

READER'S COMMENTS

On Friday, March 29, 2019, I received an email from Stuart, who is an American living and working in Thailand. He was asking about how he could help to publicize my writings on mysticism. As there may be others with the same desire to be of assistance, I am herein posting Stuart's email. And my reply:

Hello Swami Abhayananda,

I am writing because I read on your website your desire for people to download and preserve your writings on their computers. But have you had any other vision for your writings that perhaps went unrealized during your lifetime? Sometimes I get so inspired by a passage in one of your books, I want to start shouting it from the rooftops. I see so much hope for humanity because it is voices like yours that can help propel the spiritual evolution of mankind. Without the message of Truth as a beacon and guide, I feel mankind will just keep meandering in the darkness of ignorance. But the good news is that the message is available and easy to understand for large populations if they are so inclined to learn.

I suppose what I am asking is "what more can I do to carry on the vision of what you may have hoped would be the destiny of your writings?"

Most of us, I imagine, who have downloaded your books have not had a direct mystical experience of God, at least not at the profound level you did. Your books will mostly be in the hands of believers, not knowers of the Truth. It's not impossible that movements could start long after you are gone, churches started that use your writings as their "holy" texts, and leaders of such movements and churches using your message for their own self-aggrandizement. It may be a stretch of the imagination, but who knows?

I just want to know what is your message for those of us who want to carry the torch of Truth that you have laid out in your books? What do you NOT want done with it? Do you have a vision for how you want these writings to be used by an organization that may be built up around them? How shall the writings be regarded? As the Word of God? Or something else?

Anyway, maybe I am letting my imagination get away with me. But, a certain Jewish carpenter from Nazareth more than likely did not imagine the monolithic church that would be built up in his name. Who knows which way history will turn or what new spiritual movements will start? Truth teachings, of which I find yours to be the purest in expression, have a way of getting distorted in the hands of those looking for personal advancement and fame.

It would be nice if there was a statement on your website that reflected your wishes for the use of your writings after you are gone and what your highest vision is for them.

Stuart

Dear Stuart,

I can't tell you how much I appreciate your email message! Some like yourself have voiced an appreciation for my writings; but for a long time, I have been hoping for someone to take the initiative to actually do something to help disseminate these writings. But no one seems to want to make the effort. What can you do? You can spread the word by reaching out to other websites, journalists, religious authorities, and anyone who may be able to influence the public. I cannot do these things myself, since my self-promotion would be offensive to many. The promotion of these ideas must come from those like yourself who have understood their importance and are willing to help in their dissemination.

I believe that my mystical experience has the power to influence a spiritual renaissance as you have suggested, but it will be slow and will rely on the intelligent scholarly few who can promote these ideas to others of the scholarly community. For some years now I have made my writings available not only through my website but also on a website whose address is www.academia.edu. I have shared my articles on that site and have reached a number of interested scholars and academics, over 1800 of whom have cited my work in their own publications.

I think I have made it clear that I am very much against the deification of our mystics of the past, and I would be disappointed if my message were to be

misconstrued in the future. But as my message is a written one, I think it is possible to keep it a strictly rational and philosophical one. Look at how many years Plotinus' message has been preserved and disseminated strictly by having been passed down from one scholar to another.

My writings are free [to everyone] and [are] unencumbered by copyright and are available for at least another three years at my website. After that, I don't know what will happen. There are a number of downloaded copies of my works out there, and I would hope that someone takes the initiative to preserve and continue that availability. My permission and/or input is not necessary. Everything I've written is in the Public Domain and may be used freely. Someone--perhaps you--must take the initiative to continue my work online, making these works available as downloads, and promoting their dissemination.

I am grateful, Stuart, that you have given me the space to share with you my hopes and wishes for the future of my work. Thank you. And know that it is God's will that these works were written, and I believe that it is His will that, with the help of you and others, they will last and influence society for some time to come.

I send you my affection and blessings,

Swami Abhayananda

Then, on December 28, 2019, I received another email from Stuart in Thailand:

Hello Swami Abhayananda,

I just wanted to share with you an experience I had last week. I was driving home from work, and there was a Caucasian girl at the side of the road with her thumb out. She was hitchhiking. I have never picked up a hitchhiker but seeing a foreigner in a town that doesn't see many of them, I decided to stop.

Her nickname is Dee, and she is a backpacker. She is only 21-years old. She said she was traveling to Laos and needed a ride to a town about 40 miles up north. I took her to my house to get my wife before driving her to where she wanted to go. We exchanged contact information, and within a week she

messed to say that she was returning to Thailand, and since we offered her a place to stay, she took us up on our offer to let her stay at our house.

In the morning, I sat with her on the front porch over a cup of coffee. Her interest in spirituality took hold of me because I do not get acquainted often with people who speak of spiritual matters yet leave religion out of the conversation. She spoke of an experience in which she felt a unity with all that is, but her family labels her as crazy. She is not accepted by her family, and she has chosen a path of traveling in order to find her "home." She spoke to her family about her experience and tried to tell them of the oneness of all things, but they rejected her and she became convinced she may have mental problems.

As I listened to her, I came to realize that the mystical experience may not be as rare as we may think. She obviously had a mystical experience. Swami Abhayananda, you said in your writings that you estimate that the mystical experience is exceedingly rare, perhaps only a few per million people, but can we be sure of that? It seems that those who have mystical experiences encounter the rejection, opposition, and disdain of those around them just as you described, and as a result, choose not to ever talk about it.

Could it be that the mystical experience is more common than we might think, but those who have it choose not to talk about it? Could it be that the world is populated with many mystics, but they remain silent for fear of the rejection they would get from those around them?

Dee was shy to talk about her experience until I showed her your books. I have hard copies of "The Supreme Self", "The Wisdom of Vedanta", and "The Divine Universe." My wife and I took her sight-seeing around the province, but she was excited to get back to our house to see the books after I described them to her. I handed her "The Supreme Self" and left her in peace to read. When she read of your experience in 1966, she was saying quietly "yes. . . yes. . .yes. . .and then yelled out 'this is it!!!" She almost started crying and she said, "I am not crazy." I assured her that she was not.

She spent the next 10 hours throughout the night that she stayed with us reading your books and taking copious notes. I told her about your website and that she could download your books, but she felt she had to write with her own hand the words you said in a journal she kept. She copied the quotes from the Upanishads you included in your book. She was unfamiliar with the

Upanishads. She showed me all the pages of notes she wrote, reading from them excitedly.

Swami Abhayananda, I think there is a population of people who have had mystical experiences, but are taught to reject it as hallucination, fabrication of the mind, or delusion. They have nothing to compare their experience with. Many are not familiar with other mystical experiences and are dumbfounded by what they experienced. You had the fortune of having read the writings of the mystics, the Upanishads, and nondual philosophy before your experience, so you could place it in context and know you were not crazy.

But what of people like Dee who had no exposure to mystical thought and writings prior to her experience? She knew nothing of Vedanta or nondual philosophy. After her experience, her family convinced her that there was something wrong with her mind. She believed them and began a backpacking journey to "find her home" as she put it. I didn't tell her at the time that her home is within her.

But after reading so much of your writings, she left us after two nights of staying with us in a peace that she says she had not experienced in a long time. That is what your writings are doing in this world. You may never know just how much you have accomplished toward the good in the world. The countless hours you have spent typing away at the keyboard are resulting in hearts finding peace.

I felt good in that I was able to actively present your message and see the positive results from it. Thank you, Swami Abhayananda. God has been able to work through you to change lives and bring peace to the hearts of those who need to hear your message of the love and grace of God.

Stuart

*Here is another email from—you guessed it—Stuart. It is now **January 29, 2021:***

- Dear Swami Abhayananda,
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I was happy to see yet another new article on your website - "Who We Are", a short encapsulation of the universal truths of our being and the reality of who we are.

I must admit that over the years, as I read your books, there is always that nagging yearning to "do" something, to follow some method to self-realization, to discover practices that will advance my soul evolution by a million lifetimes, and so forth.

But, as it appears, there is nothing we can really do as apparent individual selves to advance towards true realization of our real natures apart from God's grace. Which, I must also admit, can be rather frustrating.

How do we, as apparent individual selves, live our lives in such a way as to maximize our evolution towards God? Is there really nothing we can do for our own advancement? Do we simply wait for God's grace to open our eyes to the truth?

Reading books and articles about our true nature and reality is fine, but the true vision of who we are, which can be assimilated into our lives and how we define ourselves, seems so elusive. Our ordinary experience of the world tells us that we are individual humans composed of no more than ego, mind, and body.

It's all God's play, and if living in a world of illusions while responding to it as if it were real is the destiny of this lifetime, then so be it. It's God's will.

But don't you wish there was something we could do? Or are we destined to simply live out our lives and wait for God to act and awaken us?

Thanks again for the article.

Stuart

And here is my reply:

To: Stuart

Fri, Jan 29 at 12:51 PM

Thank you so much for that, Stuart! It seems to me that you have very perfectly voiced the objection that nearly everyone feels in their own hearts in regard to the mystic's vision and what it reveals about God and our role in His Creation.

I have maintained from the first that my own mystical experience was a gift of God's Grace, that I, as an individual, had not earned that Grace, but that it was a freely given revelation unrelated to any action or soul quality of my own. And yet, I have always been cognizant of how unsatisfying that rationalization appears to all those who are searching for a well-defined pathway to that Grace.

I attribute to God all the events that led to my seclusion in the Santa Cruz mountains and my reception to His presence. The inner thrills and joyful signs of His presence I attribute entirely to Him. How could I pretend that it was my own actions that led to His gracious revelation? It is clear to me that, ultimately, He was the inner as well as the outer Controller of all that led to the purification of my heart, my prayer for His Grace, and the bestowal of that Grace.

I find it very difficult, therefore, to offer a 'pathway' to God that is applicable to everyone. The Buddha, Jesus, and many others including me, have followed their hearts and their inner longing, and have sought the meeting with God in solitude and separation from all other distractions. This is a path that is only open to a few whose inner longing is sufficient to and whose worldly circumstances are compatible with such a radical isolation. This is no doubt the reason that the mystics have always remained but few.

Perhaps we must conclude that, for whatever reasons, He intends that only a few shall become recipients of this uncommon Grace. I certainly have no insight into why this should be so, unless it is simply the natural result of the slow rate of human evolution. But that too is under His control. I readily admit that I do not know why I was

selected as the recipient of His Grace and was gifted with the knowledge that we are all His manifestations.

I only know that He gave me this knowledge and, by granting my prayer, He gave me the role of spreading this knowledge to all of His children. And that is what I have accepted as my destined task in this life. May my efforts to sing His praise and His glory continue to benefit all His children in the present and long into the future. Amen.

Many thanks,

Swami Abhayananda

And then I had a second thought and added this:

Dear Stuart,

I am adding to my previous email in order to clarify something in my previous remarks that may have been misleading: While the Lord was (and is) instrumental in inspiring and initiating my devotion to Him, I don't want to leave the impression that, during the time I spent in my forest cabin, I did nothing at all. I focused my mind on God, I filled my mind with His Name, I studied the literature of the mystics, I spent all of my time in contemplative meditation and prayer. But when He revealed Himself, He made clear to me that "I" am but His instrument. What you must understand is that there is really no way to separate what "I" am from what "He" is; and no way to separate what "I" did from what "He" did. His vision revealed to me that the division between "my" acts and "His" acts is imaginary; there are not two. Through this "me," He, the only One, is doing everything. Though you may be unaware of it, the same is true of you and of everyone else. It is this truth that I attempted to make clear in my Article on "Who We Are."

For that reason, your assertion that "there is really nothing we can do," is utterly false, Stuart. You can fix your mind on God as the only reality before you; you can continually repeat His name in your heart to remind you of that truth; you can study the writings of the mystics and meditate on their words; you can give a period of time every evening to quiet meditation and prayer. So long as your mind is drawn to the Truth, you must respond, you must pursue that Truth. The fact that the Truth, the love for the Truth, as well as the seeker of the Truth are all Him should not hinder you at all.

Swami Abhayananda

And then, in August of 2021, I received this from Stuart:

Stuart

To: swami abhayananda

Sun, Aug 8 at 5:03 AM

Hello, Swami Abhayananda,

I have been reading your writings over the last few nights. I usually read a few sentences from your writings each night before I go to sleep.

I notice that the style of your writing in the books is different from the style of writing in your email responses. That is okay.

But what I want to know is why the style is different in your books. Really, I want to know if what you have written is from God or from you.

It is easy to identify when a writing is from you.

It is not so easy to know if a writing is God writing through you.

I am convinced that God writes through you. Swami Abhayandanda, if we accept that everything you wrote are your OWN ideas, we have no reason to respect it.

Why did you accept this mission?

Why are [you] the person you have become?

swami abhayananda

To: Stuart

Tue, Aug 10 at 1:19 PM

Dear Stuart,

Thank you for your recent email.

In answer to your question, I believe the differences you see in my earlier writings and my present ones is attributable to the fact that we all change and develop over time. It is not unusual. It occurs naturally as we age and as we amass experience and new habits.

Also, you are correct in your belief that God writes through me. I have said many times that it is He who is doing everything, and that becomes more and more apparent to me as each day goes by. If you ask if these are *my own* ideas, who is this other *I* who owns ideas?

There is only One! Nonduality is not just true on occasion. It is always true. The trick is to remain ever conscious of that fact.

Best regards,

Swami Abhayananda

Stuart

To:swami abhayananda

Tue, Aug 10 at 7:38 PM

Dear Swami Abhayananda,

Thank you for your reply. I was in quite a hurry when I wrote my email and failed to re-read it before sending it. My comment that "if we accept that everything you wrote are your OWN ideas, we have no reason to respect it" was an absurd thing for me to say. It is held in high esteem on its content alone.

My father was a published author of many books and magazine articles. He only wrote one article which was related to spirituality which he did not endeavor to get published. He did not have the benefit of a mystical vision from which to draw upon, but it was still insightful. But he told me that when he wrote it, he felt that it "wrote itself", meaning that he was not crafting the sentences on his own initiative, but the words were coming to him almost faster than he could write them down.

I was curious about your writing process when you were composing your books. Did you feel the need to carefully craft each sentence, or did the words come to you effortlessly?

Stuart

swami abhayananda

To:Stuart

Tue, Aug 10 at 9:11 PM

Dear Stuart,

Yes, your father is right; it *is* effortless. There is the component of learning, the acquisition of knowledge, that comes into the writing of a book, as when I wrote *History of Mysticism*, or *Jnaneshvar*, *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, or *The Divine Universe*; but the words are spontaneous, flowing from an unseen Source within. That's why I give all credit and glory to God, who does indeed originate and accomplish everything. Once this fact is realized, all of life and existence becomes a thrilling fountain of wonder and joy.

In your life as well, it is He who guides your path, it is He who makes the effort, It is He who accomplishes what you are to accomplish. All is His doing. As my guru, Baba Muktananda, was fond of saying, “[Your beloved] God lives within you *as* you.”

Regards,

Swami Abhayananda

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