

Does *Moksa* Matter?

Ted Schmidt

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2407>

Inquirer: Hello. I have the following questions:

1. To make sure there is a shared starting point, is it a correct understanding to say that an aim of spiritual practice is to develop *buddhi* to better reflect consciousness and realize the delusion caused by *ahamkara*?

Ted: The aim of spiritual practice is to purify the mind, which essentially boils down to neutralizing binding *raga-dveshas*, likes and dislikes. Binding likes and dislikes agitate the mind with desire and extrovert its attention toward objective phenomena (i.e. both subtle sensations, emotions, cognitions and gross physical objects) and thereby prevent it from sustaining the inward focus necessary to do effective self-inquiry and cultivating the subtlety to “see,” or recognize, the pure awareness that is the substratum of all objective phenomena.

The *buddhi* (i.e. intellect) already reflects awareness adequately, for essentially it is nothing other than awareness. It simply doesn’t recognize the true nature of what it is reflecting (i.e. the awareness that is enlivening and illumining it).

This delusion is caused not by *ahamkara* (i.e. ego) but by *avidya*, self-ignorance. The effect of that *avidya* exerts on the *buddhi* is to make it believe that the body-mind-sense complex of which it is part is a separate, volitional individual. Since what appears to be an individual person is actually nothing other than pure awareness conditioned by the *upadhi*, conditioning adjunct, of the body-mind-sense complex, the ego is fundamentally nothing other than an erroneous notion.

Inquirer: Given that *brahman* is unchanging, any “enlightenment” would be purely of the mind/thoughts, correct?

Ted: Yes. “Enlightenment” is essentially the removal of ignorance from the *buddhi*, the eradication of the notion that one’s true nature is anything less or other than *brahman* (i.e. pure, limitless awareness).

Inquirer: 2. If this is so, then is the “benefit” of *moksa* only in this present transient life?

Ted: Yes. Under careful scrutiny, one realizes that as awareness *moksa*, freedom, is one’s true nature, and thus is an already existent fact and not something that needs to be “gained.” Moreover, awareness already knows it’s free, so to speak, for awareness itself is not affected by *avidya*. Only the mind suffers from ignorance. Thus the beneficiary of the self-knowledge that is tantamount to *moksa* can only be the apparent person.

Inquirer: Many scriptures and teachers speak of a *jiva* taking many lifetimes to finally accomplish this state, and speak of *siddhis* from past lives helping, but if *moksa* is only of the mind, how can any previous lifetimes impact this one (or any future lifetimes be prevented) unless there is something in the mind that carries on beyond death (which I have not seen anyone claim)?

Ted: Scripture tells us that the subtle body, which includes the *antahkarana* (i.e. the general mind that consists of *manas*, the function of non-discriminative thinking; *buddhi*, the function of discriminative thinking; *ahamkara*, the I-thought; and *chitta*, the memory), carries on beyond death. It is the container of the *vasanas* that determine the nature of the apparent person, and is the “soul” that transmigrates through a countless progression of body-mind-sense complexes until at last it realizes its true identity as *brahman*, pure consciousness. Within the context of this paradigm, the past actions associated with the subtle body do influence its spiritual growth, its progress toward gaining self-knowledge and becoming free of the ignorance that makes it believe it is whatever limited person it is associated with.

Just the same, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna, speaking from the perspective of pure awareness, basically says that the doctrine of reincarnation or transmigration is simply a fairy tale told to pacify the minds of the ignorant.

Though it is hard for the linear mind to accept, both perspectives are valid. The truth is comprehensive, and thus includes both the reality and the apparent reality. From *brahman's* perspective, nothing is happening. From the apparent individual's perspective, a process of spiritual awakening is occurring over the course of innumerable lifetimes.

Inquirer: I can appreciate the points made at Advaita-Vision.org that once you have attained self-knowledge and the *paramarthika* perspective, you will realize that there is no death or rebirth (and reincarnation is a provisional concept) and be freed from *karma*, but these points do not seem to address the question of whether that liberating realization is limited in impact to the transient lifetime of this mind.

Ted: It is. Each mind enjoys its own realization. There are an infinite number of minds that have and will continue to manifest, and every mind is essentially nothing other than *brahman*, pure awareness. *Brahman* will continue to infuse every mind that manifests, so it's not that once the mind realizes its true nature is *brahman* that no mind ever manifests again. Neither is it the case that when one mind gains self-knowledge, the ignorance afflicting other minds is completely eradicated. Within the transmigratory paradigm, the particular subtle body of which the mind is a part will cease transmigrating. But awareness will continue to illumine each and every other subtle body that continues to do so. Thus *moksa* is only appreciated within any given mind that has assimilated self-knowledge and only “obtains” within that mind for as long as that mind remains manifest.

Inquirer: 3. Related to the above, the site makes mentions of “*vasana* bundles” carrying beyond death, but what evidence is there for them? We experience consciousness (and try to identify with consciousness/*brahman*) and we can be fooled by the *maya* around “us,” but I do not understand the support for “*vasana* bundles” – any pointers?

Ted: In scientific terms, the evidence of *vasana*-bundles is the genetic predisposition of the apparent individual. The unique set of preferences and proclivities that characterize any given individual are the symptoms of the *vasanas* associated with the subtle body and informing the body-mind-sense complex.

Inquirer: 4. I think the mind has no free will. If this is the case, then the search for self-knowledge is preordained from the infinite past. So I suppose that would be a satisfactory explanation to #2 above: the search for self-knowledge just happens as part of this divine play, whether it “matters” or not. Do you have other thoughts?

Ted: No. By analogy, we might say that *brahman* is simply playing a cosmic game of hide-and-seek with itself, though to be sure, *brahman* is not a volitional entity with a mind that would seek to entertain itself, nor is *brahman* a he, she or even an “it.” There is no reason for *brahman* to delude itself, and there is no need for *brahman* to gain self-knowledge. *Brahman* is *brahman*, pure and simple. Due to the inexplicable presence of *maya* “within” *brahman*, however, the game is afoot, shall we say, and it is the only game in town.

Inquirer: 5. For those who teach after gaining self-knowledge, is that also simply due to the laws of cause and effect operating on their brains? Nisargadatta Maharaj said: “Why have I been talking? Because the lifespan has to be spent, it has to be used. So even that is merely entertainment. Something has to be done; this is entertainment, whiling away the time, the lifespan.”

Ted: Competent teachers are the vehicles *brahman* “uses” as a means of breaking *maya*’s spell of *avidya* and waking up the mind of the apparent individual to the recognition of its true nature within the context of the apparent reality. Again, there is no “have to” or “should.” It’s just the way it is. Once one of the seemingly conditioned portions of itself knows its true nature, that portion helps other portions know the same.

Inquirer: 6. The concept of “time” comes up in questions above, for example, in terms of the lifetime of knowledge. Do you have any pointers on thinking about time?

Ted: Time is a concept within awareness. It is a subtle object that serves as a parameter by means of which the appearance of objects in awareness can be measured. Only in terms of the appearance and disappearance of objects does time matter. Ultimately, *brahman* is unchanging reality, beginningless and eternal (i.e. altogether beyond the limiting parameters of time and space).