

Enlightenment does not Necessarily Make You Wise

Hi James ,

This is Mark from Manhattan.

I was writing to share I suppose something of myself and where the Vedanta has been guiding me of late. I don't expect anything from writing this, as it all seems to constantly become redundant. But I started so....first a little potted history of 'me'

I was attracted to spirituality, quite inadvertently, through seeking to gain self confidence with a girl I was interested in. I thought that I would be more confident and centered if I learnt to meditate and become more 'spiritual.' So I did and quickly my initial reasons were trumped with an intense yearning to solve this 'great matter.' I wanted to work out why things felt like they seemed to be one way but were instead another. Even at this age (I was 17) I had had some experiences of peace and glimpses of much more and I quickly set out to find what I could about spiritual practices and philosophy.

James: It is so interesting how the self gets a person on the spiritual path. How did it go with the girl? 😊

Mark: Of course, growing up in a small town back in the '80s there wasn't much useful knowledge. Anyhow, I still found books and methods and tried to follow my own 'inner' guidance as much as possible and surrender to whatever it asked of me. Sometimes things went well but I ended up doing some crazy shit too and realized my intuition was clouded by my desires and I could not rely on it.

Anyway after years of this and that I managed to finally have a very definite non-dual experience that obviously could not be surpassed. But it went away and I knew that there was something missing: that 'little thing' that would tweak it and make it all settle once and for all. I had intuited this in glimpses many times before; the trouble was I didn't know what that 'little thing' was.

I tried regaining non-dual experiences but each one showed me that same issue again. I became despondent: I thought I had realized the ultimate but things weren't that much better.

I hooked up with organized stuff for many years, mainly Buddhist, learned their trip and found a lot of gems but they weren't telling me the real deal. When I got into Dzogchen I had an

intense experience of self recognizing self but I still didn't know that the self was me.

I got into Advaita, mainly Nisargadatta and Ramana. I went to see Gangagi. I could tell that she had something but not that 'little thing' herself at some level.

Next I saw 'Sailor-Bob' Adamson, an Australian student of Nisargadatta. The first thing he said to me was "You are the awareness that is present right now. You are that which is aware of everything always going on around you. This is who you are. You have to re-cognize that. You have to cognize it and then learn to re-cognize it."

James: This is the basic instruction. It is true. Ninety five percent of the teachers these days are touting enlightenment as some kind of experiential happening. They lead you to believe that is it something special, mystical, extraordinary, not present and available. His formulation of the basic teaching is correct. It is a re-cognition, an appreciation of something that is always with you. This kind of teaching is only good for very ripe souls.

Mark: When he said it I actually saw it - became it, for want of a better expression. I had heard before that I AM THAT, of course. It almost cliché these days.

Bob also described to me the nature of self and a lot of other good stuff, a lot of inquiry. What he didn't have was a really compete system of teaching as I found when I read your 'How to' book. Bob didn't teach me about *karma yoga* which, you are right, has been making all the difference. Nor did I receive an explanation of all that he was teaching me.

James: It sounds like Bob is an enlightened person but not a proper teacher. There is this myth that enlightenment ipso facto makes you a teacher capable of 'transmitting' enlightenment. We call this kind of teaching *smriti*, remembered knowledge. He is teaching from his own experience...which can be helpful up to a point. But this kind of teacher can almost never close the sale. It takes a complete teaching. The interesting thing about this myth is that most of these so-called teachers are caught up in it too. It is a kind of vanity verging on narcissism, if I must say so. They are so in love with their enlightenment they do not understand that experience does not transfer. They assume that one size fits all...that what worked for them should work for everyone. I recall the Muktananda 'Blue Pearl' teaching that he propagated. He said that you have to have it before you get enlightened...because he had it. It is so obviously untrue, it is laughable. But it goes to show that just being enlightened...although it is not clear that Muktananda was enlightened...does not necessarily make you wise. The way everyone formulates his or her ignorance depends on the person's experience and nobody's experience is the same because we all have different *vasanas* and our intellects all assimilate our experiences differently. If they had a proper impersonal teaching (based the fact that we

are just three bodies and a self) that was systematic and comprehensive, there is no end to the number of people they could help to the end of the path. As it is, a person gets as much as he or she can through the points where the student's and the teacher's understanding intersect and then they move on to another teacher, get a little more there, experience frustration and move on. In Vedanta we make it clear that enlightenment does not qualify you to teach. And it becomes obvious when you subject yourself to the tradition, which is an amazing thing really. I feel kind of sorry for these modern seekers who have never had the *sampradaya* worked on them by a proper *mahatma*. There are many people enlightened through Vedanta but the world never hears of them because they keep to themselves. I'm not condemning the Neo-Advaita teaching scene because everything serves the self, but it is a very unskillful tool. There is a well worn path to the pathless and Neo-Advaita is not it.

Mark: When I read about knowledge verses experience in your book I understood finally what "that little thing" was: I needed to know that my non-dual nature was me as my identity **with my intellect**. Bob didn't make that clear to me, he only showed me and told me, but didn't explain it like that. Without *karma yoga* the insights I have gotten through self inquiry and everything else haven't stuck. Everything else about traditional Vedanta you have taught me has been reorienting my view on it all.

Somehow my intellect had become the poor-man on my spiritual quest. I had convinced myself that intuition, action, experience and being etc. were the way to go to attain enlightenment. I had been taught to doubt that my intellect was a worthy director of my spiritual life and was only suitable for material living. This really depressed me as my intellect was my best asset. I was something of a child-prodigy with my intellect and learning (quite proud too - maybe a lesson for me), so it seemed like I was being forced to keep my best horse in the stable.

The reorienting of my thoughts and the re-awakening of my intellect as a powerful ally has been shy of amazing for me. I strove for so long to attain some 'state' or create enlightenment one way or another.

To know that it is a matter of knowledge more than anything has contributed in a big way to making me whole again. I have seen the pecking order of my 'components' from the Self out to the world and I am learning to have all these parts (intellect, mind, ego etc) take their proper position in 'steering' and 'functioning' things, view, life etc.

James: This is just great, Mark. I mean it. You are so lucky. If the realization of the non-dual self, experiential or not, does not change the intellect's basic understanding and therefore cause a complete reorientation of one's life, it is not enlightenment. You have so many of these

so-called enlightened people talking a good enlightenment but their basic experiential orientation remains unchanged. They get caught up in the same tired old stuff: sex, money, fame, power, etc. And they know it, but they cannot admit it because they have gone off and made a big deal of their enlightenment in front of the world so they have to hide it or say it isn't real or that they are not the doer so it didn't really happen or turn their dysfunction into a 'teaching' meant to bust the egos of their fawning devotees.

Mark: At the moment I am watching your core teachings videos. Trying to do the 4 *yogas* (three *guna yoga* as well) and doing the 'silent' meditation and inquiry into self as a seated focused style and as a less ritualized thing hither and thither throughout the day. *Bhakti* is my weakest side at the moment as that too was disregarded in my 'experiential' days (emotions had gotten to be something of an enemy for the good Buddhist type that i became).

James: Your *bhakti* is fine, Mark. It has been strong all along. It has kept you on the path and it is motivating your work now. Desire for liberation is *bhakti*. Self inquiry is the highest form of *bhakti*.

Mark: Anyway I really wanted to thank you, You have given me 'that little thing' which has changed everything. I would love to express my gratitude if I could do justice I probably would try but that too becomes redundant and ever fresh.

Just wanted to give you a brief of where I am coming and going from and what's up with me at moment. This only serves to help me really but if I need help from you or advice, then maybe some ideas of my learning and development prior might be of help.

It is good to be able to say this stuff to someone.

Thanks again

Mark

James: Thank you for this Sean. It is very gratifying to me to see the Vedanta working. If you need any help please write. I will publish this anonymously as it is a great testimonial to the power of self knowledge.