

ZULF'S COMFORT WITH HIMSELF AT 48

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When I was young, I was like any other baby mammal. I was sniffing around filled with curiosity and trepidation and all sorts of great hopes and dreams. When I was really young, younger than six, I would cause chaos in the house of my grandmother in Bengal. My mom was trying to get her life in order. She was ambitious and got all sorts of corporate jobs and did fashion shows and so on. She would drop myself and my younger brother to her mom's. Now my grandmother is a saintly character. Later in life, I just could not believe the patience of the woman and her affection and love and what she put up with when I was young. I got a little chicken that just hatched from the market with my brother, and we loved it. It was bright yellow. We called it "Pia". And the little hen got very attached to us all, would only eat chocolate in the morning, would go into people's bedrooms and pull their hair to remind them she's hungry, and when my grandmother read the newspaper in the sun in the morning with sunlight streaming to her feet, she would be sitting on my grandmother's feet dozing off.

Then my brother and I decided that we were undersea explorers in my grandmother's bedroom, with stone floors. We took huge amounts of talcum powder and poured it on the entire floor including under the bed. Then we both wore socks on our feet and hands and started going around the room swimming around and around and around the whole day.

We were quite demanding, and my grandmother was loving and did not abuse us too much for all this.

Now I am no longer young, am 48, and I am quite familiar and comfortable with who I am.

Years ago, Edie Brickell and the New Bohemians came out with their song "What I Am" and I loved the song. I thought she was a pretty lady and her song was twinkling with laughter. What I did not understand then is that it's not all that easy to be just comfortable with who you are. Now other people do not make things easy for you, but here I am and I am more comfortable with who I am than you can imagine.

I was thinking about what sort of things I am good at and what I am bad at. You see there are many interesting intellectual pursuits, and some of them require enormous amounts of technical effort and intricacy. I can do some of this type of work sometimes, but I don't work like others. I do not think that technical wizardry is all that great all the time.

I can only do that sort of thing when my motivation is right. And that's not easy, because I am naturally drawn to fundamental questions. I prefer to work on things where I feel I can reach certain or near certain answers and I can do it with tools I know exist. I have an enormous amount of problems on working on intricate sophisticated problems which I am not very sure is right.

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A lot of people are in fields where the 'cutting edge' is intricate and they have superstars who are good at these considerations. I am not even sure if any of their fields are valid yet, so I won't be competing with them. So I am comfortable with my way of seeing the world. I know it, and I am comfortable with it, and I am not going to change much now any more. I already have diabetes and am grumpy in the morning without coffee. What use is there for being unaccepting of my own comfort? I am extremely confident that I am right on things I am right about, and you'd need a large number of bulldozers to budge me. And that's just fine. I am not meant for the sorts of things people do where they consider 'open mindedness' to be so large that they actually waste their time on things that are far from truth. Those things are for younger people. Me, I know the Truth and the Way. You won't have an easy time budging me from my convictions at all. I am invested in some of these for life. And I will consider all alternatives to be folly.

Don't try to convince me that I am doing something wrong. I won't even listen. I'll think you're a dipshit idiot and move on.