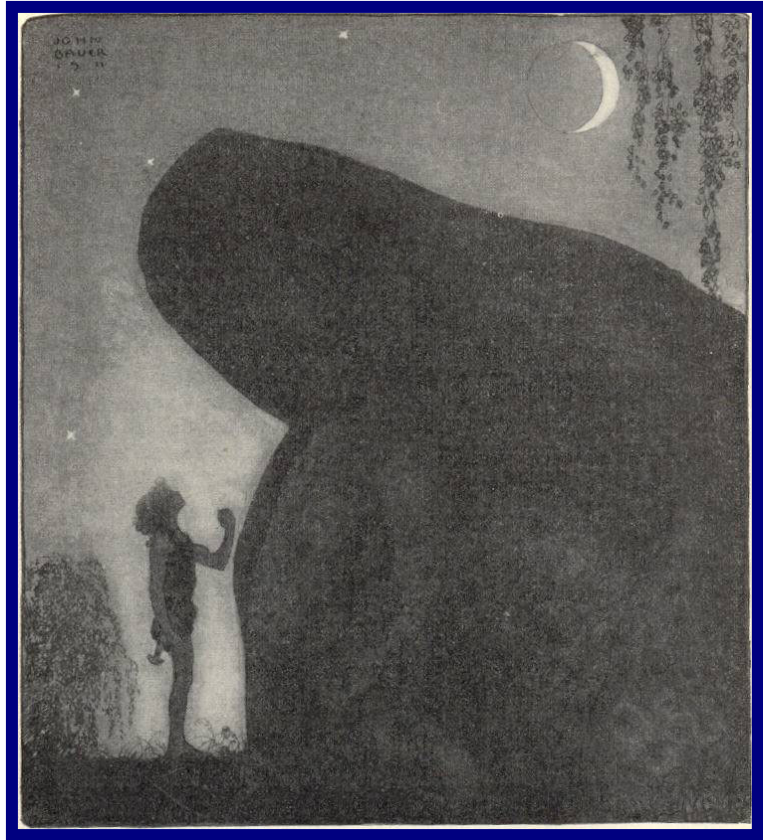


“Suffering ceases
because
struggling ceases.
Enlightenment is
not a matter of
not feeling pain,
but rather
a matter of
not fighting it.”

A. H. Almaas,
Facets of Unity



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Our mystic is addressing one of the biggest mis-understandings on the spiritual path. When you go to assess your progress (which we will all do – either occasionally or obsessively), the measure you use to determine that progress is usually the degree of pain, discomfort, and difficulty you are *still* experiencing in your daily life. As our mystic indicates, this is not a good measure of enlightenment.

As you continue to absorb the reality that our universe is based upon the tension *between* polarities, it becomes disappointingly clear that pleasure *and* pain will always be with us. Regardless of how hard we try, we will not be able to rid ourselves of pain. It comes with the territory of living – ecstasy and agony, highs and lows, happy and sad, healthy and sick, wise and foolish, intelligent and stupid, together and alone, connected and separate, living and dying. All of these seemingly opposing pairs are actually partners in the creation of this journey we call our lives.

It is no small task to relax into the understanding that the actual physical, emotional, and mental discomforts that are a part of our lives are not going to disappear. It actually requires a new neural pathway to be laid down in your brain. However, once done, the actual *suffering* that accompanies these discomforts and inconveniences of living will dramatically decrease. The *struggle* dwindles in intensity as the *compulsive drive* to avoid the pain, get rid of it, or bargain with it, begins to decline. Then you are free to simply *be with what is arising* – whether it feels pleasant or unpleasant or neutral – without the usual ‘human’ suffering behind it.

I invite you to continue your exploration of what happens when you stop struggling against the pains and discomforts of life. Does your suffering cease? Are you confusing the continued presence of pain and discomfort with failure to progress? In the Buddhist traditions, suffering is said to be the pain we create because we are in pain. Change your relationship to the pain and you can free yourself from suffering because of the pain.

Until next month when another Reflection will appear, may the peace that passes all understanding find its way into your day. As you change what can be changed, and release your struggles to change what cannot be changed, may your awareness lead you to the wisdom of your heart that knows the difference.

Ragini