

Non-Seeking

By Richard Harvey

Based on the confusion of doing and being, we can easily understand how the fundamental fallacy of spiritual practice was conceived: when we seek we will find. Let's look at this issue from a transcendental perspective.

The idea that when we seek we will find is absolutely false and merely a corruption of authentic spiritual teachings. There is no search for that which has never been lost, there is no journey to where you already are, and there is no progressive method of attainment in genuine spirituality whatsoever. The cynical will find in this ammunition to fire at the religions – traditional and New Age – which propagate this principle. The discerning will see in it a perennial truth, which is that the original teachings of spiritual teachers from Siddhartha Gautama to Chogyam Trungpa were never followed or even taken up by disciples for the simple reason that humankind was not ready for them... so the teachers were forced to withhold them and substitute them with a progressive methodology. Spiritual practice in order to attain progressive stages of spiritual endeavor is merely a cover for the ego, a virtuous mask for the small self-serving persona to hide behind.

The act of seeking is the ego. In the form of pleasure or dissatisfaction, prestige, status, restlessness, or striving, the ego manifests in the act of seeking – seeking for something that can never come. It is in the nature of desire to seek a satisfaction and fulfillment which cannot be allowed to ever appear. Why? Because satisfaction brings with it a great responsibility – the responsibility to be who you really are. You see, sometimes we search for something or somebody out of a fundamental conviction that we need to find something or someone to make us whole. But we are already whole. It may take a while to realize this. The process of self-discovery, which may be called depth psychotherapy or deep inner exploration, leads us to a state of psychological wholeness. Within this condition of wholeness, we may seek relationship or connection, but we do not seek the impossible – the completion of ourselves in another. The futile search for personal fulfillment through involvement with another person is a central theme of our current mythology. Whether in the search for a savior, a spiritual sage, or a romantic partner or soul mate, the delusion persists that through another and therefore in relationship with someone other than our self we can be satisfied and fulfilled. Never mind the wealth of evidence that contradicts the pipe dream! In fact the only way to personal satisfaction and fulfillment is to deepen into relationship with our self, incorporate all the aspects of our self we reject, accept our self fully, and learn to love our self. Herein lies the great responsibility to be who we really are.

In my explanation of the human condition, seeking is applicable in the psychological stage that is in the first and the beginning of the second stages of awakening, because the principal pursuit in that part of the journey is psychological rather than spiritual. However, seeking has no place whatsoever in the later stages of the second stage of awakening and the third stage. Advanced spiritual teachings tell us that seeking must be dropped altogether and this is right, but only when applied to the prepared spiritual student or inner traveler. The preparation itself in the first and the beginning of the second stages of awakening requires allowing all the egoistic tendencies, and particularly seeking, to arise and be played out, to grow and be absorbed in the futility of the ego tendencies over time. This is an essential part of

the spiritual preparation that is involved in the aspirant's provision for authentic spiritual practice and sacred life. But seeking has to be transcended because it contains an assertion that there is something that I am not, that is outside of me, and therefore it is inconsistent with Truth. Thought is the instrument of the ego in the first stage of awakening, so seeking is entirely egoistic. Whatever goal you are seeking, your ego is caught up in it for its own self-satisfaction and aggrandizement.

Everybody knows or has heard something along the lines of “you are already awake, you just have to realize it” or “the inner journey is to your real self who was there all the time.” There is no journey to where you already are or as Sri Ramana Maharshi put it “Be as you are.” Each of these statements implies a dilemma: if I am already there, here, awakened, enlightened, then why do anything? If on the other hand I am not, then there is much to do, so I had better get on with it. Each horn of the dilemma implies a relationship to effort, to striving, and to seeking. As spiritual aspirants, we must pass through the middle of the horns of the dilemma and attempt to rest in neither seeking nor its opposite, not seeking, but non-seeking, which is the very end of seeking.

The irony is that when I look back over the many years of inner development, painful letting go, and inner change, ultimately the purpose of it all was to enable me to cease from searching, let go of seeking, and embrace non-seeking.

All seeking is of the ego. All of it reinforces and originates from an ego message that you are not enough exactly as you are. The surrendering of ego forces that allows you to embrace the spiritual practice of non-seeking is deeply unconscious. There is no short cut. You will inevitably, with very few exceptions, have to work at it. Freedom follows constraint.

The question arises if everything is of the ego, all seeking, then what replaces it? The answer, of course, is nothing replaces it. Your spiritual destiny is to be as you are without restlessness or inner turbulence, without striving or dissatisfaction. This state is really not attractive to the life of ego struggle, restless desire, personal drama, and superficial emotion. 65 The alternative is unimaginable to us: to practice an unending devotion to existence, to remain still inside, blessed, and to be a conduit of peace. Yet we intuit that this is somehow sanity. When have you felt most at home, at peace, fulfilled, at ease, real, ecstatic? For most there is a symbol present here. It is the sunset, the ocean, the aftermath of lovemaking, or some such collective symbol denoting bliss. It manifests in our dreams and in our waking as the symbol of peace. Now take this symbol and shatter it. As it is said in Zen, when you have polished the mirror you smash it! This smashing the mirror motif symbolizes the reality of non-seeking. It says let go of the search and do not become attached to seeking, not seeking, or non-seeking!

This article is an excerpt from Richard Harvey's book [Your Divine Opportunity](#).