

## Reflections July 2006

“... When we hope for a particular outcome to arise or a desire to be met, we invariably fear that it won't happen. Thus we move from hope to fear to hope to fear to hope to fear in an endless loop... When hope and prayer become strategies to avoid facing what is, then we have nothing on which to base either effective action or real peace of mind. We're back in the hope/fear dilemma...”



**Sharon Salzberg**

Faith

Our mystic is asking us to investigate this polar pair of hope and fear. Perhaps you would not immediately place these two together. Yet, if you examine the experience of hope carefully, you can verify for yourself the presence of this polar pair – **hope** that you will get what you want is always accompanied by **fear** that you won't get what you want. They are as partnered as the in-breath and the out-breath.

We hope because the future provides no guarantee that our desired outcome will arrive. The absence of this guarantee generates our fear. You might be fearful of looking foolish and naïve, afraid of feeling disappointed and let down, or terrified of that dreaded sense of unworthiness. Hope and fear are naturally our constant companions – both consciously and unconsciously. This is the nature of being human. What then can you do?

First, you can be present to this endless loop and discover for yourself how it leads you away from facing and embracing “what is” – whatever that may turn out to be.

Attempting to move away from fear by giving hope the shape of prayer can set the stage for an even deeper disappointment and, curiously, a potential loss of faith. Prayer based in hope creates an actual narrowing of your ability to accept whatever comes. What arises instead is more of a demand that what you want is supposed to happen. If it doesn't, you may decide there is something wrong with you, or with the way God is running things. Check in your body and see if you can feel the difference between prayer that stems from hope, and prayer that stems from trust and faith that whatever unfolds will be optimal for the growth and spiritual well-being of all concerned.

Second, as an emerging Marketplace Mystic, you understand the need to honor both your humanity and your divinity, respecting your human need to create and fulfill your purpose for being while simultaneously respecting your divine need to simply be and allow life to unfold. This may seem to be an impossible situation. However, I invite you to explore this paradox of how to expect to get what you want while simultaneously allowing whatever comes to be totally acceptable.

**Expecting** to get what you want and **hoping** to get what you want are two very different states of mind and two very different states of consciousness. Can you discover what that distinction feels like within yourself? Can you notice the differences between *expecting* and *hoping* in your body and in your thoughts?

When you can make this fine distinction, I invite you to explore this powerful paradox that places you on the razor's edge of **Doing** and **Being**: **expecting to get what you want** - the mind-set for manifestation and making things happen - while simultaneously being **fully open to embracing what life brings** - the mind-set for letting life unfold and inner peace.

Please join me again next month for another Reflection from the paradoxical perspective of a Marketplace Mystic.

Ragini