

“Goal” of All Spiritual Journeys

"The most strongly enforced of all known taboos," writes Alan Watts in his basic primer, *The Way of Zen*, "is the taboo against knowing who or what you really are behind the mask of your apparently separate, independent, and isolated ego." This is the taboo that a person on the spiritual path must dare to break, a taboo created by society, authority and our own inner fear of knowing ourselves:

As is so often the way, what we have suppressed and overlooked is something startlingly obvious. The difficulty is that it is so obvious and basic that one can hardly find the words for it. ... The sensation of 'I' as a lonely and isolated center of being is so powerful and commonsensical, and so fundamental to our modes of speech and thought, to our laws and social institutions, that we cannot experience selfhood except as something superficial in the scheme of the universe. I seem to be a brief light that flashes but once in all the aeons of time—a rare, complicated, and alltoo-delicate organism on the fringe of biological evolution, where the wave of life bursts into individual, sparkling, and multicolored drops that gleam for a moment only to vanish forever.

Under conditions like these, Watts writes, "it seems impossible and even absurd to realize that myself does not reside in the drop alone, but in the whole surge of energy which ranges from the galaxies to the nuclear fields in my body. At this level of existence 'I' am immeasurably old; my forms are infinite and their comings and goings are simply the pulses or vibrations of a single and eternal flow of energy."

As Watts says, discovering who we really are may seem impossible or absurd, but it is the goal—if we can use that word—of all spiritual journeys.

Chop Wood Carry Water: A Guide to Finding Spiritual Fulfillment in Everyday Life
Rick Fields, et al. 1984 p.12