

Assessing Enlightenment Sickness

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Martin: Dear Ted, great! The only other question I have is about how one can recognize enlightenment sickness in another *jivanmukta*. The only way to recognize a person's behavior as *adharmic* would be to (1) rely on the scriptures or (2) use your personal intuition. Since the scriptures can't cover every possible scenario, intuition will eventually be necessary. And if you're judging a person's behavior based on intuition it can never be entirely objective, kind of like pornography. "I know it when I see it."

Would you agree that, in some cases, the argument for recognizing enlightenment sickness in that another person can't be any more objective than saying, "I know enlightenment sickness when I see it, and that apparent individual has the sickness"?

~ Thanks, Martin

Ted: Enlightenment sickness boils down to this: if the apparent individual person, i.e. the ego, is claiming to be enlightened, then the ego has co-opted the knowledge and is using it to glorify itself. In such a case, "enlightenment" is just another badge of honor that the apparent individual person is pinning on himself and using to set himself apart from and usually higher than the rest of the ignorant masses in order to compensate for a deep-rooted and ever-obtaining sense of incompleteness and inadequacy. Thus the vision of non-duality has obviously not been assimilated and the apparent individual person is still taken to be one's identity. The self doesn't get "enlightened," because the self is the light. When you realize who you are, you realize you are not the human being you appear to be. Nor is anyone else. Nor, for that matter, *is* there anyone else. There is only you, awareness, with innumerable "designs" appearing within your being. This is why we say *moksa*, or liberation, which is what constitutes "enlightenment" according to the scriptures, is *from* the apparent individual person, not *for* the apparent individual person.

Bearing this in mind, you might want to contemplate why you are so concerned with being able to identify enlightenment sickness in others. From the apparent individual person's perspective, the truth is that we can never know what is someone else's inner state of mind or degree of understanding. Sure, the language they use when speaking of themselves and their take on life can be indicative of their understanding or lack of understanding, but even that can be difficult to interpret because someone who knows who they are is not going to run around speaking of themselves in the third person simply because they know they are not the apparent individual person they appear to be. It is best to simply take care of your own backyard, so to speak, and let others be as they are. If you know who you are, what does it matter if someone else is suffering from enlightenment sickness? You are not looking to get anything from them, so their degree of understanding has no bearing on you whatsoever. Moreover, Vedanta is not an evangelical religious system that is out to convert or save others, so unless someone explicitly asks for your opinion or opinion concerning their understanding, you have no business foisting such on them. Live and let live, as the saying goes. And be sure you are firm in the knowledge before you start trying to assess whether others get it or not.

I hope that helps.

~ Take care, Ted