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## Just Bee: An Enlightening Tail

the Editor

In this month's center section we explore Self Realization. Trouble is, it's not perfectly clear what this Self is. Many are the definitions of the ultimate spiritual attainment, and they are not infrequently at odds. Here's a child's story to even things up.

There once lived a little princess. Though young, her mind loved to explore anything and everything, which can take up pretty much a whole day if one is not careful about the time. They called her Mango Princess for she lived in an old mango tree by the brook so far from the village that you had to really want something bad to trek there and back, which she did all the time while less wistful and less wishful neighbors did not.

She loved mangos more than chocolate on ice cream, and plucked them ripe from the tree. One day Mango Princess was watching bees buzz the blossoms when, Ouch!, she leaned on one and got stung on the knee. "Oh my, little bee," consoled the princess, "are you all right?" "I will perish, but that's the way of things," hummed the bee, who seemed overly wise for such a small creature. "Not a very good way I might say," and she did. "Perhaps it seems so just now, with your knee all red and hurting so, but aren't you happy that the sting has not hurt your real Self?" "It certainly does really hurt myself." "No, no. It pains your body, and seems to have affected your emotions a bit, and it might even result in some small addition to your mental life, but it didn't even get anywhere near your real Self." "I guess so. Tell me, honeybee, what is this Self that is so real that I can't even see or understand it?" inquired a petulant princess. "I have not myself understood it perfectly. Only a few great sages have done that. Still, I have drawn a bit of

philosophical nectar from their blossomed minds and would share it if it helps take the sting out of your morning." "Yes, do, tiny bee. I do so want to know my real, real Self." So the bee sat on the very top of her right ear and hummed and summed.

"Some say this Self is the innermost personality, kind of the individuality of you. But they are sucking on a painted flower. No part of your body, mind or emotions even comes close to the Self. Others say this Self is light and love, the divine center and soul of you. They call it Satchidananda or Being-Knowledge-Bliss. They are more right, but not really right, for that is not the highest Self, since even wonderful things like love and light and holiness are part of the great duality. And the Self is transcendental. Nor is it some ultimate, unmodifiable awareness, as some claim. It lies beyond awareness, beyond everything. Those who know, say precious little about Absolute Reality. They know It cannot be described, since It is not another it, not another thing in the magnificent world of things. It is a non-thing. You can even say it is Nothing, but not nothing in the sense of emptiness, for the Self is fullness itself. The Vedas are very wise. They describe the Self as 'Not this. Not that.'"

"I think all this will make more sense when I'm eleven. If the Self is not a thing, and it's not a nothing, then what is there between the two?" queried the curious kid. "That's just the problem with talking about the Self, princess, because all talk goes round It but never reaches It. The mind wants to touch it, to hold and comprehend it, while it lies beyond the seeker's mind. The only way to know the Self is to be perfectly still-which almost nobody can do-and perfectly simple, which almost nobody can be. Then the Self is known, not directly but sort of as an aftermath." "What's that, some advanced arithmetic thing?" "No, no. Aftermath is what follows an experience. The aftermath of bathing is being wet, and the aftermath of exercise is growing strong. Just so, the aftermath of Self Realization is seeing the world very differently, sort of inside out. Time and space and such, which seemed so very real before, appear less real than the Self within. Not only that. The Self of you turns out to be the Self of everything. Well, I must go. Let me leave you with words from those far wiser than I.

"When you have reduced yourself to nothing, when your "self" has disappeared, when you have become nothing, then you are yourself God. The man who knows nothing knows God, for God is nothing. Nothing is everything. At the top there is nothing, no you, no I, no work. So you have to come down a little to enjoy things." Sage Yogaswami.

"God-Realization, or siddhi, means Self discovery in the highest sense of the term. One consciously realizes his oneness with God. Realization is not an achievement, but a discovery. Very few are realized. If you feel there are hundreds of spiritually realized people on earth, you are mistaken.... No mind, no form, I only exist; Now ceased all will and thought. The final end of Nature's dance, I am It whom I have sought." Sri Chinmoy.

"Seeing God without seeing the Self who sees is only a mental image. Only he who has seen himself has seen God, since he has lost his individuality and nothing remains but God. That stage transcends the seer and the seen. There is no seer there to see anything. The seer who is seeing all this now ceases to exist and the Self alone remains." Sri

Ramana Maharishi.

"Communion with God, or the experience of God, presupposes duality: the knower and the Known. We cannot experience or commune with the Absolute, which is beyond all differentiation." Paramahansa Yogananda.