

# Acceptance (Part II of II)

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*(Edited transcription of a two part series talk on 'Acceptance' organised by the World Yoga Festival, UK with online participants from different countries in March 2020, kindly transcribed by Melissa Bell)*

Link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMSDIei8JLo>

Acceptance is a very profound topic and we started to scratch the surface in Part I. It is a very important part of the spiritual foundation, of your spiritual journey, and is also a very practical thing for all.

If I say acceptance is not resisting, and acceptance is relaxation, then what is it that we are not resisting, or what are we resisting? It is the process of life.

*What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.  
No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows.*

*No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.  
No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.*

*No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.  
No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.*

*A poor life this if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.*

Here, William Davies, a famous British poet, is pointing out the pace of our modern life, and because of which, we have no time to be awake to what is around us.

When things are going really well for us, we are so busy celebrating, that we have no time to inquire into life. When things are not going so well for us, then, we are busy escaping from the daily realities that cause friction through mind numbing entertainment. It's not a surprise that the fastest growing industry in the world is the entertainment industry. If we are all so busy, then how come the hours on netflix clock up to a substantial number every week? Of course, there is educational content, but for most of us, we want to escape the daily mundane existence of our life and we want to escape it because we are resisting a lot of aspects of it. Entertainment is not a bad thing, but escaping into entertainment is another. When things are very bad for us, we are busy moaning, and mourning and then again, there is no time to enquire into life.

So, what is all of this life about? Vedanta reveals a very beautiful statement, and we are open to that statement because there is no way we can figure it out. That statement is *Sarvam khalu idam brahman* which means, all of this, everything, indeed is Brahman the limitless being, which is also referred to as God.

All of this includes what is seen and unseen, is Brahman. All of this, the past, present, and future is Brahman.

All of this includes animate and inanimate objects, which are Brahman.

All of this is also space and time, and is Brahman.

All this includes the emotional landscape of all of my emotions, Brahman.

All this Karma, and its many effects, too, is Brahman.

All of the intelligence, including the intelligence of the ant, virus, elephant, big or small, is Brahman.

All the material that makes up this world, the five great elements, space, fire, water, air, and the earth, the pancha maha bhuta, is Brahman.

Speaking of the five elements reminds me of my very dear and close uncle, who recently passed away from a heart attack. For most part of the day, I was with that family and I watched the body of my Uncle being consigned to flames, because we cremate. But, before the cremation is done, offerings are made to the five great elements, and the offering comes from the recognition that space, fire, water, air, earth, which are presided over by different deities, have sustained this body, and now, this body returns to them and it is a very beautiful offering of gratitude. All of this, the event of life, the event of birth, the event of death, the many conditions of youth, middle age, old age, all of that, is also Brahman, God.

That all that is here is Brahman, is the revelation that is in Vedanta. Which really means that everything is sacred, including you. You are not a sinner, in fact, in the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna is referred to as anagha, which means the one who is capable of no sin, whatsoever. In terms of the true being, pure presence that you are, you are sacred. A way to understand this better is by looking at our dreams as an example.

Imagine you have a dream where you booked a holiday with your family to Greece. You see yourself waiting to check in at the resort. The drive from the airport to the resort was very beautiful, bright blue skies, beautiful trees all swaying in the wind. The staff of the hotel are all very pleasant. The kids are waiting to get in the pool, your partner splashes water on you, and you wake up. It's a dream like any other dream, it was very real. Where did this dream come from? The five great elements, the sands, the resort staff, all the materials of the dream, came from you. The way in which all the materials were arranged, the sequencing of the events, the intelligence in the way in which they were all structured, the conversations in the dream, where did that come from? That also came from you. So, is there any part of the dream that you are not there? What I find is my intelligence and my material pervades the entire dream. The whole duration of the dream was entirely sustained by me, and it resolved in me.

This example is a very important example for us to appreciate the difference between creation and manifestation. Our general understanding is that the creation and the creator are separate - the creator is sitting somewhere, and there is a separate creation. But, the moment we have an example in which the creation is pervaded by the creator then we call it a manifestation, and the earlier understanding goes for a toss. We can now begin to appreciate the possibility that maybe this creation is indeed sacred. Maybe *Sarvam khalu idam brahman* maybe all of this is indeed, God. Maybe all of this is pervaded by God. It's a possibility, and in time if you study Vedanta systematically, then what you appreciated as a possibility, you will see as the reality. And so, if **acceptance is seeing what is, then it is seeing the presence of God**. God includes me, so acceptance of oneself, and acceptance of others is quite effortless. As you see, acceptance is very much tied to the understanding of God.

Your vision of yourself, your vision of others, and your vision of God really then becomes your acceptance of yourself, your acceptance of others, and your acceptance of God or Bhagavan, because all the way, you see what is.

### **Self Acceptance**

It is very easy for us to blame someone else, because any kind of blaming is resisting your own contribution in the situation, and it very easily lets you off the hook. A part of the process of acceptance is not resisting the many factors that have shaped you. Certain difficult situations and events have happened, but we try to not carry a hangover of the past. Much like a hangover, some of these events stay in our system even after they have ended and that is why I call it a hangover of an event. Not everything stays in the system, some we just process, and the situation is complete. For example, when you go on a drive, you are not really reacting much, you are just taking it all in, and even as different emotions come up, you are just seeing it,

observing it, taking it in, and then it is over, you keep moving. On the other hand, for all of us there are some events that have happened that cause a hangover. For example, let's say you broke up with your boyfriend - the event happened, but the hangover may last days, weeks, months, or perhaps even years. There is a buildup of thoughts, the narrative is something like, "*I am not lovable because he is not with me. I fear rejection. I am doomed, I will never find love again. Why am I so unlucky?*" Even though the event is over, my narrative about the event goes on and on because I am resisting that it happened.

**Vedanta helps us to see that no event can really define you because you are in and through each and every event.** Whether the event is good, bad, ugly, pleasant, unpleasant, you, pure presence, pure being, actually give reality to every event and situation. The situation in terms of it's experience may describe what you are going through, but it does not define you.

There is a difference between description and definition. A definition is something which is your intrinsic nature; nothing and no one can take it away from you; no one can add to it, and no one can take away from it. No one can take away the pure being, consciousness, that you are. It is the description that might be there that is subject to a lot of changes. The description is generally about the personality whereas the definition is about pure presence that gives reality to the personality. Certain things that have happened in our lives have been extremely painful. There are ways to deal with this pain. Our identity very often is shaped only by one or two roles in our lives, and that is unfortunate because there are many roles that we have.

When we talk about self acceptance one very important verse is there in the Bhagavad Gita, which says that you have to lift yourself, by yourself. You can be your best friend, you can also be your enemy. Much of our spiritual journey, and much of our yoga practice, is about us becoming friends to ourselves. Our inner voice that is constantly chatting, is likely also very critical, and we want to transform that voice into a loving, supportive, and kind voice. If you were to take a collection of all the nicest things and endearments that have been said to you, that is what that voice has to transform into because you are living with this voice 24/7.

The yoga sutras, which are very beautiful classical texts and are the basis of all yoga, defines yoga to be *chitta vritti nirodha*, which means mastery of the mind. You may be surprised when you look for complicated asanas in the yoga sutras, but instead you open the book and there are 196 sutras (succinct sentences that need to be unlocked) and there are only just a few asanas. So much has to do with mastery of the mind and developing an acceptance of oneself while we are processing the many events of our lives. This acceptance of oneself is also relational, thus, our acceptance of ourselves depends a lot on how others accept us.

A question that has been asked is "*Why do we hurt so much when someone leaves us? How can we heal from that experience and from the pain that we feel?*" When someone leaves

us, that is an event. Feeling hurt is a very natural part of the process. We cannot help but feel hurt because we loved the person so deeply, and much of our fulfillment came from that person. When someone tells me I love you, what that really means is you are lovable, correct? I love you, you are lovable. Now, if I truly believe that I am indeed lovable and acceptable, then yes I will feel hurt and I will struggle, but in time, I will be able to move on. But if that transfer of vision has not taken place, the person that said I love you is now gone, and now I feel I am not lovable anymore. Do you see what is happening? So this transfer of vision, that if someone says I love you, then all of these things are pointing to the fact that **I am indeed lovable and acceptable, the other person was just a mirror**. And then as your inner voice becomes a loving supportive caring voice, you will see that you are deeply lovable. And as your understanding of Bhagavan, God grows, you see that you are pervaded by all the different powers, and you are pervaded by beautiful supportive situations in your life, and you begin to see that you are brilliant, you are fantastic, and there is no one like you. So we have to work on this transfer of vision if we have not worked on it. I highly recommend a book called Mirror Work by Louise Hay which involves you looking into the mirror and saying positive things to yourself which work as affirmations. So you see that you are acceptable, you see that you are lovable. It is very good that we feel hurt, hurt is not a bad emotion. Hurt is just an indication that you loved very deeply. Just because the person has moved on, it does not mean the person did not love you enough, it's just that compatibility issues were there and for whatever reason the moving away, happened.

Now this brings us to a very important question: **Why do bad things happen to good people?** All of us have been through situations where the situation that happened was very unfair. You can try and look at it with any kind of logic or framework, but nothing explains it. The law of karma explains it, and it is very beautiful. The word karma is a Sanskrit word, it comes to us from the Vedas and refers to deliberate action done by a human being.

The law of karma tells us two things. The first, is that if I do an action there is a visible result, and there is an invisible result. For instance, If I am making masks for the security of my apartment complex, the visible result is the people get helped, and the invisible result is what we call punya. Punya are the invisible results, and they are all adding up in our account. If I do something harmful to another person, then again, the result of that action, the person gets harmed, but the invisible result of that is a word called Papa. Papa is the negative result of my actions. So, what the law of karma teaches that every day the actions that we do, the results of those actions, are both punya and papa. Favorable, and not so favorable. Although punya and papa are invisible, they do impact you. The punya that is all the favorable results, translates as pleasant situations in my life. Examples of this are to have a roof over my head, to have meals on the table, to have supportive people in my life, to have the opportunities to do what you want, so many blessings, and so many wonderful things that happen in our life is really because of this punya, that we have accumulated over a period of time. This has been accumulated during this

lifetime, and actually many previous lifetimes as well. The papa on the other hand manifests as unfavorable situations in my life. Some examples of this are any kind of suffering such as a breakup or a job loss.

Does this law of karma then make me fatalistic? Because, then I feel I don't have any choice, these are just going to happen to me, does this mean acceptance? No, not at all. Acceptance is not resignation, because acceptance has an element of doing something constructively, and productively. In addition to the transfer of the vision of being lovable, another part of healing from a break up, is to look at the different relationships in your life. Generally, what happens, is that we invest all of our eggs in one basket and we expect all the fulfillment in the world from only this one single person. But, the truth is, I have many other roles - I am also a son or a daughter, a parent, a work professional, a friend, an employer, an employee, etc. Look at what you are giving, and what you are receiving in all of your roles. That will be a very good reality check because you want to be able to contribute to all these relationships. This will give you a perspective on your entire life, whereas previously you were caught up with just this one person. Now, you are able to see what you are giving and what you are receiving in these other roles, and it's likely you will find in some relationships you are giving a lot more, in some relationships you are receiving a lot more and perhaps it makes sense to be able to do more.

Next, to deal with this hurt that you have, write copiously what you wish he had done, said, not done, not said and also what you wish you had done, said, not done, not said, etc. Then, find an image of him and talk to him. You will cry a lot and that is ok. Crying is not a problem, it's just a clearing mechanism, like the nose has mucus, the eyes have tears - there is no reason to complain about crying. What will happen is you will experience release and closure with respect with that relationship. So, yes, there is some hurt, but you have attempted a closure. If you have an altar, I would recommend that you keep all of this stuff that you have written at the altar, and seek grace for you to get over this.

“Getting over it” means making a decision. Very often we don't make that decision. I will get over this. What does it mean to get over it? I am not saying forgive and forget, I don't even want you to go down the road of forgiveness, because when you accept, you do end up forgiving, but we don't want to have extra pressure on ourselves to forgive. We don't need any of that pressure, we just want to see what is, we see the impact the relationship has made on us, we see that we are deeply lovable and acceptable. The past is done, it's over, it has left a deep impact on you but what is it that you can learn from the relationship? Were you very clingy? Were you communicative or were you over communicative? You will learn certain things and from all this learning, you are now enriched. We are now open and receptive to all of our roles, we see what we can do to contribute, and you have a committed yoga practice, so that you are able to see yourself as an independent conscious being that fills up the many roles of your life.

This kind of perspective that Vedanta offers you makes you very strong, very resilient and sensitive at the same time. Because of that, if and when another relationship happens, you are ready for it. All of us continue to have this need for love and belonging and it does not mean that I love less, or that he loved less, but for whatever reason, our karma intersected for some time, and then we went on our separate journeys. It's very much like entering the tube, let's say you enter one station and you travel a certain distance for five stations, someone walks in. Then you chat and maybe you get to know each other for some time, then that person gets off. Then if you are traveling in India, long distances, so you travel for sometimes 1-2 days, lots of people get in, lots of people get out. Some people will travel all the way with you to your destination and with some, it will be a brief encounter. What I am highlighting is that different people come into our lives for a different reason, and there is much to learn from them, there is much to contribute to them, and if you are going to look at your life as a series of karma, all meant for self mastery and self discovery then you are very grateful for all the people that have walked in and walked out. It's very likely you have walked in and walked out of many people's lives. And so you have that perspective, and you are open to all of life. Now, life is not equal to a boyfriend only, there is so much more to life. So, I think all of what I have said so far would help us to heal and not be afraid of pain.

Pain is a very beautiful emotion and you are much stronger for it. When you go to the gym, and you are doing curls with your dumbbells, the heart of any muscle is very soft jelly like tissue, and from the work out, there will be some wear and tear of the surrounding tissues. Only then, when it heals, the muscle becomes bigger, and then you can bulk up. So it heals then again you do some more, then as it heals it gets a little bigger. And then you find you have great muscle tone, but it did come from a little pain - it was not easy. It's not like just lifting two spoons. So yes, it came from a little pain, but we are not afraid of pain. The moment you say that, you just release yourself. That yes, it *is* painful and it is ok. **I am greater than any emotion**, I am greater than any pain that I might go through temporarily and that is ok.

Another question asked is: *“Alongside key events in life sometimes a succession of small instances in day to day life can seem to grind us down and we end up in a funk without us really noticing. The journey to the yoga mat or a healthy meal can seem impossible, as you see we end up on netflix or scrolling on the internet or having an extra glass of wine. How do we regain our energy and focus?”*

You know, every day we can live a happy life. Every day. It's possible. Spend some time thinking on what is it that meets your need for love - it might be talking to someone or hugging someone/something. It will be different for different people. Put that in your day. Think of your need for power - how do you feel powerful? For some, it may be getting a task done or ticking off your to do list. Again, you make that happen. How do you fulfill your need for fun? It might

just be laughing with your family or friend, or watching some videos. Think of something for each of your needs: love, independence, fun, respect, and acceptance. Then situations will change, but, you ensure that your needs and other people's needs are met on a daily basis. Also consider your spiritual need, how is that met? Is it by doing an asana, a pranayama, by praying, by meditating - you have to figure this out because there is a repertoire of things that you all do. When you are awake to this, you try and bring in it consciously, deliberately. Of course, there will be times that you just want to escape from it. Your need for entertainment can very well fit in for fun which is fine and great. So, what happens is it is very easy to regain your energy and focus.

When you watch a ship that is sailing to a particular harbor, the ship is never on track. There is no one straight line that you are going down, you stay on course but there will be days that you have focus if there is enough energy and enough fuel, but sometimes you go a little off course, which is required, which is the journey of life. So it is ok to be off course off and on, as long as you stay focused. And for that we will need to have a separate workshop on setting priorities, because we will never be able to fulfill the 20000 desires that we have but we are all able to fulfill the 5 or 6 priorities which is the basis of all of our desires, on a daily basis, and so with the understanding of our priorities, even if you go off course, it's not a problem.

*“What do you think of the role of trying to manifest things in life vs surrendering to what life has to offer?”*

This idea about manifesting things is highly overstated because it does not account for the role of karma. One aspect of it is absolutely correct, which is that you must want something so deeply, so badly, and you almost behave as if it's already happening and you actualize your idea into reality. That part of it is fine. But, I have to share this. I've had a lot of people come to me for counseling for when what they wanted, did not happen. They felt there was something wrong because they didn't manifest their intention properly. Well, they did not account for the law of karma. Karma, the situations of punya and papa, that are unfolding on a daily basis.

Let's say you did great visualisation and intention building of launching your venture as an entrepreneur, but now coronavirus happened. Whom shall you blame? Here, you just surrender, meaning you don't resist, you see the facts of life. You use this down time to plan your entrepreneurship so that when all of this tides over, you have all the energy, the vigor, the focus, the enthusiasm to just dive into your venture. **There is a role for trying to manifest, but thoughts do not replace action. Thoughts and intentions can only enhance action.** The same thing applies to prayer - I cannot sit there and just pray. Prayer definitely enhances my worldly actions. That is what we need to do, and surrendering involves doing things that are required to be done. We are not like solar batteries without any hands or legs, we have been given this



beautiful body to work and to make things happen alongside thinking and visualizing and actualizing.

*How do you accept someone that will always be a part of your life but is not a very nice person. How do you forgive and accept them?*

When we talk about accepting another person, what we are saying is I am ok, you are ok. You have certain personality patterns that I struggle with, and we might find a way to be compatible or have healthy boundaries. Accepting that person will be a part of my life, which means the person is going to contribute to my life in some way and I will also contribute to the other person. You decide how much or what kind of a role you want that person to have in your life. If it is possible, I would suggest you talk to that person. Tell them how they have contributed to your life and you wish to contribute to their life by doing abcd and what do you think about that? Or, you can also ask the person that I would really like it if you were to do abcd. The request should be realistic, we are not saying “oh, please go to the moon and come back”. Ask the person, is that possible? There is room for dialogue. Generally what happens is, we make our point in a way like we declare like the Queen of Sheba: “You should do the dishes!” and then we walk off. That does not work. Try “I would like you to do the dishes, is it possible?” or “Can you do this?” or “What can I do to make you comfortable?” If the person will be a part of your life whether you like it or not, no matter how dysfunctional they are or you are, you can have a healthy boundary. Which means that there are certain areas of your life that you do not discuss with them. Especially if you note that the person continues to hurt or criticize you, or put you down, you accept the fact that this person sadly, for a number of reasons, has become very critical in life. You understand it is hell to live in that person's head - so, you also feel sad for that person, how critical that person must be on themselves and you pray for that person. You pray that the person has a happy life, but you also have an emotional boundary especially if you are staying in the same space. This way, you are able to contribute to that person's life, and you also see that that person is contributing to yours. Most importantly, you see that you are an independent being that has many roles. You don't make that role to be the end all, be all, of your life.

There is a lot to be said about forgiveness, but just accepting that different factors, different laws such as that person's karma has shaped him or her, and you can only do your best. With this, you bring in *kaushalam*, competence in dealing with that person and you also bring in acceptance seeing the person as the person is. Seeing your own reactions, praying for both of you and seeing the purpose of that relationship in your life. Very often, we do not even think about this. What is the purpose of that relationship? Most importantly, I think all relationships, especially family/friends/partners, will be to show love and support and a commitment to the growth of the other person. So that takes different permutations and combinations across all relationships. You have to see what is good enough for you and try to have a dialogue with the

person if it is possible. If it is not possible, then, you have to reconcile with the fact that this is the journey this person could do in my life, and I wish him well on his onward journey, and I am grateful for them bringing certain realizations into my life. So you are at peace with everything. The more you do this the more you are at peace with everything.

Although briefly touched on in the responses to questions, I wanted to talk a little bit more about the acceptance of other people. I am drawing from this person Eric Berne who spoke about the four life positions. In relation to certain events, we might think that something is ok, or something is not ok. But here, we are talking about certain life positions, it is almost like a default setting that we take on. Let's say the washing machine, you might have set it to fuzzy, and it becomes a default setting for all kinds of things that happen. Whether it is a large or small load, it is default. We want to be able to respond in a way that is flexible and it is not default. But, sometimes because of the series of situations in our lives, we develop these default settings. These default settings are the four life positions.

One is, "*I am ok, you are not ok*". So as a life position, it will then translate into my perspective of different people. Wherever I go, "*I am ok, you are not ok*" which means I am likely to be patronizing, arrogant, or even paranoid.

The second is, "*I am not ok, you are not ok*". This is a dangerous position to have because these people are likely to be suicidal and have no hopes for anything, there is usually a lot of futility and despair.

The third is, "*I am not ok, you are ok*". This is kind of a victim position because the person has not claimed one's own powers and constantly dwells on "*why me*" lamenting all the time. It's likely we could be any of these positions.

What we want to do is move to this position of "*I am ok, and you are ok*".

Vedanta talks about oneness, *sarvatma bhaava* - all that is here is me, all that is here is one. The baby step that we take towards this, is seeing that "*I am ok, and you are ok*". I have been shaped by different factors, different life situations, and all of these laws and principles are indeed the order, the dynamic balance of God. And likewise you have also been shaped in that way. What happens is one develops naturally, a healthy self respect and also a respect for others. It cuts across class, it cuts across gender, it cuts across all possible divides and divisions. It is a very healthy attitude to have as a default setting. **Because when I am ok, and you are ok, I look for constructive ways to deal with situations.** I also have working trust that you will do your best. Of course, this may not work with people who are highly manipulative or who are homicidal, but still we have found in therapeutic settings that when they are touched by care and respect, some of them do change. If we try to have this position, then it is likely that we are able to see what is and therefore acceptance of oneself, acceptance of others, is really acceptance of all that is here that is God.

**Sarvam khalu idam Brahman**

All that is here is God and you are indeed sacred.