

A Critique Of Jnana Yoga

Dear MT,

At the moment, I am suffering a genuine shock as I told my Guru and class that I can no longer follow [their] teachings and that they would have to find another place to hold Satsang. I suspect that the energy of Initiation (last night) had something to do with this but as far as my conscious mind is concerned, I am not aware of the connection. Nonetheless, it hurts, as this group and teacher has been my real family for about eight months.

My [former] teacher is a direct disciple of Ramana Maharshi and he is a Jnani and there is no question (in my mind) that he is truly transcendent—but I now know that I can never accept a teaching that focuses solely on identification with ourselves as pure being without taking into consideration that this pure being is expressing itself as an evolving consciousness through human form and personality. As deeply as I care for my teacher, it's not enough to see enlightenment as just awakened consciousness expressing itself spontaneously. A human being is an individualized divine spark, which doesn't lose its individuality—just its separateness, and it eventually expands into a state of superconsciousness. It doesn't become a nothing at the moment of enlightenment and it's not enough to just ask *Who Am I*, if it means denying our feelings as an evolving human being.



—Sincerely,
J.B.

MT's Reply:

Dear J. B.,

Such sometimes apparently "painful" separations take place when the soul is suddenly awakened to a deeper dimension of its Being, and no, the conscious mind would not necessarily have been aware of having made any such decision for "x reasons". It must be noted that some clear contrast within your Being has taken place to allow you to decide for so emphatic an action despite the potential pain involved, even though no personal agency has influenced any such seemingly radical shift. What has precipitously "propelled" you to make so decisive a move, of a spontaneity and immediacy that obviously surprises even you, has to do with the very *order* in which real awakening must necessarily take place.

The Inquiry "Who Am I?", to which you've become accustomed in your practice with the above-mentioned "Jnani", is given through such agencies as (ideally) a means of linking the ordinary—and ordinarily preoccupied—thinking mind with the spontaneous Inquiry of Consciousness that takes place *implicitly*, all the time, through every aspect and instrumental agency of your Being. Every breath, perception, thought, action, feeling or state of mind is an *implicit means* by which the Whole Being inquires continuously after its *ultimate* Reality, constantly asks *through* the camouflage business of its "familiarizing" faculties what its own real nature and condition might possibly be.

Yet the formal, verbal mind-inquiry given to the student by the Jnani in the hopes of eventually linking him to the present truth of continuous unpremeditated Soul-questioning, is no more compelling in itself than any other function of the thinking mind; it carries no more decisive weight in itself than the question "what's for lunch?" or "what shall we do now?". And no amount of mental repetition, mnemonic reinforcement or formal thought-practice on the part of the student is going to give that verbal phraseology any more privileged a status with respect to the implicit Self-inquiry of the total Being than it already shares with every other superficial expression of thought. Placing the inquiry at the level of thought at

the outset *never* leads to a deeper installation of the 'Soul-recognition' sought, nor to any deeper or greater *spiritual* quickening past the threshold of continuous mind-chatter (amidst which the phrase "Who Am I?" forever rattles).

Why then does it seem that some "Jnanis" (some would name "Ramana Maharshi", some would name "Krishnamurthi" etc.) do awaken to such Soul-realization, *do* indeed seem to be "transcendent" as you put it?

Indeed, taking *just* the case of Krishnamurthi as example, we mustn't ignore the history behind his eventual brand of espousal; we mustn't take too lightly the fact that the Theosophist Leadbetter discovered the young Krishnamurthi (through the former's celebrated "aura reading faculty") to possess *already*, as found, the most "perfect" aura he'd ever seen. It was, by his description, very stably *sattvic* or yogically balanced—and this, remember, *to begin with*. This *always* suggests the presence of a relatively rare being whose "soul record" is already largely balanced through sufficiency of real energy-work in "former" incarnations etc. He is, virtually, trembling already on the brink of a "higher realization".

All too typically, however, the methodology by which that transformation is brought about serves to *smother* potential recognition in the awakened psyche of "the *preliminary developmental stages* through which all beings must procedurally progress. In the case of Krishnamurthi, his reaction to the Theosophical pressure to emerge at the end of the process as World Teacher, caused him to *short-circuit* the very real Process that had been begun in him. The *character* of this swift termination inevitably stamped the character and quality of his teaching work; consequently, what emerged as clear, self-conscious recognition of the inquiry of Being to which he could *then* address even the verbal or thinking-mind, became the exclusive showpiece of his teaching. It was recommended as sufficient-in-itself *at the very outset*, to a *whole planet* of consciousness that would thenceforth be in the dark re the preliminary mind-body alignments and repolarizations required to achieve just the threshold of balanced stability needed *before* any such Inquiry could be placed at the verbal or *thought-level* (without becoming hopelessly a part of the general mind-chatter of random contents).

The "awakening" of such a Jnani himself, while apparently transcendent, is necessarily partial; it is, as you've intuited in your letter, a half-realization which at best *clears out* the thinking mind, and makes its thought-structure lucidly reoriented about the basic Questionmark of Being. Thus the "answer" the Jnanin elicits in response to that habituated thought-form, turns upon the *mental process of inquiry* itself and so settles on the *subject-self* the presence-to-itself of the Mind-mirror. The real *emptiness* of this subjective self-presence through which all contents of inquiry are reflected, becomes the *apotheosis* of enlightenment. The "camouflaged" activity of the faculties—according to this "enlightening" orientation—are superfluous, no longer hold any meaning or fascination and so tend to become much like the bridge which, once crossed, is burned.

This accounts for the Jnani's apparent fastidious dissociation from or minimization of the instrumental coordinates of the whole Being. *Indeed* he tends to become fixed, immobile or kept to a stingy economy of activity (e.g. as in the case of Ramana Maharshi) since all faculties and expressive agencies are assigned a superfluous value with respect to the stillness of Mind. They tend to become very functionally *subordinated* to that empty stillness which "answers" to the general Inquiry of Being. Indeed the persuasive impression emitted by the authentic Jnani is that of one who quietly awaits the superfluous presence of the body and thinking-mind to drop off, to be finally "shed" in death. It's from such personalities that we obtain our "Eastern" idea of Enlightenment as a cessation, a final termination of all development, of engagement or exteriorizing expression etc. in an ultimate detachment and cold dissociation from the creative processes of life.

But, as we've seen, the Jnanin point-of-departure always targets the *thinking mind* (firmly structured already about the unifying hypothesis of the "subject-self) as the uniquely suitable vehicle through which to "realize" the overall-inquiry of Being. Thus, once the thinking mind settles on the Term of its resolution, (i.e. the emptiness of its own activity *as* a Questionmark gnawing through endless contents that model the self-nature on a contingent basis) it *cultivates* satisfaction in simply contemplating that Term, as if it could be sufficient in the exclusivity of its apprehended "state".

The "transcendence" we see in the Jnani's face is his *holding* to this emptiness; though he often teaches precisely "letting go" or even *excising* the phenomenal (as "Guru Bawa Muhaiyaddeen"), he himself is clutching to the emptiness of subjectivity in such a way that all the faculties and functions necessarily *expressing or formally communicating* in, through and *as* that state are critically devalued. Indeed, they are *expected to* languish; and where (as with Guru Muhaiyaddeen) they're not actually looked upon as a *cancer*, they're nonetheless viewed as agencies of potential disturbance without keys of *reconciliation* toward that state of Mind/mirror-emptiness at all! Thus the Jnani "beams" the "transcendence" of Empty-mind *just* exactly in the manner of (or as if positively modeled after) the moveless statuary of the Buddhically enlightened, upon the frozen exterior of which dust indifferently settles.

Yet when he turns around to give this valued point-of-departure in Mental Inquiry to the student, he mysteriously fails to produce even this partial effect. Rather than having handed the student a means of becoming *sattvic* or balanced, he has handed him another *content* on which his thought processes can gnaw in common distraction with all other contents. He's handed him another "thing" to think about, which in its verbal phraseology bears no privileged relation at all to the spontaneous Questionmark configured by the activity of the whole Being.

Unless there's first an awakening of the implicit presence-to-itself of consciousness as the *spontaneous interrogation of Being* into its own nature through all representative instruments, agencies and faculties, the formal Question: "Who Am I?" has no special impact on the reality of the subject-self. Indeed, it simply becomes an artifice through which the subject, continuously changing like Proteus into every impression carried on the stream of thought, can nonetheless mentally convince himself he's getting somewhere, prying loose some special insight into the subject-constant of those changing predicates presuming to fit formal features in provisional answer **to the empty Interrogative.

The awakening of Being to direct recognition of itself as spontaneous, *implicit* Inquiry into its own very nature, however, makes of the "Who Am I?" a much more central and primary apprehension of Consciousness than it could ever hope to be in merely verbal or conceptual form. The "verbalization" of Who Am I? in this case does not define the limit of dependency upon which the Soul must hope to hang its chances of a Conscious Insight. The border of recognition does not abruptly stop with the fitful disappearance from mind of the formal concept.

From *this* angle of entrance, there is no procedural "retirement" into an empty or enforcedly "blank" Self-sense; rather the spontaneous void-character of the whole Being becomes intensified, stabilized as the Self-referent of Conscious Inquiry and finally serves to inform the faculties and functions directly. Thus those instruments aren't asked to be significantly *diminished* in their activity but on the contrary become creatively vivified, mutually awakened to a unific function in Consciousness so as to be able wholly to serve, express, communicate, transmit and further quicken (to the degree of awakening) that liberative Void-value through the responsive faculties of others.

In this way creative activity isn't thwarted, nor are the expressive instrumentalities of Being artificially shut off like a water faucet; indeed the creative force of Being becomes magnified, ballooned in unlimited extension and projection like the "powder of projection and limitless multiplication" imputed to the alchemists' Philosopher's Stone. In the *wholly Awakened personality* the faculties, functions and forces of the expressive pattern no longer serve to supply the camouflage content of ostensible formal "answers" to the Question-of-Being; rather those instrumental agencies use, form, organize and act through all such contents as direct expression, communication and celebration of the unitive Void-nature of Being so as to function *in the spontaneity of Consciousness Itself toward* the magnification and Limitless Projection of truly Enlightened Influence.

It was this preliminary awakening to Whole-Being inquiry and awareness during the Initiation Process those several nights ago, which furnished the persuasive Value of a contrastive standard through which you could find the surprising strength to terminate previous practices in which you'd been engaged, regardless your emotional identification with them and the group etc. As initiates quickly wake up to recognize, there's a universe of difference between the *Being* of spiritual Whole-value, and the endless ways of simply thinking about or contemplating its possibility.