



July 2023 Graduate Program Lesson
Exploring Lesson 4– Radical Renunciation

Introduction

What is the essence of lesson four of the Dissolving the Ego course? If we could distil it down to one sentence that we could carry through our lives, what would that be? I'm going to suggest a few variations of the same theme and you can add your own to this or pick one of these.

“There is nothing other than the Self”

“Nothing is what I think it is”

“Everything thing I perceive, inside and outside of my body, is my own Self”

“All this is me.”

“I've only ever met myself”

Remembering this we will come back to peace after we begin to imagine that there are other beings and other things to fear or resist. Anything or anyone that we try to push away is already our own self and so it will be painful to us to resist something. Anything or anyone that we try to grab a hold of and want to keep will also feel separate to us because of our grabbing or holding and we will suffer. Lesson four is asking us to practice radical renunciation by renouncing all thoughts that are about something or someone else. There is nothing else. Nothing is outside of you, you are omnipresent. You are all that is and you are everywhere.

Let's look at what renunciation is and how we practice it most effectively. We may have many ideas about renunciation as being something we do or that it means we have to give up many things in our lives in order to wake up to the Truth. Renunciation means the act of renouncing. The etymology of "renounce" gives us vital instructions as to what it is and how to do it:

Renounce: late 14c., renouncen, "give up (something, especially to another), resign, surrender," from Old French renoncier "give up, cede" (12c., Modern French renoncer) and directly from Latin renuntiare "bring back word; proclaim; protest against, renounce," from re- "against" (see re-) + nuntiare "to report, announce

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/renunciation#:~:text=late%2014c.%2C%20renouncen%2C%20%22,to%20report%2C%20announce%2C%22%20from>

From the old French word "renoncier" we can see renunciation is to give up something or to give is back, to surrender something to another. We can also see from the Latin "renuntiare" that by giving up something, we are also proclaiming something and reporting or announcing something. So what are we going to give up that will benefit us most of all and what will be proclaimed or announced? The true form of renunciation is to give back all our thoughts about what things are. Nothing is what we think it is and all things are really the unknowable mystery of the Self. The more we think about something, the more it seems solid, different to the Self and separate to us. Simply put, the more we think about things, the worse we suffer. The more we are curious about what something actually is, the more peace we will feel and freedom will be our experience.

Renounce thoughts about other things and other beings! None of them are true anyway, they are only mental projections happening inside our own mind, removed from the person or thing we are thinking about! Renouncing thoughts does not mean we push them away but rather that we examine the thought and see if it about something or someone else. If it is about something other than us, then it can only move us deeper into illusion. Renunciation is a sifting, sorting and examining and then deciding what is important. It is not a rejection or pushing against anything. If we went to the store to buy some potatoes for baking in the oven, we would sort through the loose potatoes gently examining them and selecting the ones that are useful. The ones that are too small or too big we would simply notice and leave them be. We would not try to tell the store owners that they should get rid of the small salad potatoes because they are no good to us! We would have no opinion at all about small potatoes except that they are too small and not useful right now. Mind is our very own grocery store offering many types of thoughts for sale. Some are in the "illusion" aisle and some are in the "Truth" aisle. We do not need to go to war with anything. We simply pick which thoughts are useful as they are presented them by the mind, take what we need and use it.

Radical renunciation is really just making a commitment to notice our thought stream as it continues and deciding which thoughts are useful to us as the Self. This is an ongoing way of being, renunciation is a way of being. Approximately 99% of our thoughts will

simply cease if we apply this simple way of being to our mind. No struggle or resistance to thoughts, they are just the next potato to examine! 😊

Exercises for this month:

I suggest doing these exercises together as a group and/or with your GP buddy/buddies or in the GP Sanghas. Discuss your doubts, challenges and insights with each other.

1-Begin to watch the thoughts that go through your mind and try to just observe them the best you can. Even if you get caught up in them or feel some strong emotion with them it does not stop you from renouncing them. Try to remember that who or what you are thinking about does not really exist outside of you! You are thinking about yourself only.

2-Examine that thought and see if it is about another being or another thing. It could be a subtle thing (like thoughts, emotions, time, a sensation or energy) or about a gross tangible thing (like your body, the world or “someone else”). See if you can realise that the thing you are thinking of does not exist.

3-Begin to gently notice how much time and energy the mind spends thinking about things that do not exist. Do not reject this, just notice it.

4-See if you can see that the things you think about most are the things you are suffering over most and feel most separate to you. Mind says that you need to continue thinking about them to resolve the issue but what if thinking about them so much is reflecting as this issue. “I’ll stop worrying about money when I have enough of it” says the mind. The Self says “Because I worry about money, I do not have enough of it.”