

James: Any feeling is an attribute. You are that because of which the feeling is known. You do not feel anything. When the mind is predominately sattvic awareness as attention flowing through the subtle body causes the feeling of love in the mind. It is a pure attribute. It belongs to the mind, not to the self.

Thomas: This was my point with Bliss. Isn't bliss a feeling? Would not make this an attribute. What is the difference with bliss and love or compassion as the Buddhists put it.

James: The bliss word is one of the biggest all time problems in the spiritual world. The word, ananda, which has been translated as bliss actually is actually ananta, which means without limits or without end and refers to you, awareness. But because people are so emotionally unfulfilled they imagine that if they realize who they are they will be walking around feeling good all day long. What bliss actually means is a 'sense' of authenticity, wholeness and peace that emanates from the understanding I am whole and complete and emanates out as good feelings.

Thomas: As far as I know through my practice of Buddhism, what Buddha meant was the sense of a "personal self." He described it somewhere like the rafters of a house being removed. Removing the wrong identification with the person. In his case being Siddhārtha Gautama, his biography, memories, thoughts, feelings, emotions, habits, conditioning, samskaras, vasnas, karma and so on. This is what he meant by emptiness. The sense of the person no longer being there. The new sense of who you are is Brahman, awareness according to Vedanta or emptiness according to Buddha, but they are almost identical. How much of a departure was this really from the vedas?

James: Yes, I think that is what he meant, no separate self or personal self. I am of course very familiar with the Mundaka quote. It is one of my favorites. The Buddha quote is much welcomed. I get asked about this all the time and since I don't know anything about Buddhism I cannot speak with any authority. This makes it clear that emptiness is not empty. Buddhists do not appreciate it, but the Vedantins have a clever saying, "Buddhism is just a chip off the tooth of the Vedas."

How the Brahmins describe Brahman:

In the highest golden sheath is Brahman,
stainless, without parts;
Pure is it, the light of lights.
This is what the knowers of the Self know.
The sun shines not there,
nor the moon and stars,
these lightnings shine not,
where then could this fire be?
His shining illumines all this world.
Brahman, verily, is this Deathless.

Mundaka Upanishad

How the Buddha describes Emptiness:

Where water, earth, heat
and wind find no footing,
there no stars gleam,

no sun is made visible,
there shines no moon,
there the darkness is not found;
When the sage, the brahmin,
himself in wisdom knows this place
he is freed from the form
and formless realms,
from happiness and suffering.

The Udana