

The Myth of Self-Inquiry

The Myth *of* Self-Enquiry

Questions and Answers about the Philosophy of Oneness

Jan Kersschot

Foreword by Tony Parsons

NON-DUALITY PRESS

NON-DUALITY PRESS
6 Folkestone Road Salisbury SP2 8JP United Kingdom

www.non-dualitybooks.com

Copyright © Jan Kersschot 2007
Copyright © Non-Duality Press 2007

First printing July 2007

Cover design and layout: John Gustard and Julian Noyce

For more information visit:
www.kersschot.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information or retrieval system without written permission from the publisher, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

Isbn 10: 0-9553999-6-3
Isbn 13: 978-0-9553999-6-1

Contents

<i>Foreword by Tony Parsons</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xi
1. Are you locked up in that body?	1
2. The story of your soul	4
3. The fight against the shadow side	8
4. Intelligent design versus Darwinism	11
5. Blasphemy	24
6. What to do after the understanding	30
7. Can a ghost become enlightened?	37
8. You can believe whatever you like to believe	47
9. Two sides of the same coin	52
10. There is always a shadow side	55
11. It feels as if I can choose	61
12. I want to stay in control	68
13. When will I understand this?	74
14. Pointing at the sun	78
15. Democratic spirituality	83
16. Give me hope.....	89
17. All is an illusion.....	95

Foreword

The Sanskrit word "*Advaita*" points to that which cannot be spoken of and exposes the fallacy of the idea that there is something separate from something else called Oneness. The simplicity of this message is directly threatening to the apparent seeker. It is rejected by the guru mind which searches for states to lay claim to ... Stillness, silence, bliss or awareness arise within the hypnotic dream of separation and then drop away again like sand through the fingers.

But Being is the one and only constant that never comes and never goes away. Because it is nothing and everything it cannot be gained or lost, given or received, approached or avoided.

The seeing of these words, the hearing of sounds, sensations in the body, feelings, thoughts ... the very stuff of boundless aliveness, is the essence of Being ... indefinable, unknowable, beyond description and yet filling every part of existence.

This clear and simple message speaks of a revolutionary perception where all traditional ideas, and even contemporary teachings of becoming something

The Myth of Self-Enquiry

better or different, collapse. Its illumination is in the energetic, vibrant aliveness that is implicit in the wonder and liberation of simply Being.

Jan Kersschot has a clear understanding of this perception and demonstrates his ideas very well in his new book, *The Myth of Self-Enquiry*.

All the time the seeker continues to search for the unfindable through process and path this kind of exposure can be a reminder of another possibility.

Tony Parsons
April 2007

Introduction

As a child, you are told to be a person. As a reader of this book, you are told to be a person holding this book in your hands. Maybe you also imagine that you are a seeker on a spiritual path. Your spiritual leaders probably also told you that something is wrong with you. Maybe you still believe that. That you have to follow their rules in order to reach heaven. That you have to do your best in order to become worthy. That you have to meet certain standards if you want to end your spiritual search. Maybe you still believe all that as well.

Meanwhile, perhaps you have started to ask yourself questions about all the stories you once took for real. Is it all true what you've been told? Maybe you've already discovered that something was wrong with all these stories. What if time is a mind construct? What if the person is just another thought? If both the linear time axis as well as the belief in the separate person are concepts, what is left of your spiritual goals? What if there is no spiritual path at all? What if there is no path to liberation? What if the person who feels locked

The Myth of Self-Enquiry

up is just a construction of the mind? What if spiritual liberation is just a myth?

If you believe you are in a prison, and ask me how to escape from that prison, what can I say when it's clear that the walls of that prison are made of thin air? What if all these walls were imaginary in the first place? You complain that you have a rope around your neck and that this particular rope is preventing you from becoming free. And you ask me how to remove that rope. Or you hope that I can cut that rope around your neck. What can I say when it's clear that your rope is only an imaginary rope? Do you expect me to give you a technique to untie the rope around your neck if that rope is illusory? Do you expect me to show you a path to solve your spiritual problems if that path is illusory? Can I promise you a better future as the future is an illusion? Can you expect me to approach you as a person when it's clear that that person is an illusion? Both "you" as well as the rope around your neck are illusory.

This reminds me of the story of Tashi. He is a young Buddhist monk in Ladakh, North India. The story is about the journey he made with his friend Sonam and their master Apo. In 1985, they joined the inauguration of the Shanti Stupa in Leh. The Shanti Stupa was inaugurated by the Dalai Lama that year and that's why these three monks joined the festivities. After the ceremony they stayed for a few more days and then took their horses to go back to their own monastery, Hemis Gompa, about 80 miles west of Leh. On their way home there was a big storm. They had to stop and wait until the storm was over. While they were sitting

Introduction

by the side of the road and waiting till the storm was over, Tashi asked his master, "How come I still have all these problems with my ego wanting to do things which are not allowed according to the rules of our monastery? What can I do to suppress them? I want to become a good monk. A devoted monk. I want to be free. I meditate as much as I can. I do the ceremonies every day – but things only get worse. Can you help me in my struggle against my ego?" The master replied, "Wait until tomorrow. Then the answer will come to you."

As the storm continued, they decided to stay over for the night. So they improvised a place to sleep in a cave and made a fire. Unfortunately, they only had two cords to tie the horses down for the night. The rope of the master's horse was gone. Probably that rope was lost during the storm. Tashi and Sonam asked their superior what to do. Apo said, "These horses are tired. I don't believe my horse will run away in the middle of the night." But the two young monks were afraid they would wake up the next morning with two horses by the tree instead of three. So Tashi and Sonam still asked their master what to do. Then Apo said, "Simply *pretend* to tie the third horse down. Pretend to take an imaginary rope from my bag and my horse will believe it's his rope you're taking. Then act as if to put it around his neck." Sonam couldn't believe what he had just heard and replied, "We just *pretend* to tie him down?" "Right. You pretend to put that *imaginary* rope around his neck and fix it to the same tree as the other two horses. Make the usual movements with your hands. Just act as if he is tied down, and my horse will

The Myth of Self-Enquiry

stay put for the night, trust me! Although my horse is very smart, I am sure he will not move until I whistle tomorrow morning." Tashi said to Sonam, "I will do it." So Tashi pretended to tie down the third horse with an illusory rope, making the same movements as usual – as if there was a real rope involved.

Tashi and Sonam didn't sleep well that night. Not because of the storm, but because they were worrying about the master's horse. The next morning, Tashi and Sonam woke up very early and rushed to the tree. They saw that the three horses hadn't moved during the night. They were relieved to notice that they were still standing next to the tree. So the master was right when he said that the three horses wouldn't move until he whistled to them the next morning. So everything was all right. They untied their horses and they started to pack their things to continue their journey to Hemis Gompa. When the master whistled – as usual – to call the three horses, only two horses showed up. To their amazement the one horse they *pretended* to have tied down the night before did not move at all. The other two just walked towards them but the third one didn't respond to the whistle.

The two young monks were very surprised and asked, "Master, why is your horse not following the two other horses?" The master smiled and said, "That's because he still *believes* he is bound by that imaginary rope. In other words, he doesn't realize he is *not* bound." The two young monks still didn't understand. The master said, "You see, the third horse *believed* he was bound yesterday evening. You did the job very well. He didn't know that he was free to

Introduction

go for a walk all night long. This morning, you only untied the two horses with the real ropes, didn't you?" Tashi responded, "Yes, that's right, master - we only untied our own horses." Apo continued, "Because of the gestures you made when you pretended to tie him yesterday, the horse *still believes* himself to be bound by that imaginary rope until this very moment. He is still influenced by your hypnosis. That's why he didn't respond to my whistle." The two young monks then asked, "What should we do then?" The master responded, "Well, you just *pretend* to untie him!" Tashi laughed, but as the master insisted, he walked up to the horse and pretended to untie him. He made all the gestures with his hands as if he was really untying him. Just to make the horse *believe* he was really free now. Now the master whistled again, and his horse followed him immediately. After this, they continued their ride to the monastery.

Half an hour later, Tashi asked his master, "Do you remember that I asked you a question yesterday about my struggle against my ego? That I feel imprisoned by my fears? That I have difficulty in controlling the desires in my body? I want to find freedom in *this* life. I feel locked up in my body with its pain and its desires. I want to find my Buddha nature. I want to be free. I still didn't get an answer from you." The master replied, "Yes, I remember your question very well. The horse has given you the answer. You are like my horse." Tashi looked in amazement. Apo continued: "You see, my horse believed himself to be bound yesterday. And he believed that all night long - while he never realised that he was free all the time. That's

The Myth of Self-Enquiry

exactly the same situation as when you ask me how to become free while you were never bound in the first place." The young monk said, "I was free all night, but I believed I was in prison? That's why you waited to give me an answer before the morning?" The master replied, "Right, Tashi. You are already free, but you just *believe* that you are bound by an illusory ego. You're bound by an illusory rope. And you complain about all the problems you believe you have with that ego. I tell you that you are free, and you don't listen. Just like my horse, you don't respond to my whistle. You believe you live in a body. You pretend to believe you are in a prison. But the walls of your prison are illusory. What you really are *is* already free. That's all you have to understand. And what can I do with monks like you? All I can do is to pretend to untie the illusory ropes around your neck until finally you respond to my whistle!"

Then there was silence for several hours. The weather was much better now, and both Tashi and Sonam looked forward to getting back home. But Sonam noticed that Tashi didn't have a smile on his face. Tashi didn't like the answer of his master. He said to his friend Sonam, "How can I already be free if I still feel bound?" Just before they reached the temple, Tashi asked his master, "What can I do to understand that I am already free?" Apo smiled. "You believe you are bound by your ego, while there *is* no ego. The ego is illusory, so you don't have to fight it or try and destroy it. The thinker you believe you are is just a thought. Your prison is empty! Don't you see? You're not imprisoned, never were, never will

Introduction

be, because there is no 'you' in the first place." Tashi replied, "So there is nothing I can do because there is no 'me' to do it?" Apo replied, "Exactly! If there is no Tashi, what can I say to that ghost to do to find liberation for Tashi?" Apo smiled and continued, "Just as we come back home to our temple, you come home to your true nature. And you see that you've never left home anyway."

Jan Kersschot

Are you locked up in that body?

Questioner: *Everybody says that we are an individual locked up in a body.*

Jan Kersschot: What if the sense of being locked up in a body is no more than a snapshot in your brain?

Still I feel locked up in my body.

What if the idea of being locked up in a body is no more than a few electrical currents in your brain?

Still I identify myself with my body.

The sense of being locked up in a body is very strong of course.

For example, when I look in the mirror, I see myself.

No. You only see an image of yourself. A mirror image of the front side of your body. At a few metres away from you. Is that what you really are?

The Myth of Self-Enquiry

When I have pain in my toe, that proves that I am in this body, doesn't it?

It only shows that at that moment there is an image of pain appearing in awareness. And that image only lasts for a moment, say less than a second. It's a snapshot. It doesn't prove anything.

But I know who I am. I am a man who is 62 years old. I have a name, I have characteristics.

Again, images in your mind. Electrical currents in your brain.

But I know I am in this body. That's what everybody told me. And it feels that way.

When you look at what appears in your story, you may notice that your body only comes to the surface during a part of the day. Your mind – your memory – says the body is there all the time, I know. But that's just another concept. Sometimes you are aware of your body. Usually because there is pain or joy.

But it's just a part of my body appearing?

When you have pain in your toe, there is an image of your toe. Not of your thyroid gland or your stomach. But when you're hungry, the stomach area appears.

I see. Only parts of my body come to my mind. Only parts of my person appear now and then.

Are You Locked Up in That Body?

"Your" body is not in the picture *all the time*. They're just snapshots.

But it looks as if it is continuously there.

As I said before, that's a trick of our memory.

I am not sure about that.

The body and the person appear as snapshots, as images. And then another image comes in which says that the body and mind are there *all the time*.

They come and go in our attention. They appear in awareness.

The story of your soul

If I am not my body, then I am a soul that has chosen this body to live in?

That's another belief. Have you ever checked? Did you ever *see* a soul? Did you ever see *your* soul? And even if you believe you have seen a soul, isn't that again another image in your mind?

All right. But I've read that my soul is going through a series of lessons.

It's another belief. Not everybody believes that. Maybe it's just a story you liked to believe.

It's true that I can't check such a story.

It's a matter of belief and hearsay. In my books, I never ask anyone to believe what I say.

For you, all these stories don't mean that much any more.

The Story of Your Soul

There are so many uncontrolled stories around. In a subtle way, all these stories are still about the captain. It's about *your* path. It's about *your* soul. So the ego game can go on. You want spiritual liberation. It's still about *you*. The diversity of stories that promote individualism is endless.

And anyone who dares to question all this will be labeled as a betrayer, or as someone who lost his mind. Or someone who lost faith and will go to hell.

Seekers want to continue seeking, they can't help it. And spiritual leaders just love that because it keeps the spiritual game going. The devotees can continue to play the role of being a good devotee, the leaders can continue to play the role of being a good leader.

Those who don't follow the rules are the bad guys.

The gurus don't want their devotees to ask critical questions. Nobody is allowed to question the holy texts. A lot of spiritual leaders just want the seekers to follow them, they want the devotees to believe the holy books. The devotees must believe the prophets unconditionally, and must do what they say has to be done. Just as in ordinary everyday life, we receive a to-do list. And a not-to-do list. We are again told what to do and that we will be rewarded for our good behaviour. And punished if we do not follow the rules. Again we are confirmed as being individuals with free choice who ought to do their best. And that is exactly what seekers want.

The Myth of Self-Enquiry

Some seekers, however, do not follow the crowds and are crystal clear about all this. They show us how ridiculous all these religious codes really are.

Yes, indeed.

For example, some seekers sense that there is no individual choice.

Yes.

That there is no karma. No debt to pay. No heaven and no hell.

Some also realise that there is no past or future – except as concepts in our minds.

They unmask the popular belief systems.

Some also understand that there is no body-mind in the first place. They see that each teaching that reinforces the illusion that there is such a thing as an individual starts from a basic misconception. When that fundamental misconception is seen for what it is, the whole masquerade falls apart.

That's the end of all the spiritual questions?

Some seekers seem to understand that indeed there is no seeker in the first place. Then all seeking stops automatically.

The Story of Your Soul

You stop seeking?

No, there is no personal involvement in this. It's not something you do. There is no "you" who can stop seeking. There is no "you" who can choose or decide to stop seeking. The seeking just disappears automatically.

Because the seeker has been seen as a ghost. It's a paradox to me.

It's not attractive for the ego when the captain is turned into a ghost. When they hear about it, most readers quickly turn their backs. The reader doesn't like to be unmasked and prefers to continue to play its games.

Why do they walk away from the truth?

The ego doesn't want to die. And the individual path is much more attractive!

They want to keep seeking. Maybe that's what all these temples and ceremonies are for. To keep these people on the spiritual path.

When it is clear that there is no captain, it is obvious that there is no spiritual path either. But again, most seekers don't like the idea.