

Pouring Concrete: A Zen Path to the Kingdom of God

by Robert Harwood

~ An excerpt from the book

I continued to read *Collision With The Infinite* over and over, seven times in about two weeks. As I finished the book for the seventh time, it became clear that if there is no personal self, then there is no future for a personal self. My idea of waiting patiently for enlightenment to arrive in the future must be an illusion because there was no personal self who could wait for the future to arrive. Closing the book and laying it down on the table beside me, I slowly looked around the room thinking, "If there is no personal self, and there is no future for a personal self, then what I'm looking for must be here now." I sat there motionless. Time stopped. My eyes went around the room in silence, once, twice, and then..... I realized the truth. Everywhere I looked I saw the truth. The walls, the floor, the table beside me, and the one who saw those things, I was *That!* In the blink of an eye, the future disappeared.

For thirteen and a half years, I had been expecting some sort of explosive experience like what happened to Ms. Segal on the street corner or what happened to me thirteen and a half years earlier. It didn't happen that way. What I saw was subtle, profound, and complete. I saw that I was reality. There were no bells or whistles, and there was no euphoria. There was only the silent realization that I was *what Is*. In that moment, all of my remaining existential questions vanished, as well as all of my hopes for an enlightened future. There has never been any need for patience; the truth had been with me all along. I just hadn't seen it. Intellectually I had known it must be true, but I hadn't experienced it through my body. Now, I finally knew the truth, and my long search appeared to be over.

I didn't say anything to anybody about my realization, because there was no need to say anything. What I saw was just a fact. I was reality manifesting as a particular body/mind. It was obvious. I had already understood that the present moment is the only moment, but my understanding had been intellectual rather than embodied. Unconsciously, I had adopted an attitude of patiently experiencing the present moment with the expectation that enlightenment would happen in the future. For years I had thought that if one accepts the present and does what has to be done with awareness and attentiveness, then this would eventually lead to psychological freedom and enlightenment. Gradually, by reading Ms. Segal's autobiography, I realized that my idea about patience was an illusion. I was the very thing for which I was searching. There was no enlightenment to be attained in the future no matter how long I waited. Everything is already complete in this moment. Suzanne Segal was correct.

Perhaps the most amazing aspect of this discovery was the fact that after almost fourteen years of practice, the subtle idea of having a self that need enlightening could have dominated my perception so strongly without any awareness of it. Although much of my prior understanding had been accurate, this single point was a glaring defect...

When I asked Bob for permission to post the above excerpt on searchwithin.org, he responded with the following email (dated January 30, 2014):

Hi [Paul],

Ironically, that quote makes it sound like everything was finished at that time, but it took another year before the FELT sense of selfhood collapsed and there was a FELT sense of total freedom. Up until August 17, 1999 it felt as if I were an entity inside a body making things happen, and I was still making an effort to stay present via ATA [attending the actual]. In other words, it took another year before the sense of "me" as a doer was suddenly seen to be nothing more than an idea. After that point in time, it no longer mattered whether the body/mind thought thoughts or remained silent.

Someone once asked Eckhart Tolle what his greatest attainment was. Eckhart laughed, and said, in essence, "Well, the idea that I ever attained anything is a misconception, but if I had to give a short answer to your question in the same vein as it was asked, I'd say that this body/mind's greatest attainment was gaining freedom from the compulsion of incessant thought." I would say the same thing. Compulsive thought is what creates and maintains the illusion of separateness.

Realizations inform mind about what's going on, and the informative process continues even after there is freedom from the idea of selfhood. Today, I understand many things that I didn't fully understand after August 17, 1999, but the sense of personal doership never returned. Today, we could say that the body/mind sometimes "chooses" to do ATA, but this is simply how reality manifests, and there is no sense of there being a personal entity apart from what is happening that is choosing anything. Sure, this body/mind has a name and refers to itself with first person pronouns, but the reflective intellectual process that used to create a sense of personal doership simply isn't there. It used to feel as if there were an "inside world of me" and an "outside world out there," but that ended in 1999 and never returned. This is good news for all seekers because it means that the search can come to an end, and that real freedom from the idea of selfhood is possible. Having been a serious seeker for 35 years, I can say with great certitude that it's a lot more fun NOT seeking than seeking. Ha ha.

Take care,

Bob