

Nobody Is Enlightened

Ram (James Swartz)

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Deva: Hello, Ram. Hmm, for me the realization came about after a sudden understanding dawned in me of what “impermanence” and “no self,” as taught by the Buddha, meant. Meaning I didn't realize so much that I am the self as I realized that there is nothing that can be called “self,” because reality is constantly changing and there is no static entity called “I” that owns anything. This ultimately resolved the contradiction I was unable to resolve between the “self” and “doer,” and I saw that there was only the “doing,” and there existed no “doer” and no “self” really.

James: Many people would give their eye teeth to understand this fact. It is a negative way to formulate enlightenment.

Deva: I wouldn't say that I am enlightened, it's just that I am no longer looking for enlightenment, because to the extent I believe that there is a static entity which is “me” who can ultimately/suddenly “get” it, I am divorced from the reality that there is no such thing.

James: Most people – particularly the Buddhists – would say that realization was enlightenment. But if you are identified with the dysfunctional patterns that appear in you, then you are not enlightened, because enlightenment means that you know that you are the self. The self is not bothered by the stuff appearing in it, dysfunctional or functional.

Deva: I still have tendencies and habits which are dysfunctional, but they don't bother me so much now. Sure, to the extent I can and life allows it, I will try to get rid of them. That's just life happening. Am I un-enlightened if I have those tendencies? No. Will I be enlightened when I get rid of them? No. Because there is no “me” that persists through time to be either enlightened or not. This is how I would put it. This is the reason I thought we might have some disagreement, but if there isn't any, I am glad.

James: I say this is enlightenment. You have it right. The tendencies have nothing to do with who you are. Enlightenment is the realization that you are the self and not Deva. The tendencies belong to Deva, not to the self. Many people – particularly the Buddhists – say enlightenment is the absence of *vasanas*, tendencies. But Vedanta does not agree. Your tendencies do not stand in your way. They are known by you, so they cannot be you. If they do not bother you so much now, it is because of your realization that there is no separate self. The fact that you have stopped seeking and the fact that tendencies that formerly bothered you do not bother you is a sign that you have realized the truth. In fact nobody is “enlightened.” There is only one “light,” and that is you.

Deva: I have immense respect for your wisdom, and am grateful that I have someone like you to ask questions when I need to.

Thanks, Ram!

