

A Golden Light and an Interpretation

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An Enlightenment Experience and an Interpretation

Ram: This experience took place thirteen years ago and amounted to this man's spiritual awakening. It put him on the path and has kept him there until today.

Galen: Well, it looked like a golden light, gold like melted butter and sort of the same kind of smooth or frictionless, almost like a substance but not really a substance. I could see it from, in and in comparison to the abstract, formless terror/darkness of my mind, and it appeared just as I had given up all hope of ever rising out of this horrifying emptiness and wanted to die... and when my attention swung towards it, it blew through me, was all around me, was me, faster than time could measure and there was nothing but that, a sense of limitless peace is the best way I can describe it, but that description arose out of the terror I had just been experiencing beforehand. Of course in that experience there was no description, words or comparison.

Ram: This experience is the self's way of communicating with you. It is telling you who you really are. I'll decode the symbols. (1) Golden light means the self. The self is awareness. Light is one of the most common symbols of awareness. Fire is another because it gives light. (2) Gold is very valuable. The self, you, awareness, are very valuable. It is for the sake of the self that you do everything. (3) Gold does not tarnish, meaning change. You do not change. Smooth and frictionless means that it is beyond *karma*, duality. (4) It is non-dual. You need duality for conflict, separation, friction. Life is friction. It wears you away. The self is not subject to friction. You are exactly the same today as the day GALEN was born. Galen has been ground down a bit by life, but you have not been affected in the slightest. (5) It is not the mind. You say, "I could see it from, in and in comparison to the abstract, formless terror/darkness of my mind." The main Vedantic technique for self-realization is the discrimination of the self from the mind. Your epiphany did make it clear that you, the golden light, was not the mind. "There was nothing but that" means that you are limitless and full. (6) There is no "other," to use the Vedantic terminology. (7) The self, you, are limitless peace (*parama shanti*).

It is true that there were no words, but words are absolutely essential to the understanding of one's self. Vedanta is all about words. They are the means of self-knowledge. Self-realization takes place in the mind. The self is already enlightened, so it doesn't need knowledge. It is self-knowing, self-luminous. The mind needs to know that it is the self and in what sense it is the self, so it needs knowledge and knowledge comes in words. Yes, once the words have delivered the knowledge they disappear into the knowing/knowledge. And they can emerge back out of the knowing when necessary – to remind the mind or to teach others. The problem with such experiences is that they don't come with a label attached telling you what they mean. This is why the self organized our contact. This experience is not telling you to "do" anything. It is revealing something.

Galen: Wow! Thanks, man. I been looking for almost thirteen years for somebody to tell me what this experience meant!

Ram: The problem with experience is that it does not come with an attached message that tells you what it means. If you leave it up to the ego to interpret it, the *vasanas* will interpret it, meaning that one's beliefs and opinions will make the interpretation. The value of Vedanta lies in a body of "meta" truths – all of which amount to one truth – that can put any experience – subtle or gross – into perspective. By "perspective" I mean a way of seeing that can "handle" experience in such a way that it leaves you free of experience. As long as you take yourself to an experiencer you will never be free, because every experience modifies you. You are not the person you were ten minutes ago. This is why you cannot take people to be real. Somebody falls in love with you and invites you to move in with them. Then one fine day that same person falls out of love and asks you to leave. This happened to me once about ten years ago. So I said to her, "I'm happy to leave if you can answer this question. I'm quite confused. Are you the person who fell in love with me and invited me to live with you or are you the person who does not love me and wants me to leave?" She just stood there for the longest time thinking about it – she was very spiritual and really trying to understand things. Eventually she just looked at me in a very strange way and walked off. She couldn't answer. I didn't leave. So a couple of weeks later a truck pulled up in front of our flat, the movers came and got all her stuff and she drove off behind the truck to her new house.

She simply had no way to look at herself and her behavior that would set her free. This is what I mean by "interpretation." The correct answer of course is: "I am not the one who loves you or doesn't love you. I am the awareness of love I had for you and the awareness of the love changing to hate. I am the awareness of the hate." If she had understood this then we could have communicated. But as it was the loving person was no longer there. In its place was an unloving person.

~ Ram