needs to do nothing else. In the beginning the silence might be colored by the absence of thoughts: it is like when a painting that has been hanging somewhere on a wall for many years is removed; one day the person who lives there takes the painting down and you come in. What do you see? At first you don't see the wall, you see the absence of the painting.

That is what it's like with this state of silence; at first you were hindered by thoughts: by the feeling that's gradually becoming vaguer that you were a thinker, then thoughts and feelings disappear, and now you notice their absence. The accent is not on the silence yet, but on the absence of the other things. But now you only have to wait, you only have to make your self open to the Unknown.

Gradually the symptoms of the great harmony arrive. A deep feeling of peace, of warmth, a feeling that everything is good, arises from the heart. This feeling that comes and goes, is not the absolute, not the Unknown, but it is a manifestation, it is like the first rays of dawn coming over the horizon.

Then you have to find the right attitude; vague feelings of I-ness, of personality, that still exist have to be allowed to dissolve in these soft feelings. You need not so much surrender (that still sounds too active), but you have to allow it to fill you; you have to allow -

desire without desire – that this soft feeling takes the place of whatever little trace of personality that is still there.

Above all, you must not allow the personality, the automatic habits, to be in a hurry, to desire that it has to happen now. As long as there is any notion of 'now' you are still caught in time – therefore in the mental – and the realization can never take place in the mental – you have to be constantly aware of that. So, you need only allow that warm, soft feeling to wash away the last traces of the personality, blown away like a light feather in an almost imperceptible sigh on a still evening.

Then the complete emptiness breaks through. Much has been said and written about this emptiness in all the great and living spiritual traditions, sometimes in a poetic way, sometimes in an almost clinical–philosophical manner, but again and again the theme returns.

'The use of a bowl depends on its emptiness' says Lao Tzu. A full bowl can no longer be used for something else. And so it is when thinking and feeling are filled with other things, that they cannot be filled by the Unknown, by the Essence. Therefore one must take care to be always 'empty'.

In the beginning this can only happen for short intervals, (even though no time exists in this situation and one cannot speak of long or short), but slowly but surely the emptiness installs itself in us even when we are busy with our daily tasks. We don't tackle problems any more with all kinds of notions, we no longer trust in our knowledge, our memory or experiences, but we approach them empty and naked. Everything else happens by itself: initially to our great surprise it appears that the world takes care of itself; the right idea comes at the right moment, we don't know from where, but we have no worries about that anymore. Actions happen virtually effortlessly because there is no one any more who is carrying them out; the Zen Buddhists say that the work does itself.

One cannot order the Great Experience; one can only make it possible, and when one has made it possible it comes by itself. 'Cela vous remplit comme une grace', says Jean Klein. It fills you like a gift of grace.

From that moment on one is the great Experience. The spectacles of thinking and feeling with which we allowed our seeing to be limited until that moment are taken off. Deep sleep, the instants between thoughts and feelings, now form a unity with the Essence of which the thoughts are now, so to speak, an extension, just as waves are in a certain sense extensions of the sea. No words can give even an approximate description of this situation – even the word situation is in fact also ridiculous.

What can be said is that this Experiencing is endlessly satisfying, that it is boundlessly full of endless love now symbolized by the newly achieved union with the guru. 'The only thing that remains with you even after realization of the Self, is the Guru's teaching.' Why? Because this Experiencing, this being one with the Guru is the teaching of the guru. The guru is this Being–One itself. The thoughts and feelings of the disciples create a body and a mind for him, but from his own standpoint he was not a person, he had no body, he did not think. He did not speak. He was not a guru. But only this one timeless, unbounded Being–one, or not being two: ' I am no body – I have no body – I am no mind – I have no mind. I am no doer. I am no enjoyer. I am pure consciousness which knows no dissolution.' (Shri Krishna Menon)

With this 'being conquered' by the Experience the last remaining bit of personality is dissolved by the teaching of the guru who is nothing else than this experiencing and love itself. At that moment, the unity between a master and disciple is reached and with that the fulfillment of all love. Because, there is no relation like the relation between a master and a disciple. The love of a mother for her child cannot be as great as the love of a guru for his disciple (or, in the words of Krishna Menon: for the one that he allows to regard him as a guru).

It is one of the most moving experiences that you can have on your path, when you suddenly get to see, as if through the eyes of the guru, who you actually are. In place of the ignorant, incompetent, imbecile that you imagined yourself to be, in the presence of someone who you intuitively and ever increasingly know to be stronger and bigger than the biggest, instead of seeing a weak, dumb or unworthy one, it suddenly turns out to be that the master has seen you as light itself, as love itself and as infinitely good. He did not see you in terms of his personality, because this only

existed in your imagination. He saw you – if this can be said in this way – in terms of love itself, that he was, and is and will always be.

No one realizes the Self without tears; not because the way is painful, but because the love of the guru, and the love, the same love that he awakens in you, are so incomprehensible, and in addition so completely undeserved. 'Cela vous remplit comme une grace.' It is totally like that.

When one of our fellow disciples once asked the guru: 'How can I become worthy of you?' the immediate answer was: 'By your death.' Of course, not as a body but as an ego, as a personality. Thinking and feeling can never comprehend the Infinite, therefore they have to disappear, therefore the personality and the I-feeling have to disappear, dying, being dissolved in the still harmony that arises in the emptiness of the spirit.

[Wolter Keers]