

Persistence and Self-Honesty

by Shawn Nevins

I am not outstanding in any quality. Yet, I attained a spiritual realization, so there is hope for others. In examining my decade of seeking, I think the qualities of persistence and self-honesty proved key.

Persistence implies desire, but I never felt I wanted the Truth badly enough. I always felt short of my ideal seeker who asked every waking moment, "Who am I?" I never felt driven. Perhaps that is a result of my biology. I am more of a long-distance walker than runner or sprinter. The walker may not show sweat on the brow, yet be just as driven as the runner.

Mr. Rose once said, "If I tell you to go five miles, don't walk a mile then turn back." Though I certainly fell to the ground many times, I always got up and kept walking. Why? Because I knew, in my heart, that there was NOTHING ELSE TO DO. This is where the self-honesty comes into play. Think through your desires and see where they take you.

Other than the spiritual search, I believe my strongest desire was to retreat to a cabin in the woods. It was a nostalgic dream of a perpetual summer evening complete with front porch swing, a dog, and sweet iced tea. Yet, I knew that moment of perfection would never last. I also knew that I had limited energy in life. I could choose the cabin - the known but ultimately hollow - or choose the unknown but potentially complete spiritual search. For me, every dream ended in death, and the discovery of my true nature seemed the only hope of escape.

Self-honesty is developed. For this, I see the value of my years of character development while with the Self Knowledge Symposium. If you learn to see your daily lies, you will learn to see the larger lies. You must find a point within your self from which you can judge the garbage from lesser garbage. A teacher helps in this respect. Around him, you may sense his perspective and see clearly the idiocy of your daily pursuits. Books, being in nature, music, meditation, friends, many things may give you a truer perspective. You will know it when you find it. One really does back away from untruth. Until, finally, your momentum is in one direction and you no longer care - you just want to know the Truth.

This was all done in tiny steps and nowhere along the way did I feel, "Aha! Now I am a seeker, now I am a vector, now I am 100% committed." I think that was a good thing. When one feels they are falling short, they are probably working as hard as they can, and when they feel they are at their maximum, they probably have more to give.

More important than a specific, verbal commitment to find the Truth, is the action of self-honesty. As Rose would say, "Tell the truth in all things relative." If you are honest, you will realize that you don't know anything for certain. That uncertainty will

haunt you and keep you moving. You hide from the uncertainty by distractions, but it is always in the back of your mind.

Lest you get the idea that I was a paragon of persistence and self-honesty, I will point out that several times I threw up my hands in despair and fatigue. The worst of these was early in 1998, when I decided that I was finished with seeking and would go make a fortune instead. Perhaps everyone hits a point where they convince themselves that they cannot attain - that the task is too great. Sometimes, the mind simply loses interest in the search. I have no easy answer for these dark times, except that in each instance, something appeared which reignited my interest. Being surrounded by fellow seekers helped. It is as if one is delirious and needs friends to watch over them until they recover. Unfortunately, in their delirium, they see their friends as enemies and try to flee. "To the sick man, sweet water tastes bitter."

Let's say a boat goes down miles from shore. There are some people who, floating in the water, decide they will never make it to shore and give up on the spot. These people don't begin a spiritual path. Others point in the direction of shore and start swimming, confident they will make it. These people soon discover if they are truly courageous or not. Finally, some say they cannot make it, but start swimming anyway. These are the most courageous. They have learned to act in the face of despair.

We back away from untruth and judge the untrue from a higher perspective. The higher perspective is eventually judged from another, superior perspective. Until the end, I was never certain of anything. I think that is the value of Rose's emphasis on using reason and intuition. For me, one perpetually doubted the other, so I kept striving for a superior state - a state of certainty.

I was not a born seeker. My plans for the perfect life were trounced and in the resulting state of despair I felt the emptiness of life. The despair was born of an honest appraisal of my situation. I stumbled upon a lecture by Mr. Rose, and for the first time realized the possibility of discovering the meaning of life. I was twenty-two years old before I read my first spiritual book. At first, the spiritual search substituted for other failed pursuits and propped up my wounded ego. I suppose I could have rested in the conceit that I was a spiritual seeker and superior to my fellows, but I did not. Perhaps it was the sense I got from Mr. Rose that there was something ultimate to be discovered. That sense of the ultimate is the most important thing to communicate. Once you have had a taste, it will haunt you.

Again I return to self-honesty. You know that there is more than the way you are living. You have a superior perspective, yet you chose to forget. You cannot escape. You are simply running in circles. Persistence is a natural outcome of honesty. Commitment is the fruit of honesty.

Honesty may very well bring despair, then you must have faith. Faith born of your own contact with the edges of the Ultimate or in the knowledge that others have attained. Know that the path of honesty will lead you through the final despair - through death itself.