

Experiential Mumbo Jumbo

Ted Schmidt

2015-02-27

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2013>

Nick: Hello, Ted. What makes a “liberated one” laugh?

Ted: Whatever humor appeals to his or her values, which are determined by his or her *vasanas*, which are in turn dictated by his or her *guna* makeup, which are the same factors that influence anyone’s sense of humor.

Nick: Would a “liberated one” push away one kind of food over another?

Ted: Yes, refer to the previous answer for the reason why.

Nick: Would the answer to these two questions be identical for an (another) “liberated one”?

Ted: Yes.

Nick: Is the simple answer, as explained by my Indian teacher, who was described by Swami M. in reverential terms and by Swami Lakshmanjoo as “the greatest living saint in the past 10,000 years”... to paraphrase, it’s an “individual” who is enlightened, who is liberated, with his or her own likes and dislikes.

Ted: Yes. But of course the idea of an individual getting liberated has to be properly understood. On the one hand, no individual gets liberated, because an inert mechanism cannot realize its true identity by attaining self-knowledge. In this regard then it is only awareness recognizing itself through the instrument of the apparent person’s intellect. Of course awareness has no need for enlightenment, or liberation, because awareness is the “light” and its very nature is freedom. Awareness already always knows itself simply by virtue of being itself. But it doesn’t know itself as one would know an object. Hence, on the other hand, awareness seems to play this game of pulling the wool over its own eyes, so to speak, through its own inherent power of ignorance, and then rediscovering and recognizing itself through the mechanism of the apparent individual with whom it is associated transacting within the context of the apparent reality with which it finds itself, both of which are nothing more than projections appearing within the scope of its being. This rediscovery still does not allow awareness to know itself as an object, for no object can comprehensively define or characterize limitless awareness, but within the context of the apparent reality the apparent person with whom it has associated and to whom it has lent sentiency can gain self-knowledge as a result of “seeing” the reflection of its true limitless nature as awareness in a sufficiently purified intellect.

Nick: This teacher often reminded us that a teacher teaches according to the student's understanding. If a person has had a glimpse of their true identity, there's one teaching. If that person is established in their true identity, that would be reflected by a corresponding physiology, and according to Deepak Chopra will soon be able to be measured, another teaching, etc.

Ted: I understand what you are getting at, and it is true that the teachings are presented to the apparent individual in a way that corresponds to his or her current level of understanding. This is the reason, for instance, that reincarnation is taught. From the ultimate perspective, nothing other than awareness exists, so nothing is even happening. Thus the accrual of *karma* and the subsequent experience of it is a moot point. Moreover, since awareness is the singularly existent being, there are no individual souls, or subtle bodies, that could be doing any transmigrating, not to mention the fact that they would have no other "place" to transmigrate to. But if we were to just bonk someone over the head with the declaration that nothing is actually happening, how effective do you think that would be in liberating the person from his or her erroneous notions about the nature of reality? He or she wouldn't be able to get beyond the apparent level of reality to understand the meaning of the teaching and its essential truth. And what's most important, is that rather than alleviating the person's existential suffering, it would most likely add to it. They would be left with a negation of their experience that they would have no way of assimilating on their own. This is why the non-dual vision of Vedanta needs to be systematically unfolded.

However, there is a part of your statement that makes no sense. If a person is established in his or her true identity, why would they need a teaching? At that point, the teaching is no longer necessary and simply drops away. The point of Vedanta is to reveal the self and liberate one from suffering, not amass a bunch of philosophical points that make for a bulky contribution to the conversation at the next spiritual cocktail party. Thus one is not left with a bunch of facts that he or she must remember. One simply knows one's true identity and then moves through the charade of the apparent reality with a sense of ease, bringing one's inherent sense of joy to what life offers rather than seeking to procure joy through the pursuit of objects.

Nick: And at that stage then one truly begins to witness sleep (awake within himself), for example, and with further refinement of the nervous system, the *tamasic* element of the witnessing of sleep begins to dissolve with more *sattva*, more light during sleep, being experienced.

Ted: Again, I get your point, but this all seems like a bunch of experiential mumbo jumbo. I mean, what does it mean to "witness sleep"? You are not going to start witnessing sleep any more than you are already witnessing it. It's not the apparent person who witnesses sleep, for the intellect is dormant in deep sleep. Awareness, you, witnesses deep sleep, which you, awareness, are already doing, as are all apparent persons, for all apparent persons are essentially nothing other than awareness. They just don't know it. If the sleep to which you are referring is a figurative way of characterizing our general state of ignorance, then it is true that the apparent person's mind becomes subtler and less inclined toward a fascination with objective phenomena. But it all seems rather confusing and, moreover, seems to equate enlightenment with a particular experience.

The point is that enlightenment is not defined by experiential changes. No doubt, self-knowledge will have an affect on one's experience, but there is no way to define enlightenment in terms of a

particular change. Moreover, the teaching is that you are already limitless, non-dual awareness, which, if considered from an experiential standpoint, means that you are already experiencing awareness 24/7. Hence no change of experience is going to establish you as awareness, for nothing can give you what you already have.

The teachings give one X-ray vision, we might say, that allows one to see “through” the appearance and understand the true nature of reality. Thus the experience can stay the same as it ever was, but the understanding of it will be completely transformed. It is true, as you say, that the mind needs to be *sattvic* (i.e. calm, quiet, contemplative) in order to gain this understanding. One needs to have neutralized one’s binding *vasanas* through understanding to the point where he or she is no longer fascinated by the allure of appearances and no longer to compelled by the erroneous notion that objects are the source of happiness. Once the mind is no longer distracted by appearances, then it can start to inquire into the essential reality underlying those appearances.

Nick: And with this, the ripening, and the readiness for the teachings of Vedanta.

Ted: Yes. Simply put, once one realizes that objects are not the source of joy, then one is ready to turn one’s attention on oneself, which is the only other alternative.

Nick: Perhaps the reason why this teacher’s teaching about Vedanta hasn’t surfaced is because of his constant warning that this teaching is not only not for those who aren’t ready, would not only be confusing, but would be a great danger to their evolution.

Ted: There is only one teaching that constitutes Vedanta, and it “surfaced” thousands of years ago. Any teachings this teacher has have already surfaced, and any that haven’t aren’t Vedanta and so would be, as you say, dangerous to one’s evolution in the sense that they would simply burden one with more erroneous beliefs that one would have to eventually have eradicated by the true teachings of Vedanta. Again, I understand what you might be getting at in the sense that some of the teachings can be abused when co-opted by the unripe ego and used to justify unethical behaviors in the name of non-duality. But there are no new teachings or secret teachings or more advanced teachings involved in Vedanta. Moreover, the teachings don’t need to be guarded or withheld from anyone. Those who are not qualified to understand the teachings generally don’t have the capacity to stick with them. Ultimately, its all in *Isvara*’s hands, so to speak, anyway. No one is going to be hurt by the teachings of Vedanta. An improper understanding might delay one’s progress toward the assimilation of self-knowledge, but one isn’t going to be more damaged than one be having never heard the teachings.

Nick: The term he often used was “mood-making.”

Ted: I’m not sure what he means by this, but it sounds like he might have been referring to the fact that self-knowledge is not characterized by a particular “feel-good” or transcendental or “spiritual” state of mind.

Nick: This teacher credits his understanding to his teacher who was a *shankaracharya*, whom millions referred to as the “pope” of India.

Ted: Yes. Vedanta needs to be taught. One cannot wield the means of knowledge on oneself, for the wielder in such a case is conditioned by the very ignorance he or she is seeking to eliminate. A qualified teacher is necessary.

Nick: (For me, nice as these names are, nice as the robes and mutual admiration society is, keep your head up, boys, if you’re in the batter’s box, you may get a dusting off if you get too close to the plate. *Namaste*. Let’s play ball. Let’s dance. Just for the fun of it.)

Ted: Yes, it is wise to use common sense and discretion when encountering teachers. The teacher should “walk the talk,” so to speak. Ultimately, it is the teachings that are important, not the teacher. You need a qualified teacher, but the teacher cannot neutralize your *vasanas* and assimilate the knowledge for you. The teacher is merely a vehicle for the teachings and most certainly not a substitute for one’s own spiritual work in the form of purificatory/preparatory practices and the continuous application of the teachings to one’s own life.

Nick: Of course none of this teaching has anything to do with what I may or may not think about what I heard from this teacher. I don’t feel any attachment, but there is a resonance.

That being said, your commentaries are obvious to me and don’t really need to be thought about at all. And are appreciated.

Approaching all things anew... especially what I just wrote. ☺

~ Thanks, Nick

Ted: You’re welcome.

~ All the best, Ted