

An Experience Junkie

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Len: Hi, Daniel. What do you mean by “when this understanding is firm in your mind”?

Daniel: Firm understanding means direct knowledge. And direct knowledge is when one has completely assimilated the fact that he/she is not the body-mind entity but that which knows the body-mind. Direct knowledge is when discrimination (*viveka*) is totally firm and there is no identity confusion between you, awareness (*sat*) and the objects (*mithya*) that appear to/in you.

Firm self-understanding is enlightenment.

Len: I know some of this as first-hand knowledge and some as second-hand knowledge.

Daniel: I think you are referring to direct knowledge and indirect knowledge. Indirect knowledge is when you have realised your true nature as awareness but have not yet fully “claimed” it. A good example is the two comparative statements: “I know that I am limitless awareness” versus “I am limitless awareness.”

The first statement is indirect knowledge because the idea that you are awareness still remains as an object, there is still a gap/division (duality) in this statement. The second statement is a direct conviction.

Len: I can transcend the mind to be the witness all the time, to be beyond personality (I am witness very often but I become a person again very often and then become witness again and so on. The point is, I can get deep in silence very often.

Daniel: All experiences share the same default: they end. This is why enlightenment is not an experience. Enlightenment is firm self-knowledge. The teachings of Vedanta make this very clear. Unfortunately many seekers get caught up in the “experiential” enlightenment game.

The pursuit of a special experience called enlightenment is unnecessary and possibly harmful since experience is in the dream of *maya* and never lasts. Transcending the mind has nothing to do with freedom. You may wish to define enlightenment as experience of the self, but what good is it if you still suffer attachment to experience? Enlightenment means that you don't pursue or avoid objects with the belief that you have something to gain or lose by obtaining or avoiding them.

You don't need to transcend anything, Len. You only need to attain the understanding that you are already free awareness and that the body-mind entity is an object appearing to/in you.

Len: And in that silence I am witness – a formless entity which is registering everything, an entity free from this mind-body called Len. However, that silence is interrupted as mind becomes a little less silent so often and I lose the witness. And then I become silent – silent witness – again, and so on.

Daniel: Whether the mind is silent or not, you, awareness, are always free from Len. You are free from all states of mind. The state of silence is just an object known to you, awareness. The nature of the mind is to vibrate. A “noisy mind” is not the problem, only the identification to the noise causes an issue. Once discrimination is firm, whether the mind be vibrating noise or silence, all is negated as unreal, *mithya*.

Len: However, I have never had unity experience, experience of non-duality ever yet, when one merges with any object one witnesses so that duality of object and subject is no more, and also I have never had experience of *samadhi*.

Daniel: Liberation does not require any type of experience. Enlightenment is not an experience of *samadhi*. Again, the spiritual market is polluted by this false notion. These experiences often create a great hindrance to the inquirer. You are a perfect example of an inquirer who is trapped by the experiential enlightenment notion. This point is going to be difficult to digest.

Vedanta says that this is a non-dual reality, therefore there is only one self. Whatever is experienced anywhere at any time in any plane of consciousness is the non-dual self. So the pursuit of a special experience called enlightenment is unnecessary. The freedom that people seek can only be known and appreciated for what it is. To quote Ramana, whose views are in complete harmony with Shankara and traditional Vedanta, “By *jnana*, or spiritual knowledge, alone is this bliss (the self) to be realised, and *jnana* is achieved through *vichara*, or steady inquiry.”

Len: Yet a friend I was speaking to over the phone yesterday goes into *samadhi* every day many times and she has non-duality experience many times. I am not there yet. However, my progress is very fast, I should be there soon.

Daniel: Your friend is no more free than you are. Even if one could experience perfect *nirvikalpa samadhi* it does not help, because then you cannot experience your life. If you were here not to be here, you would not be here. You cannot avoid life. Additionally, *samadhi* ends at some point and requires effort. It is impossible to exert effort endlessly, so the *samadhi* will cease on that account.

You’re not going to get anywhere soon, because you are already there. Meaning, you are already free. You have never not been free. You are what you seek. The only thing left to do is to recognise your limitless nature by applying the appropriate teachings, Vedanta offering a means.

You think that enlightenment is some sort of transcending experience, and until this notion has been dropped you will continue to suffer and seek.

Len: What is your spiritual history? How and when did you get started, and so on?

Daniel: My spiritual history was put to a quick end thanks to Vedanta and the clear guidance of my teacher, James Swartz.

Though you have some great spiritual insight, Len, you are deeply stuck in the experiential mud which is preventing you from assimilating self-knowledge. If you want to end your seeking, Len, then I suggest that you order and read James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment* and digest each page with an open mind.

You may very well "get it" quickly because of your meditation practice has fruited a *sattvic* mind.

Len: Yes, Ramana talks of *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Have you and James Swartz had *nirvikalpa samadhi*?

Daniel: Again, *nirvikalpa samadhi* is just an experience. And like all experiences, it ends. Freedom is not an experience. Freedom is freedom from experience. In other words, a free person is someone who does not crave or depend on any particular kind of experience for his/her happiness, because he/she knows that they are already the non-dual self.

Samadhi-chasing is a painful pursuit and has zero to do with enlightenment. The only benefit of *samadhi* is the purification that it may give, if the inquirer is able to claim the experience of "oneness" as his/her true nature.

I can't speak on behalf of James. But what I can say is that he will confirm that experience is not necessary or a qualification for enlightenment. Vedanta does not care about anyone's experience, because experiences all share the same fickle nature, they are all *mithya*. Freedom is not found in *mithya*. Freedom is **from** *mithya*. Contemplate the emboldened word "from."

There are many enlightened people who have never had any spiritual experience. Seekers don't suffer from an experience problem but simply an ignorance problem. Ignorance refers to not understanding one's true identity as limitless, ordinary, unchanging, non-dual awareness. The only remedy to self-ignorance is self-knowledge. The application of knowledge eradicates ignorance, and the eradication of ignorance is the revealing one's already free nature.

Len: I'm going to order the book, hopefully today.

Daniel: I am very happy to hear that you will be reading James' book. If accurately and patiently digested, it will resolve all your doubts and end your search for good.

Len: James Swartz was your teacher. Did you just read his book or did you meet him in person and had face-to-face coaching/teaching from him?

Daniel: I've met James a few times. But it was through his book and online guidance that set me free. If you are qualified to assimilate the teachings, then a few email exchanges with a qualified teacher can be more than sufficient.

I'm very happy that you're going to get James' book. Feel free to write to me along the way if need be. But I suggest that you read it from start to finish before writing, as it has a logical flow. You will find that it provokes questions and then answers them as you go along.

~ *Om* for now, friend