

Interview with Peter Fenner by Gary Smith of Evolutus PR – June 2009

*Gary: How would you define surrender? Who or what is one surrendering to in your opinion? God, Universe, Self, Soul, What Is, present moment...?*

Peter: Generally, the way that I see things, such as the notion of surrender, is inspired by the nondual traditions and approaches to spirituality. Essentially these come out of Buddhism and Hinduism. We find them in India, Tibet, China and Japan.

A term that makes more sense to me than 'surrender' is 'receptivity'. Surrender can easily sound as if there is someone doing it. Someone is surrendering. I feel that real surrender is receiving and being touched by everything that is. No effort is needed to do this: to be in this state of pure receptivity. We are not trying to manipulate or change the environment at all, either what is happening inside of us or outside of us.

Our natural state is the state we find ourselves in when we are not struggling to be different. The cause of struggle is a fundamental lack of acceptance of who we are. We have a lot of judgments about who we are. We are in conflict a lot of the time. We are either invested in who we are, or invested in our potential. We'd like other people to notice who we are, appreciate our existence, or we are trying to escape who we are. We are trying to be someone else or perhaps even prefer not to exist at all.

The nondual approach says okay, we do have a finite existence. We are individuals. There is no denial of our individuality. We accept that. We do not feel deficient in some way just because we are finite and have a particular history. At the same time as that, we are finite, we are conscious.

And when we look at the nature of consciousness, at the nature of awareness, we discover that awareness is the same for everyone. Awareness dissolves all barriers. We are different at the finite level, but at the level of awareness, pure consciousness, we can't distinguish between each other. Why? Because awareness is not a thing. Awareness doesn't have any structure to it. Then there is a profound connection between us because we realize that fundamentally, by virtue of being a conscious being, we share something identical with everyone else.

When we are engaged in spiritual seeking, the seeking creates distance. Seeking stops us from realizing what we are looking for. So long as we are looking for something to happen in the future, we can't be fulfilled in this moment. The state we are looking for is the state where there is nothing more that we need. The only way to be in this space is to abide as awareness. Abiding as centerless awareness, is a more profound state than even the highest spiritual ecstasy. Why? Because spiritual ecstasy comes and goes. Awareness does not come and go. It is ever present.

There is nothing to fear in this, because abiding as awareness allows us to fully, deeply and profoundly appreciate the totality of our existence. It allows us to be present to the

history of who we are, present to the anticipation of how the future might unfold, without any judgments. It acknowledges our shared humanity, which is God consciousness. The Eastern traditions say, "Thou art that." We are the divine. There is no difference.

*Gary: Is there a practice or methodology to surrender that one can follow that does not cause suffering? For example, some paths try to create madness so that the ego surrenders. Is there a joyful methodology?*

Peter: It is not necessary for anything to happen in order to abide and rest as pure, imperturbable awareness. Nothing needs to happen for us to be here in the pure, complete simplicity of this moment. At the moment we do suffer. It is important to acknowledge that and accept that. As long as we have preferences--things that we like and don't like--we are compelled to suffer. It is important to see that.

On the other hand, there is no path or process that we need to move through in order to be totally at ease in the moment, without asking anything more from ourselves or others. We are here right now in fact. It is easy to think that we need to suffer and struggle in order to arrive at the end of all searching and achieve union with divine, unsullied, awareness. But look at what is happening now. We are here. We cannot say where here is, but this is the sublime state of total rest and relaxation.

If we think we need to suffer, *before* we can be here, then we need to do that. Millions of people will suffer before they see that it is our need to be free from suffering that causes our suffering. But right now we don't need anything. We are aware and this is enough. This is everything in fact.

We are so used to suffering, it is such a familiar way of being that even though we say we want it to stop, we just don't know how to do it. We have got into this bad habit of really believing that things can be different from how they are arising. It's really quite frightening to suffer less. When we begin to suffer less, it often creates an initial disorientation. Now what is going on? Now who am I? What's the meaning of my existence? The friction of our lives confirms our reality. If there is no friction, no problems, obstacles or worries, who are we? Now what will we do? It's simple, we go back to our suffering because it is familiar; we exist and know roughly what is going on.

*Gary: What happens when you surrender?*

Peter: I prefer to look at surrender not as an action or something we do. We surrender to this moment. "This" is how it is. There is no sense of giving in or giving up here. We are not surrendering to the necessity to surrender. We surrender the habit of needing things to be different or better. What we discover is that in this moment, right now, we do not need anything. This moment, and every moment, in fact, takes care of itself. We might be quiet or active, talking as we are now, but everything takes care of itself.

*Gary: What is the Ego or mind? What's holding on?*

Peter: It is the mind that is always dissatisfied, we think, "I like this. I hope this continues." Or, we think, I cannot handle this, it is too much, I need to get out of here. I want this to change." But this is all mental chatter. It is wasted energy. It is impossible to hold on to this moment, or push it away. Is there some way for me to fast forward what is happening or put it into slow motion? No. It is impossible.

We also think that we can control things, or that we can't. We think that there is someone inside of us who chooses and controls, or finds themselves out of control, a victim of circumstances. But if we try to find the "I", myself, Peter, for example, I cannot find anyone in here, who can control this moment, or be controlled by it. We can find the "I" thought because we are thinking it thousands of times a day. It's the most common thought we have. But who is thinking the "I" thought? The "I" thought is an object of awareness. Who or what is aware of that? This expands awareness because we can't find a thinker or perceiver.

We cannot understand this logically. We cannot think about it coherently. It is weird. Even though we can't find ourselves, we still exist as a finite being, at the functional, human level. The two things exist in parallel. Infinite awareness that is outside of time, and being here, the two of us, in our bodies, in this unique moment of existence, that will never be repeated again. It is amazing. And what is even more amazing is that these two, the infinite and the finite, are inseparable. They are not two different things. We cannot separate awareness from what we are aware of, because awareness is not a thing.

*Gary: Is there a practice or methodology you follow that would create surrender? If so, please share!*

Peter: There is nothing we have to do to be here. Simple things often work the best. Simple contemplation, simple meditation, being with what is, meditating and connecting with space, feeling the space of our existence. In simple contemplation, we take a break from the routine activity of daily life and bring awareness into the foreground. We can ask questions like "Who is aware? Who is doing this?" This creates openness into this place that is infinite, that has no center, that which allows everything to be as it is. It can be done just as well with eyes open as with eyes closed.

We can also pray to that which has no source. We can extend the prayer, and not know who or what we are praying to. Listening can also be profound. Not listening for anything in particular, but being in a state of total receptivity. Just listening. Listening to the silence of pure being.

Thank you very much for your questions Gary, and the opportunity to share this time with you.

