

I slept and dreamt  
that life was joy.  
I awoke and saw  
that life was service.  
I acted,  
and behold,  
service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore



Photo by Ragini

This beautifully succinct insight can create quite a powerful stir in the unconscious mind! First, up jumps joy and it's sidekick sorrow. Then the notion of service brings up selfless and it's cohort selfish. Then action hits the scene activating doing and it's comrade being. And of course, the notion of sleeping goes nowhere without its companion waking up.

All of these concepts and their associated experiences leap into the fray of the mind's drive to make sense of everything that comes its way. These notions begin to dance and move about searching for some arrangement or configuration that will bring clarity, understanding, and peace to the mind. Without an awareness of this internal and unconscious process, you may be left in some confusion as to why this piece of lovely guidance may be difficult to actualize in your daily life.

First, our mystic is not referring to the joy that is the opposite of sorrow, nor to the selflessness that is the opposite of selfish, nor the doing that is the opposite of being. He is pointing to the joy, selflessness and action that is beyond concept, reflecting the essential qualities of our Being itself. Second, to find these qualities of our Being, the mind has to navigate through the sea of opposites that is the fabric of its world.

When joy is perceived as better than sorrow, selflessness better than selfishness and doing better than being, this capacity of mind to reflect our Essential Self is deeply disturbed. As the mind struggles to arrange these pieces of the puzzle in some way that allows clarity and calm, it can only follow the instructions it's been given. "Please mind, take the action that will bring me joy and selflessness and do it please by getting rid of sorrow and selfishness and passivity." This instruction leaves the mind no choice but to strive for an unreachable goal. In the world of opposites, the only avenue to peace and joy is to embrace all opposites and perceive the

oneness of all things hidden in this worldly dance of duality. When the mind begins to embrace opposites rather than setting up one as better than the other, the inner turbulence subsides and the sea of opposites becomes calm enough and quiet enough to reveal the previously hidden qualities of Being itself.

Most of us know being of service brings joy and we want that joy badly. Yet, we often resent being of service and have relegated it to a check for our favorite charity or saying a prayer for those in need of support. In my personal sleep, I struggled for years with an unconscious notion of service as servitude which meant losing my freedom. That was definitely not an option. Of course, that meant selflessness was beyond my reach (and I was a very selfish person) and joy was beyond my grasp (which filled me with sorrow). Until I awoke to the reality of opposites as the fabric of our human journey, and the interdependence of these polar pairs, I was not able to see through my unconscious notions and experience the wondrous Beauty, Joy, and Love that reside beyond the realm of the mind.

I invite you to investigate your own notions of service and joy and how they impact your everyday life. It's an interesting challenge to keep reading our mystic's words over and over and really explore how they feel to you, how you make sense of them, where you allow this wisdom to guide your life.

Until next month when another Reflection will appear, may you awaken to the joy that lives in your heart as you care for others knowing it is tending to the needs of yourself appearing in yet another divine and beautifully clever form.

Ragini