

# Cracking the shell

## Some nagging questions

Can you relate to the following questions?

Do you feel held back from expressing who you really are?

Is there something deep within you that yearns to come out?

Do you sometimes wonder if you lost something precious along the way?

Have you given up hope of ever connecting with that lost part of you?

What if you could free yourself and reconnect with your full potential?

What if there was nothing wrong with YOU?

What if you are perfect, just the way you are?

What if all the answers were already in you?

How could you get beyond the barriers that have accumulated over the years?

How could you surrender to your wisdom?

How could you reconnect with your Self?

How could you unleash your magnificence?

## The human crystal

Consider a pure crystal, surrounded by a thick crust of soot, dust, volcanic ash and other debris. Viewed from outside, it may look like an ugly black glob. In fact, you can't even tell what is inside or how thick the crust is because, from the outside, you don't even know that there are two distinct things there: the crust and the crystal.

What if your true essence was that pure crystal stuck inside a thick crust of beliefs, concepts and so-called "values" that you have taken on over the years? So much stuff that you have forgotten about the crystal! Would the nature of the crystal be changed by that crust? Not really! It just could not be seen or experienced as a crystal from the outside.

This leaves a few questions:

- How can the crystal and the crust be distinguished?
- How can the crystal be freed from the crust?

- How do you actually do it?

## Distinguishing the crystal

The first step is to recognize that we are not our thoughts, our emotions, our behaviours; we have thoughts, emotions and behaviours. We may not like some of them and would prefer to have better ones. That will come in time but the first step is to recognize the ones that are there now and to stop identifying with them: they are not YOU!

This is essentially the purpose of meditation. As you begin to stop identifying yourself with what you think, feel or do, you will start discovering the witness: that part of you that can remain the detached observer of all the crazy things that your mind and body do. Little by little, you will start distinguishing what is not YOU (the crust) and will get a glimpse of what YOU really are (the crystal).

Meditation is really that state that occurs in the gap between thoughts. Meditation techniques are merely means of getting to that state and of widening the gap. The actual techniques used to go into meditation do not really matter. The only important thing is the resulting state of detached observation of what is not YOU. In fact, different techniques should be used over time to avoid becoming dependent on a particular approach and losing sight of the objective: stilling the mind long enough to recognize what else is in there.

Eventually, meditation must become a way of life. Unless the witness consciousness is transposed to your every day life, a daily meditation practice is merely an escape from reality.

## Freeing the crystal

Once we know that there is a crust, we want to remove it. You can chip away at the crust for years using different forms of therapy or spiritual practices. With this hammer and chisel approach, there is always the concern of chipping away some part of the crystal if one is not careful. It seems like a never ending task. Actually, for some people, it may become a life purpose to chip away at this crust (undoing karma, atoning for one's sins or any other esoteric explanation).

What if it did not have to be that way? What if you could get rid of the crust without endangering the crystal and with minimal effort?

First we need to understand a physical property of crystals called resonance (it is used in all quartz watches). When subjected to an electrical current, each crystal has a specific frequency at which its vibrations start increasing in intensity, feeding upon themselves. Once that resonant frequency has been found, the crystal will continue vibrating almost on its own.

The same principle can apply to the human crystal. We need to bring enough energy to it at the right frequency and for long enough so that it can start to resonate. In time, the vibrations will become so strong that the crust will simply break apart and fall off in a thousand fragments.

So the next question is: What energy, at what frequency and for how long?

Only YOU know the answer to that question. Start exploring techniques that work with energy. Trust your intuition and let your Self be drawn to one or more of the many possibilities (Yoga, Tai-Chi, Reiki, conscious breathing, polarity, Qui Gong, chanting, toning, ....). Once you have selected your approach, persevere and do it as often as possible until you experience the freedom you seek (daily practice is recommended).

### **Practical issues**

One of the difficulties is that freeing your Self from the crust implies that the part of you that makes up the crust has to die (your ego, your mind, your personality or whatever other label you wish to put on it). Rest assured that it will strongly resist your attempts to dislodge it.

You have no doubt experienced its way of sabotaging your efforts by raising doubts and taking away your will power. In fact, it is very difficult to heal the mind using the mind! The body is often a more reliable path to the Self.

Now, when you begin that process, the first thing that the mind will do is try to persuade you that whatever you are doing is not working and that you should try something else. Use the witness consciousness developed in meditation to remain aware of the internal dialogue and thank the mind for sharing its concerns. Stay focused and trust you Self! (While it may be OK to add complementary practices, resist the temptation to take on too many or to keep switching around.)

The next thing that the mind will do is try to convince you to take it easy today or to skip a day. During this initial phase, you need some form of support (therapist, groups, workshops, classes, ...) to persevere in your regular practice because it is bound to feel uncomfortable at first.

Eventually, as the benefits from the practice become more evident, you will be drawn to continue on your own. At some point, struggle ceases, the resonance effect takes over and you discover the paradox of effortless effort.

Once you have overcome the initial resistance, it can become a lot of fun to feel the amplifying vibrations of the crystal as your practice brings more and more aliveness inside. Enjoy it!

And then, when you least expect it, the crust will just shatter and fall off leaving you to wonder what all the fuss was about in the first place.

Along the way, you may be called to explore other approaches or to stop using techniques altogether. However, that would be after many months, if not years, of daily practice (unfortunately, there are no magical, instant solutions).

Whatever you choose to do, begin it now, stick with it and whenever doubt sets in, focus on your goal as you think of the tune by Pink Floyd:

*Remember when you were young,  
You shone like the sun.  
Now there is a look in your eyes,  
like dark clouds in the sky.  
Shine on you crazy diamond!*

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