

The Event of “Enlightenment” Versus Self-Actualization

Ted Schmidt

2015-09-02

Ted,

Thank you for your response. My understanding, while admittedly not as "technical", resonates with everything you wrote.

However, when I read quotes (elsewhere) such as "Don't mistake understanding for realization" and also read about people who can provide a date and time to their awakening/realization, I wonder if "I" (or "this computer" to use your analogy) is adequately configured to claim "realization."

Ted: Usually, such claims are a sign that the ego has co-opted the event of “enlightenment” and claimed it as its own. Actually, the person doesn't get “enlightened.” The mind gains knowledge of its true nature and realizes the self was a never a person after all. The self is awareness, not the body-mind-sense complex that the ego claims ownership of.

Yes, from the absolute perspective, everything is awareness. But, as was explained in the previous email, that understanding means that essentially there is no “everything,” for in reality there is no other thing that is different or apart from awareness, and awareness itself is not made up of parts. What could possibly constitute the gap between any such parts? The tacit acceptance of a gap implies the existence of a more pervasive substratum, which is impossible given the fact that any object—which is what any substratum other than pure awareness is—requires awareness in order to exist.

Niraj: It seems to me that if I don't indulge myself in matters concerning Advaita (books, satsangs etc.) for an extended period of time, I tend to easily get lost in the world of people, things and places (in other words, I go back to sleep).

Ted: Yes, *nididhyasana* is essential for the assimilation of self-knowledge. *Nididhyasana* is the practice of continuously meditating upon the teachings of Vedanta. This type of meditation is not to be confused with formal seated meditation. The discipline of formal seated meditation can be helpful for cultivating the introspective mind necessary to engage in self-inquiry, and can in fact serve as a platform for self-inquiry. But *nididhyasana* is the third phase of self-inquiry.

The first phase of self-inquiry is *shravana*. During this phase one is exposed to the teachings and initially gains a sound intellectual understanding of them.

The second phase of the process is *manana*. It is during this stage that the student is encouraged to approach the teacher with all doubts and confusions that may arise in his or her mind in order to lay them to rest under the teacher's guidance. This resolution of all doubt is vital in order for the intellectual understanding to become assimilated knowledge. As long as any doubt remains in the student's mind, the student will not be able to stand with unshakeable conviction in his or her true identity as limitless awareness. He or she will continue to think awareness as something he or she just has an intellectual understanding of, rather than knowing it to be his or her essential

nature.

The third phase is *nididhyasana*. Because the ideas that reality is dualistic, the manifest universe (i.e., apparent reality) is real, and that one is the limited person one appears to be are so deeply ingrained in one's psyche, it takes time and effort to remove its stain. For this reason, one has to continuously dwell on the teachings and apply them to each and every thought, circumstance, encounter, interaction, event, and experience of one's life. While self-realization may be a "one-off" in that there is a moment when you "see" who you really are, self-actualization (i.e., the full assimilation of that knowledge, which allows one to live as the limitless self within the context of the limited body-mind-sense complex inhabiting an apparent reality characterized by limitation) takes time to establish.

Having said that and bearing in mind both your reference to Advaita books and satsangs and your concern with whether self-knowledge is something more than intellectual understanding, I'm going to guess that you may not have yet been exposed to the traditional teachings of Vedanta. If you are interested in gaining the self-knowledge that is tantamount to *moksha*, liberation or ultimate inner freedom, I strongly urge you to immerse yourself in traditional Vedanta. While modern Advaita teachers spout the highest non-dual truth, few—if any—unfold the teachings in a systematic way that enables the student to actually "see" the truth of his or her being. As you suggest, it's one thing to think you're limitless awareness, but it's an entirely different matter to know it.

The teachings of traditional Vedanta have been preserved since time immemorial through an unbroken teacher-student lineage. What's more, the tried and true teaching methodology that makes the knowledge accessible for the student has been preserved as well. In order to actually "see" the truth of the knowledge in terms of your own experience, you really need to have the teachings unfolded according to this systematic pedagogical methodology.

In this regard, I would highly recommend any of the teachers that have been taught under the guidance of Swami Dayananda. You can find a listing of many of them in the Related Sites section of the Arsha Vidya website. My own teacher, James Swartz, was trained in this tradition and has passed the methodology onto me and the other teachers associated with his Shining World website.

Niraj: I guess my follow-up questions are –

(1) If there are no special "states" as you say, how is realization/awakening/enlightenment different from just having a solid understanding of and belief in non-duality?

Ted: When you have been guided through a logical analysis of your own previously unexamined—or at least erroneously interpreted—experience, you will "see" the truth of your limitless nature. Thereafter, you will not have to rely on intellectual understanding or belief. You will know who you are.

Niraj: (2) Is the understanding of Advaita enough for the body-mind computer? Does the body-mind computer have to do something more such that self-remembrance becomes a habit for it?

Ted: Actually, the body-mind computer doesn't have to do anything. Self-knowledge is not a

matter of accumulating information, but rather of removing misunderstanding. You are already the self and your true nature is already limitless awareness. You simply haven't seen yourself in the right light, so to speak. Once the mind is exposed to the teachings, the teachings do the work of correcting the mind's misapprehension.

Of course, then, as you say, the mind has to rewrite its programming.