

Enlightened and Dissatisfied

Hi James,

I just saw your last video yesterday on Youtube with the guy from Buddha at the GasPump. Very interesting as begets the Master of masters; yet, in viewing the video I see once again where some of my recent hesitations (previous emails) are coming from. Sorry if the following account might cause a certain amount of frustration on your part (maybe I'm just projecting, but I get the impression from some of our recent dialogue that you may have expected more from my understanding). I can only be as honest and transparent as can be.

James: No, I don't expect anything from your understanding, Donnie. Maybe I have a little more confidence in it than you do, but that is all.

Donnie: To the point: in your dialogue on Skype some of your responses to your host have left me a little perplexed. For example, when he speaks of his sense of silence (what he seems to consider being his personal attainment) not being disturbed while engaged in separating 2 enraged dogs, it seems he was expressing the basic myth surrounding enlightenment as experience. This can be verified by the fact that in one instant he says that his sense of silent presence is the background of his experience of life (and this is what the neo-advaitins keep repeating ad nauseam as their "permanent" experience of enlightenment), and yet at another moment he mentions that if his thumb were forcefully banged upon with a hammer, his reaction (experience) would obviously not be so peacefully immersed. To summarize, this guy is relating to enlightenment in experiential (and therefore transient) terms.

James: That's right.

Donnie: Where I feel a little dumbfounded is that you seemingly (and smilingly) go along with his permanent "silent background" experience. (Note: Maybe this is part of your "chameleon" teaching strategy. This is what I was alluding to in a recent email when mentioning how you answer differently to different students on similar topics).

James: Well, Donnie, he was not my student. I was not asked to set him straight spiritually. My publisher dug him up and I agreed to do the interview for publicity for the book. So he was my host and I was a guest. As Krishna says in the Gita, "let not the wise unsettle the minds of the ignorant." He is a good guy doing his best. Let him be.

So all I could do was to affirm his view. It would have been impolite to correct him in public. And he was not asking me to set him straight. I'm accustomed to a smooth ride, Donnie. Or maybe I'm a dog that lost its bite, but I can't single handedly take on IGNORANCE whenever it rears its ugly head. Probably some of his listeners bought the book, my publisher will be happy, maybe somebody who is affected by it will contact me and I can be of service to them.

Donnie: I bring this up because, as I read your many *satsangs* (I'm still getting through most of the older ones), I sometimes get confused as to what the teaching is really saying. In turn, this confusion somehow leads to a certain sense of doubt: Aren't I somehow deluding myself? Of course I can resolve the doubt almost instantly by knowing I'm the Knower of the doubt (the awareness of both knowledge and ignorance). However, many of the descriptions of how enlightenment relates to relative experience (in both your Skype interview and on shiningworld), occasionally leads me back to doubt.

James: The doubt is left over from the time when you were not clear about who you are. It is quite natural. Just dismiss it as an object, affirm your wholeness and get on to the next thought.

Donnie: Fact is, Donnie is not always a happy camper and, as you remarked during our encounter, I can be quite negative. There was no rebuttal on my part as I've been keenly aware of this throughout much of my adult life. (Note that others have coined this same negativity as skepticism or being highly critical, or even "realistic". Whatever the case may be, if not for this *vasana* - if you can call it that - I would still be under the influence of delusional cults, gurus and belief systems. Hence, what is sometimes seen as a shortcoming might be positive in other circumstances).

James: Yes, you, meaning Donnie, are a bit dissatisfied with yourself. What do you expect from yourself that you are not supplying? Are there things you feel you should have done (or are doing) that you have not done? What kind of fear is supporting this dissatisfaction? On the other hand, the karma yoga view...count your blessings, be grateful for the gift of life, etc... should work to dismiss this emotionality. Life is not here to make us happy. You have to make yourself happy by doing what you enjoy. Maybe you withdrew from life because of some hurt suffered at the hands of a family member, an old girlfriend, etc.

Donnie: So, this brings me to my central question: it seems that your host is still quite immersed in the enlightenment via experience scene. Though you bring this up in your interview, it seems the experience phenomenon is always lurking in the background as a reference point. And you seem to accommodate your host (for teaching strategies?) up to a certain point by describing relative life in enlightenment in descriptive experiential terms (maybe like you said in a recent email, the authors of the Vedantic scriptures sometimes talk of extravagant bliss in order to lure in possible eligible seekers). So, since I often fall short of these descriptions (for example, in Montreal's current outstanding week long heat wave of + 45 degree C - a literal living hell for poor old Donnie - I feel like a total irritable load of crap), I start wondering if Donnie isn't deluding Donnie with this enlightenment business.

James: How do you know that you aren't deluding yourself by thinking that you are deluding yourself about the enlightenment business? Maybe we should speak on the phone. If you get a netbook and install Skype we can video chat. It is nearly as good as an in person communication.

Donnie: (Yes, I realize that it is far from being only Donnie' predicament in the current situation. That I'm part of a field in which the personal Donnie is only the 5 elements going through the pressure of certain other elements at play...). Hence, I'm the one that is aware that Donnie feels like hell warmed over (now I get where concepts of hell fire come from: my skin feels like its literally burning). But I sometimes wonder - with the numerous descriptions of happy and blissful jnanis - if I'm (Donnie) not really up to par. Again, you could say that Donnie doesn't like this and that that is apparently happening in awareness...but what I'm getting at is that when I really get down to it, all I have is knowledge.

James: That's right. If the knowledge is not enough to satisfy you, then you have to do action. If you cannot dismiss this dissatisfaction with the knowledge that it is just *prarabdha*, and appreciate yourself as you are, then you need to experiment with your life until you hit on something that turns you on. Maybe the idea that you have to stick it out in that dead end job until you retire is a bummer. Maybe you are fed up with yourself for flogging the dead spiritual horse. Maybe this negativity is somehow satisfying to your ego. Maybe you feel as if you deserve more from life because you are so wonderful. I don't know. As I have pointed out many times self knowledge is not experiential bliss. It is a feeling of wholeness, authenticity. I met several great mahatmas in India who were grumpy old men.

Donnie: This knowledge is both intellectual and experiential, though the many inferences that can be made by the different ways of interpreting your *satsangs* and recent interview leaves me at times perplexed. You definitely are the king of chameleons (the self can take on innumerable forms) and I know that much of my confusion stems from the fact that I've always had a lot of problems processing contradictions. Life is obviously full of them; somehow I thought self knowledge was a little less ambiguous.

James: How about being OK with paradoxes? Let them stand. What do they have to do with you? Why make an issue about them? The biggest paradox of all is that there is a Donnie in the first place, considering the non-dual nature of reality. I am not really a chameleon, Donnie, although it may look like it if you evaluate me by the words that come out of my mouth. I am just very smart and experienced. I am like a big fish that sits on the bottom of the river with its mouth open and lets the food come in rather than the little ones that rush all over chasing every possible bug. It is a waste of time for me and source of confusion for others if I say too much. People need to be spoon fed the truth, a small mouthful at a time. I can tell what is too little or too much. This is not about me making a big statement about TRUTH. I am here to serve others.

Donnie: I guess I only feel 100% blissful and one pointed when I read a text like the Advadhuta Gita (shiningworld). So, could the Illustrious MahaRamji offer some comments to these concerns?

James: Is the bliss coming from the Gita or is it coming from you? If you think it is the Gita, then just read it all day and you will feel great. ☺ This feel good stuff has to do with the way you live. It has nothing to do with the self or self knowledge. Somehow you are not doing the

right thing and some part of you knows it and you feel bad. I may not have mentioned it...but I usually do...that the scriptures have a certain agenda. They are trying to encourage seekers to seek, so they are not above a bit of false advertising. Check out one of the last few verses in Atma Bodh about bliss. It is obviously a conscious exaggeration to motivate people. The kind of bliss you want...you cannot feel the bliss of the self because it is beyond feeling...comes from right living. Maybe you have made some choices that do not sit well with you.

Love,

James