

Is the Cracker Cracked?

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3>

Tony: Dear James, I sometimes get the feeling teasing apart these subtle points... experiencing versus non-experiencing witness... gets a bit convoluted. They mind can't discriminate so well.

I was talking with one of my friends who came for *satsang* last night and he said we weren't really experiencing the self, that the whole Vedanta thing was too intellectual, and I told him to shut up... it's ordinary awareness, there is no special awareness, that this is it, it doesn't get better than this, that it's no big deal. I wasn't angry, just bored. I hate this worry about whether the subtle body is claiming awareness for itself.

I then said that if I start telling someone I've cracked the code maybe there's a problem but I know I've always been awareness and the only thing that makes it not rock-solid is a hair's breadth of ignorance - a veil of gauze. I've known everything all along. Yes, I forget it and can't argue it but I know it.

James: If you tell somebody you've cracked it, you haven't cracked it, and if you tell somebody to do what you say you definitely haven't cracked it, not that there is anything to "crack." Two issues here: (1) The one who has cracked it is not who you are, ordinary awareness. If you are ordinary awareness, then claiming to have cracked it means that you still think you are the doer. It is understandable that the doer feels happy (and perhaps a tad superior) to have cracked it. But what has been cracked? You were ordinary before the cracking, during the cracking and after the cracking. So what's to claim? Did anything actually happen? Nothing is more ordinary than the cracker and nothing is more boring than the cracker claiming he or she has cracked it. Nobody, particularly uncrackers, care because they think the cracker is saying, "I've got something you don't." It is irritating in the extreme when someone claims to have something but can't give it to someone else. "Cracking it" means that you realize that you were always ordinary awareness, so rather than finding in this understanding an opportunity to ring the bell and get other potential crackers to come to church and put their nutty heads in one's nutcracker, the most appropriate thought should be, "I think I'll slink away into the night with my tail tucked between my legs. It is shameful to advertise such a long stay in ignorance." (2) Teaching is more than telling. It sounds like your friend has not resolved the logic of the experience/knowledge argument, which means he does not understand what non-duality means. Is this because he is not qualified to understand or is it because his putative *guru's* mastery of the means of knowledge is somewhat compromised?

Let me share with you what I know from my own experience. Cracking the code is only the beginning of the spiritual journey. Below I've copied in a recent letter from another cracker that points this out. The real cracking is understanding what it means to be ordinary awareness in terms of one's relationship to one's life in *samsara*. It should expose and transform heretofore unexamined tendencies. This is a difficult phase because the knowledge shines a light on aspects of one's apparent self that compromise one's good opinion of one's apparent self. You (the cracker) starts to realize that you are not nearly as wonderful and you think you are, that you are not nearly as kind as you think you are, that you are actually insecure, self-

centered, vain and manipulative. You become really humble and stop showing off. It makes you feel rather exposed and awkward seeing your pretentiousness, seeing the cracker strutting around acting big. You start to realize that, contrary to what you previously thought, nobody is actually watching you and that the odd few that are watching don't really care. Perhaps they are just amused that you are trying so hard to be somebody, a cracker extraordinaire. If the cracker doesn't experience a bit of shame, know that the knowledge is not firm and that the lid on the unconscious is still in place. I am speaking from experience. It stands to reason because the only thing that keeps one going in life is the secret or not-so-secret idea that one is pretty special. One sees that this is not true, that one is no smarter, no more talented or more tormented than anyone else. A sense of vulnerability and a strong appreciation of *Isvara* arises. You realize that everything that you previously thought belonged to you, including your apparent enlightenment, was and is only the glory of *Isvara*. That there is more junk to wade through is not a depressing thought, however, because if the cracking has really happened, the cracker understands that henceforth the knowledge, not the cracker, is doing the work. Enlightenment sickness is not a rare disease. It is a very common one. The fellow who wrote the email below seems to understand that cracking the code is just a stage in the spiritual journey, a journey that only ends when the cracker dies.

Seen from the ego's perspective, the post-cracking experience is often unwelcome news. It often prefers to bask in the light of its amazing accomplishment - "I am the cracker of crackers..." - rather than roll up its sleeves, get into the trenches and help the knowledge-muck out the crap.

~ Much love, James

Assimilated Self-Knowledge

Tony: Dear James, before I begin, a few biographical details which might help: I've been following Vedanta teachings for about three years, attended a seminar last year in Goetz, Germany, with you and have repeatedly been studying several of your recordings for the past two years.

Several things have happened recently to me on the conscious/mental level which I feel the need to share with you, and if possible get some assessment about.

A few days ago a thought popped into my mind during a meditation sitting: I am identical to reality. Since then things have shifted around for me somewhat drastically regarding how I'm interpreting my experiences. For example, everywhere I look I seem to be seeing me!! If I sit and have lunch with my son: it feels more like the self is sitting to lunch with itself and having a conversation with itself. Repeatedly when I look at strangers passing by in the street, I have the absolute certainty that I'm looking at myself. This happens also with inanimate objects and objects in nature.

I also have the feeling this is really just the beginning and a lot of integration work is yet to be done. I also feel that I have a pretty big *vasana* load that needs to be worked out. Things still keep popping up but they seem to have a once-removed feeling, they're not so urgent/pressing/binding/tormenting as they used to be.

I'm very curious as to what you think about all this, and what you think I should be

looking at and concentrating on in applying the knowledge.

~ Yours, Tony

James: Hi, Tony, Well, aren't you a lucky guy! The thought "I am identical with reality" that arose during your meditation is called the *akanadakara vritti*, the vision of non-duality. It is the knowledge of your identity as awareness. It seems to be a result of the assimilation of the teachings of Vedanta that has occupied your mind for the last few years. I say "assimilated" because of the effects you describe, the experience of non-separation from objects and the once-removed feeling are symptoms of the assimilation of self-knowledge. The sense of absolute certainty is very fortunate too; it means that the assimilated knowledge is firm, *stitya pragna*, to use the Vedanta term. Let's see how it goes but it looks like the end of your seeking. You have been very diligent with your inquiry and it has borne fruit. Good for you.

At the same time, you rightly perceive that it is the beginning of a period of purification of the *samskaras*, old patterns of behavior built up before you assimilated this knowledge. It should be a relatively straightforward process if you stay with the knowledge and/or the knowledge stays with you, which I think it will. Don't change anything you are doing spiritually, i.e. reading the texts, watching the videos, meditating, etc. Don't be eager to get rid of old stuff; it should just work out on its own. And for God's sake don't tell anyone you have cracked the code! I got a sense from seeing you that there were some *tamasic* habits that might require a bit of work but basically you are good to go. So stay vigilant and let life unfold according to your *prarabdha karma*.

~ Love, James