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Integral Education and Nonduality

BY HARIDAS CHAUDHURI

A father one day called his son to his side and said, “Son, you have the habit of seeing things double, seeing everything as two.” Energetically protesting, the son said, “No! If I really saw things double, then I would see four moons.”

THINK ABOUT THE IMPORT OF THIS. Simply for the father to say, “You are mistaken, you have double vision” is not going to help the son.

This is much like our education. We just point out mistakes and say this is wrong and that is right, and nobody believes it. Even by reading books and committing them to memory, we can express these things again to other people, but they don’t necessarily believe them. Oh, we may believe ideas as something written in the book, or something said by a professor, and be in a position to repeat these things parrot-like and feel good about it—but not believe, to the extent that the truth becomes a dynamic force in our actual life, a dynamic force in our behavior patterns. ➤

Our concern is how to drive a force in our actual life, a dynamic force in our behavior patterns. Our concern is how to drive a force into the depths of one's soul so that it becomes not only a set of words, or a system of propositions, but a vital force in our course of living.

You see, at present, we are all in the habit of seeing things double. This is due to some defect in our present level of consciousness. We are all seeing things double without knowing it. We look at the world, and we suffer from the incurable habit of slicing the world into pieces, dividing it into antagonistic camps depending on whatever the ideological or philosophical or religious background of an individual may be.

When the self is divided into two, the world is divided into two. When we look at the world, we often divide it into two groups, one is very good and the other is very bad—an extension into the world of our inner division, dividing our fellow beings into good guys and bad guys.

Looking within yourself, you will find that there is a double personality there. There is an empirical self and there is what is called a transcendental self. There is a phenomenal self and there is a spiritual self. Once in a while we seem to be in touch with our spiritual self, and then we catch a glimpse of the reality of such values as peace, freedom, justice, and love. We just catch a glimpse of these things. But as soon as it comes to our activities, we are plunged into our empirical self, we get enmeshed in the network of ideas, feelings, and desires of what is called the empirical self—the phenomenal self—which has an absolutely different rhythm and law of operation altogether. On that level we find that all these beautiful ideas and visions of lofty values completely disappear; they appear like shadows when it comes to the actual activities of our life operations from day to day. So right within ourself there is this split personality, this divided self.

In spite of the deeper problems that go along with this division, we somehow manage to adjust to our environment and get along. But still, even though there is this normalcy because of adjustment that we make, that does not mean that there is not suffering inside. All of us so-called normal human beings suffer from a good deal of anguish or agony of the soul, all kinds of mental, psychological, spiritual problems. We intuitively feel that these problems are there inwardly hindering our personality growth, our self-development, obstructing our urge for self-perfection and continuous unfoldment of the inner potentialities of our being. Deep down in our

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BY CARRIE GRAY

BEFORE KNOW

FOR YEARS I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING for an education that is meaningful—an education that doesn't press me into predetermined categories or ask me just to satisfy outer requirements, but one that I resonate with on the inside. My interest is in knowledge that addresses me as a whole person, and can offer insight into questions such as: Who is this "I" and how is it connected to that which is known? What is real knowing? What is the relationship between knowing and being? Between ideas and life itself?

To approach these questions, I have looked to a practice that includes the body as an ally in the quest for understanding—a holistic system of bodywork, exercises, and harmonizing principles called Breema. I have long felt that the body we are given is far from irrelevant to our human experience on this planet. I don't think it is something to overcome or dominate. The body is our earth; it is our most intimate connection with the planet. It has a gift to offer: It is alive and has an aspect to its nature that is always in the present.

Breema uses the support of the body to cultivate a new relationship to what it means to be present. When I connect with the body's weight and breath, and let all ideas go, I experience myself not as I think I am, but directly. Starting with exercises practiced on my own body as well as partner bodywork, my body learns to relate to life as

WING, BEING

a whole entity, with body, mind, and feelings working together. With a balanced relationship between these three centers, I am in a new way of being.

This knowledge of my own existence, which I receive directly by “taste,” is the starting place for a new form of education. Taste is like the difference between thinking “apple” and actually biting into an apple. In the moment that I bite, regardless of my past ideas and images, I know “apple” directly, undeniably. This taste is something that the mind cannot produce; it exceeds my ideas. It shifts the site of knowing from a field of outer information or past experience to a receptive relationship with this moment. A connection to the body is the ground for experiencing my own existence via taste. When taste is present, the mind can receive conscious energy, and knowing and being become unified in the form of realization. Knowing and being become direct expressions of each other.

Using the principles of Breema, I bring the posture of presence into any aspect of life. The other day while washing the dishes, I remembered the principle “Single Moment/Single Activity.” I washed the dishes without any mental stories—it was simply body washing dishes and fully being with that activity. My aim shifted from a focus on the result to being with the process itself. I became included in that process and was energized by it. Time

became more spacious and I was both active and receptive. I was no longer rushing around but was simply with each moment.

This kind of direct experience helps me to see the limits of what the mind can give me, and helps me to see what I don’t know. Instead of looking to the preconceptions of the mind, I connect with the body, with the taste of “I am,” and I stay receptive to not-knowing. In this state, knowing and not-knowing are simultaneous, and they support each other. I am available to receive the reality beyond my concepts. Knowledge has become integrated into experiencing my own existence in life.

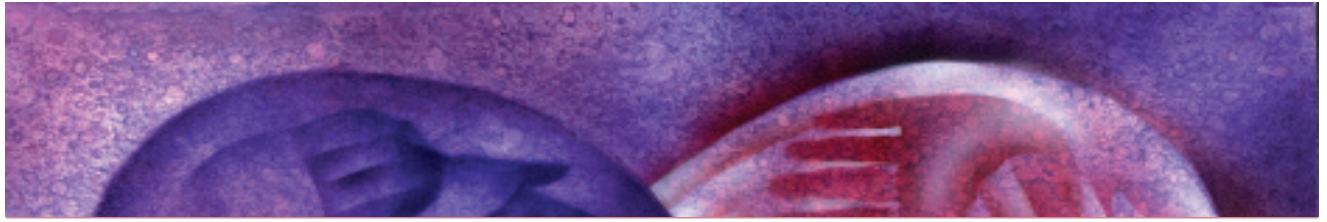
Recently, during an emotionally charged debate at school, I reminded myself that if education isn’t grounded first in a receptive inner posture, in the wish to include self-understanding, then knowledge gets stuck in ideas located in the realm of abstraction and theory. Of course, the ways in which we humans use ideas are important, as is the development of discerning thought. But if I equate conceptual information with understanding itself, then I’ve lost something: I’ve lost myself.

When I am in my body and in the moment, I am more open to diverse points of view, to receiving beyond my pre-formed ideas. When I speak, I can simultaneously express and receive my own words. Because I am receiving myself as I am, I’m not as concerned with what others think. I’m connected with others as an aspect of being connected with the whole of my life in my own body.

The moment that I connect with a taste of being present, I experience that everything is present within me, interconnected and mutually supportive. I recognize that existence is not personal; it is not mine, but it’s something that I can experience directly and participate in. This gives me tangible support for actualizing my desire for self-understanding. The body allows me to know by taste that I exist; it supports me to be conscious of my own consciousness. With this foundation, I can experience myself in each moment as a student of life, a student connecting knowing with being. 🌍

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heart we feel that, and therefore we suffer from the existential anxiety that is present in all human beings, however normal we appear to be.

Our educational institutions ordinarily do not address this problem. The emphasis normally is on gathering information about a lot of things. But accumulation of information, however indefinitely it may go on, will not bring about that inner cure, will not eliminate the habit of seeing things double, which is an internal thing. The kind of operation that is necessary to help us out of our dualistic thinking is a nondual experience. Then we begin to see things as one again. The world is one, and all human beings, regardless of differences of race, religion, culture, ideology, are members of one international human family. Until and unless we have this inner vision, not just an intellectual idea that doesn't change behavior, but as an inner vision, spiritual experience, or emotional experience of this fundamental unity of existence and

inseparable interdependence of all individual human beings and races and peoples of the world, then we are not going to set aside the habit of dualistic thinking. For this, what is necessary is the discipline which brings about an inner growth of consciousness. This is a matter of vital importance—this inner change in consciousness.

This ability to see things from the standpoint of an integral consciousness is present in each one of us. That is the true meaning of the latent divinity in humankind. When the great seers tell us that God is present in us, in all human beings without exception, this is the true meaning of it—that we have this profound spiritual potential for rising from the level of dualistic consciousness to the level of nondual experience of the universe as a whole. This is the profoundest potential of man. And only when

we shall experience this transition from the dualistic or pluralistic thinking to the nondualistic way of seeing everything, can the ideal human society or global society be founded. 🌍

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