



www.engagednonduality.com

Free version: Low quality pictures



2019

2019 - 01

How do we perform action without desire? It does not seem possible. - 2019-01-02 06:53

There is no need to try to perform action without desire. This is the kind of question that a "me" or ego has when trying to fake "being enlightened." This is also the kind of question that a "me" or ego has when trying to mentally grasp or practice what it heard from someone else (so second hand knowledge). It is not about trying to fake it or mentally grasp it or practice it. Instead look at this "me" that is trying to fake it or grasp it or practice it. How do "I" perform action without desire...what is this "I"?

In Indian philosophy, they tend to try to practice "acting without desire" mainly from two directions: duty or service. The teaching is that one should always do their duty...duty to family, duty to society or country, etc. So in a way, you go to work not because you want to...but because it is your duty. In this way there is no desire or want, you do it because it is your duty. This is a rather cold and dry way of living. The more juicy way (so to speak) is service to God. You act not because you want to...but because it is service to God. Again, you go to work not because you want to...but because you are serving God through working.

There are elements of the service aspect in karma yoga, but the main focus of karma yoga is on the desire for results or fruits of action...and less so on the desire for action itself. You act without desiring the fruits of action. You leave the fruits of action to God or for God's benefit. Basically, doing action without self interest. You are doing work for its own sake in service (to God). If the work is done to distinguish oneself or for personal gain, then it is karma bhoga or working for one's own satisfaction. Karma yoga means non-attachment to the fruits of action

Anandamayi Ma had said, "If for any reason there should arise even the least feeling of resentment, the action can no longer be said to be without attachment. Suppose for example, after having accomplished by far the greater part of some work, you have to abandon it, and towards the end someone else takes it up, completes it and gets the credit for having achieved the whole of the task. If you mind this even in the slightest degree, how can the work have really been done disinterestedly? Obviously it was not quite free from a desire for recognition."

However, this is all pretty dualistic in nature. It is always a "me" trying to act only out of duty or service...and not out of personal desire or gain. There is no need to try to perform action without desire...personal or otherwise. Whatever you want to do is exactly what the Self wants to do as you. The Self is all there is. Action is action...whether it is action with desire or action without desire. Either way...it is the Self acting. There is only a thought of "my" desire and identification with the action as "doer". This is an illusion. The Self is the only doer and desirer.

So do not beat yourself up for acting with desire for personal gain because you read somewhere or someone told you that we should act without desire...because that is how spiritual or enlightened people should act. Instead delve into and investigate this "me" that acted for personal gain...what is it really...what is its source? As long as there is a "me", there will always be the tendency to act for personal benefit...and there will be a needing to acquire or retain things in order to be happy (i.e. attachments of various kinds). When the illusion of duality is dispelled and therefore the idea of "me" shatters, then attachment and the idea of gain are no more. There are no more attachments or needing to acquire or retain things to be happy. There is no such thing as gain or loss. However, action still continues.

When the "me" is seen through, there may still be desire...and based on those desires actions are taken. For example, for this body/mind there is a desire to live by the ocean and in warmer temperatures. This body/mind has always lived in Minnesota and a desire has arose to live somewhere else. Based on these desires, this body/mind has formed a plan to move to Florida in about six months. However, there is no attachment to these desires. If something happens that prevents this body/mind from moving (including never moving), there will not be discontent or unhappiness. There is happiness and joy even now...even though it is January in Minnesota with snow and cold. In this way, the desires and actions are closer to play...than anything serious

It is the Self that desires. It is the Self that acts. Regardless, everything is alright. Again, whatever you want to is exactly what the Self wants to do as you. In the 2016 presidential election, I voted for Hillary Clinton...it was the desire and action of the Self as this body/mind. However, it was the Self that ultimately elected Donald Trump...via playing all the body/minds that desired and acted by voting and via playing each member of the electoral college. The Self is all there is. I am That. Therefore, I desired and voted for Clinton and I desired and elected Trump. There is nothing wrong with desire. For it is the Self that desires whatever it is.

Do you mean that Oneness has only "positive" qualities? - 2019-01-05 06:30

Oneness is only a figurative and poetic pointer to nonduality, so I will use the term nonduality in answering. What you deem as "positive" or "negative" qualities are both not other than nonduality. Nonduality is all there is. There really is no such thing as "positive" or "negative" qualities. It takes a judgment based on some reference point. It takes two in order to have "positive" and "negative". In reality, there is simply what is. Opposites are really a figment of imagination, mental creations, and references to memories (and so thinking).

Let's play with this idea of "positive" or "negative" qualities a bit more...in a different way. Is there not sadness in the world? Is there not anxiety and fear in the world? Is there not hate and hostility in the world? Obviously yes. So these "qualities" do exist and because nonduality is all there is, then it must be concluded that these "negative qualities" are also within nonduality (or Oneness).

While nonduality does not exclude "negative qualities", many qualities that are deemed "negative" only occur due to ignorance. For example, in the absence of ignorance, there is only love. There is no such thing as evil...only ignorance. People exist within varied levels of delusion and ignorance. This is why everyone has their own way of thinking and understanding. Ignorance manifests as the varied ways of thinking. There is only one Truth. If all realized the same Truth (this includes a complete understanding), then we would all act exactly the same way. We all act according to our understanding at the point in time. If we all had the same understanding, we would all make exactly the same choice.

Nonduality does not exclude ignorance as well. It can not be other than nonduality. However, this does not mean that when ignorance is dispelled and the illusion of duality is shattered (and the idea of "me" is shattered) that "negative qualities" continue to manifest for that body/mind. For the body/mind that enlightenment has occurred and so ignorance is dispelled, it does not continue to act from ignorance but instead acts from new understanding. This is why the Buddha and other spiritual teachers talk about the cessation of suffering after enlightenment. Suffering arises due to ignorance. This ignorance is primarily based upon the idea of a separate "me". When the idea of "me" shatters, then anything founded upon that idea shatters with it.

Let us take "fear" as a "negative quality". Fear exists because the delusion that there are "others" that will do "me" harm and the delusion that there is a "me" that can be harmed or lose something is believed. When the "me" shatters...what can be harmed...what can be lost...what "other" could cause harm or take away? This idea causes some people confusion and misunderstanding. They don't understand how ignorance (manifesting as suffering, fear, guilt, boredom, etc) could be included in nonduality...and yet upon enlightenment these "negative qualities" cease. It is because ignorance is dispelled. The delusion of duality is dispelled...and with this understanding there is no room for fear.

After enlightenment has happened, this is why there tends to be a movement towards service, compassion, love, harmony, etc....the "good/positive qualities." The Truth is realized and understanding changes; and this changes how the body/mind acts and reacts. When there is no other and no ignorance, there is only love. Some might question...isn't love just a "positive" quality. You call it "positive"...for me it is acting with a different understanding...an understanding closer to the Truth. Only in ignorance would we hurt ourselves...and so when there is no "other"...it is natural to want to help, heal, and serve all. It is Self-service, Self-help, and Self-love.

Love is the natural state (so to speak). Isn't it true we want only the best for ourselves? Is it not natural to care for oneself? So when there are no "others", there is only wanting the best for the Self and caring for the Self...which is everything. Wouldn't you call this love? Isn't an ideal love for another caring for them and only wanting the best for them? Love is the Truth. Love does not need a relationship or an "other" to exist. Can you not love yourself? Self-love is ultimately all there is when there is no other...and wherever the eye looks...what is seen is the Self. Therefore it could be described as an unconditional love for all...which is just love for Self.

A deep realization and understanding of the Truth that there is no "other" will also tend to manifest as harmony and peace. Why? Because only in ignorance would you fight, struggles, or be in conflict/war with yourself. The right hand does not fight and stab the left hand with a knife...that is insanity. If ignorance of "otherness" is dispelled, what

is there to struggle with, fight with, or war with other than the Self? Therefore, there is the tendency that after enlightenment, the body/mind acts more and more in line with what-is...and thereby harmoniously. The struggle ceases and instead there is a working with what-is...collaboratively and cooperatively.

Let me conclude by saying that I do not mean to say that Oneness has only "positive" qualities...but for the one that enlightenment has happened there is a gravitation towards so called "positive qualities". This is purely from a dualistic...thinking/judgment based viewpoint. Nonduality is all there is. So while ignorance is included in nonduality (part of the game being played), after enlightenment ignorance is dispelled and so understanding is different. Due to this change in understanding, the actions and reactions of the body/mind tend to arise from wisdom and Truth...instead of ignorance and illusion. When there is no ignorance...and there is only Truth...then action follows the way of love, truth, harmony, and unity. Not because they are "positive qualities" in some way or good, but because acting from the Self simply means not hating, lying to, fighting with, or dividing the Self.

Is there a progress in realization; are there specific stages or degrees of awakening (enlightenment)? - 2019-01-08 06:37

There are no stages or degrees and no such thing as progress in realization or enlightenment. Only the ego or "me" could progress through stages, through degrees, or make progress...but enlightenment is seeing through the "me" or a shattering of the "me". Either the "me" is no longer believed...or the "me" is still believed. It boosts and strengthens the ego/"me" to say "look at the progress I've made...I am at such and such a stage."

When the "me" is still identified with and believed in...there is a strong appearance of progress and stages. There can be many profound new understandings and spiritual experiences...some life changing. However, when the "me" shatters...there is a recognition of a large gulf between a believed "me" and a shattered "me" that is no longer believed. And it is clearly seen there is no path or progress to that revelation. There is nothing a "me" can do to see through itself or overcome itself...for that would be the "me" doing it...and thereby strengthening and supporting the illusion of "me". A "me" never awakens to the Self...it is the Self that awakens from a "me".

Enlightenment has either happened or it has not yet happened. It is the difference between fully seeing through an illusion in full understanding and thus no longer being fooled by it versus still believing in the illusion and being fooled by it in ignorance. How do you know if you are still being fooled by the illusion of "me"? There is still the experience of suffering. Nearly all suffering is based upon the idea of a "me". If the "me" is still believed, then a "me" that suffers is experienced. A "me" that is afraid. A "me" that feels guilty. A "me" that struggles. A "me" that feels bored.

There are passing spiritual experiences which can influence one's life and understanding. Temporarily, thought may cease or the idea of "me" might disappear and there is just a feeling of being one with everything...like in deep meditation or even taking psychedelics. However, when not meditating or tripping...and instead at work, what you

really feel yourself to be is a person or body/mind - a "me". This temporary or passing absence of "me" is not enlightenment. In deep dreamless sleep there is no sense of "me" and this happens every night. Even with some anesthesia, you may lose all sense of "me" and time...like if you were put under to have a tooth removed or another operation. However, in day to day life, you still believe yourself to be somebody. You are still being fooled by the illusion...there is still a lack of understanding. If you had this passing experience of a lack of "me" and then mentally concluded that the "me" is not real, this is not enlightenment. I have met many who say the "me" is an illusion...but then say they can't quite live it or put it into practice...and suffer. Why? Because it is only a mental concept and mentally held belief by a "me", but what they really believe in their hearts and souls (so to speak) is that they are this body/mind.

It would be incorrect to say you have made progress or reached another stage because you mentally believe in the concept of not being the "me"...and yet live and feel like a "me" in day to day life. That is only deluding yourself. One must not lie to oneself. Do not give the ego/"me" a boost by claiming to have made some progress. No progress has been made...the "me" is still fully believed.

When the "me" has shattered, all that is left is what is here and now. In the absence of duality, there is no such thing as stages or progress. There is no here versus there. Progress, stages, and degrees are a fiction within the illusion of duality. In the absence of duality, there is no higher or lower...no superior or inferior...no where to go or anything to attain. What must be remembered is...nonduality is already the case. Duality is an illusion...a fiction created in the mind via thought. There is no where to go...even now. There is just ignorance or not seeing what is as it is...and realization (i.e. ignorance dispelled) is seeing what is as it is. So you could create all sorts of stages and degrees, but it would not be believed after seeing through the illusion of duality. The idea of stages and degrees would be seen through as well. There is a recognition of a whole lot of effort and trying to get somewhere...when where we wanted to go was already here and now.

I will conclude by saying that after enlightenment it is possible for understanding to deepen. This deepening understanding allows the body/mind to drop any remaining samskaras or habits in the body/mind. However, the "me" is never believed again...this is the key point. Whether a "me" is believed or not is the defining point of whether enlightenment has happened or not. Suffering by and large has ceased after enlightenment due to the lack of a "me". Any further deepening does not *have* to happen, so it would not be correct to say "those" who have deepened further have progressed further or reached another stage. There is no "me" to make progress or reach another stage after enlightenment.

**If everything is perfect as it is, there is no room for growth and no fuel for any self-improvement? -
2019-01-11 06:28**

Yes, what-is is perfect as it is. However, growth and change is within what-is. Some might say we are far from being the perfect manifestation of that innate perfection. This makes manifestation and perfection two separate things. There are no others...no separation. This manifestation as it currently is...is perfect. We like to equate perfection with some ending or completed, but learning and evolving is perfection as well.

Take a piece of fruit...like a strawberry. What is the perfect strawberry? You might imagine a perfectly formed and shaped strawberry with no insect holes or rot...that tastes sweet and is not tart. But is this really what perfection means? Is this really the perfect strawberry? What if the strawberry is green and still forming/growing on the plant...is this strawberry imperfect? Regardless of the shape, stage of growth or decay, or taste...the strawberry is perfect. Only if you make the strawberry about you...your use or utility...your likes and dislikes...then you judge the strawberry as good or bad.

Even a rotten strawberry is great...if you want the seeds to germinate and make more strawberry plants. Perhaps a strawberry is "misshapen", but looks just like a heart or a butterfly...and so brings joy and glee to the one who sees it. Unripe strawberries on a plant are great because they soon become ripe strawberries. Don't you see...there really isn't any such thing as a wrong or bad strawberry? They are all perfect as they are.

We too are perfect as we are. This does not eliminate room for growth, it just does not make completion or achieving some end as what it means to be perfect. It means that being unripe and still ripening is not a mark of imperfection. It does eliminate the dire need to become something else...and instead accept where we are and we are growing/changing. It eliminates the need for some future state to happen in order to be happy (i.e. "at last I am perfect...now I can be happy"). An unripe strawberry can be happy being an unripe strawberry...knowing that growth and change is part of life and what-is. Even if something happens and life comes to an end before entirely ripening...that is OK too.

Change is what-is...and so growth, decay, and transformations of all kinds do not impact perfection. Perfection is not reaching some ideal state and staying there...unchanging and dead. Perfection is here and now...manifestation as it is right now. Enlightenment is looking upon creation...and like God within the Bible saying, "it is very good." To be totally content with what-is as it is for as long as it is. What-is...in all its manifestations...is perfect as it is. And yet what-is is changing...and regardless of the change...is still perfect. Growth or decay...it does not matter. What decays just becomes fertilizer for what is growing next.

What about the fuel for self-improvement and transformation? I didn't forget about it. No fuel is needed. Nothing is static anyhow. All is change. However, when someone talks about fuel for self-improvement...they are talking about motivation and reasons to change a certain way. This is egoic. It is only important to a "me"...in particular an adult "me". We have come to believe as we grow up that you need a reason to do things. That we need motivation. You only need motivation to do things you don't want to do. If it is something you want to do, you do it without any problems. People need motivation and reasons to get out of bed and go to work. People don't need motivation or reasons to play. Children know this already. You ask a child, "what is your motivation to play?" He or she will reply, "to have fun." What is play, but to have fun? So you are being told that the motivation to have fun is to have fun.

After enlightenment, it is seen that life is play. No motivation or fuel or reasons are needed to do anything. Joy and happiness is why "we" do what we do. Of course, the idea of "me" has shattered with enlightenment...so it is living and spreading joy and happiness is why actions are taken. I have been asked, "if you are enlightened, why do you blog?" As if after enlightenment, the body/mind just falls to the ground and does nothing because there is no "reason" to do anything. I typically respond, "I blog because it is fun." The Self is playing. This is what is meant in

Indian philosophy when it is said the world is God's leela (i.e. play). What-is is creative play by the Divine Absolute (Brahman).

Any self-improvement after enlightenment is done simply for the fun of it; not because it will make you a better person or perfect. Any self-improvement after enlightenment is not needed...or a requirement in some way - to be a better person or to be happy. Nisargadatta Maharaj awoke and still was known for a terrible temper...he saw no need to "fix it". This is not a mark of imperfection...it simply is what is. After enlightenment, many still continued spiritual practices like meditation, bhajans, kirtans, etc. Why? For the fun of it. I continue to regularly go to kirtans...because I enjoy them. I still meditate nightly...because I enjoy it. I continue to delve into trapped, repeating energetic/thought patterns...and digging up and dispelling ignorance by seeing and deepening understanding. Why...because there is joy in seeing the unfolding and growth. Life is play...and things are done simply for the joy of it.

Why change anything if "it was all meant to be" or "it's your karma"? - 2019-01-14 06:48

Say you are walking down the street and stumble on a crack in the sidewalk. You fall down. You aren't hurt...no injuries; just a misstep in which you find yourself on the ground. If you say, why change anything..."it was meant to be" or "it's my karma", do you imagine you just spend the rest of your life sitting or lying on the ground where you fell? This would be kind of silly. Most would just get up, brush themselves off, and continue on wherever they were going. But guess what...this was also meant to be...it was also your karma to get up, brush yourself off, and continue on.

Actually, the same misunderstanding happens in religion too. It is the will of God. Nothing happens except by the will of Allah. Same thing. If you fell down on the sidewalk, you can say it is the will of God or Allah...but getting up, brushing yourself off, and continuing on is also the will of God or Allah. Why do we select certain things as meant to be, karma, or God's will...and use that as an excuse to not act? No one would just stay on the ground after falling and say, "I must stay here from now on...it is the will of God that I fell down." How do you know it is not the will of God that you get up?

It is a strange kind of fatalistic apathy. Speaking of which, another is "it was my fate." Again, it may have been your fate to trip and fall on the crack...but how can you assume it is not your fate to stand back up again? I keep using the tripping reference to show how ridiculous it is. Common sense would be to just get up, brush yourself off, and continue on.

I recently said that what-is is perfect as it is, but typically I would not say "it was meant to be." This is because to say so assumes there is meaning for what happened. However, all meaning is a creation of the mind and thought. There is no meaning...outside what we imagine. When the mind is silent and there are no thoughts, there is awareness of what the senses of the body are senses...but there is no meaning. It is an effect of our advanced human

brains (due to evolution) to try to find causation...causes and effects...and also to attribute meaning to what is experienced. This is how superstitions are born. Two unrelated things happen, but our brains link them as related. Suddenly, the black cat that crossed your path in the morning is the cause of the crappy day you are experiencing. The black cat and a crappy day are unrelated...and the black cat does not mean anything. It is all thought and belief in meaning where no meaning exists.

I have spoken about karma. Karma is simply cause and effect. You throw a stone in a pond and it causes a splash and ripples. You can't expect to throw a stone into a pond without a splash and ripples...unless it is frozen solid in the winter. You can accept what comes and goes in life...both good and bad..and say it is karma. However, it would be incorrect to think that this should determine action at present. If you are a boxer, due to your actions fighting in the ring...the effects will include being hit. It would be a mistake if after the first punch received to say, "this is my karma...I should work it out" and then stand there without defending yourself and just continue to be pummeled in the face. It is your karma that you were hit (you started fighting in a ring...what did you expect) and so roll with the punches and try to avoid as many as possible. Do not use "it's karma" as an excuse to not act or change things.

Change is inevitable. What-is is change and flux and flow. If an action can change things...then why not act? Nonduality is all inclusive...nothing is excluded. All the possibilities are being played out. Whether you choose to act or choose to not act, either is OK. Whatever you choose to do is exactly what the Self chose to do as you. Just don't bother making the excuse that "it was meant to be", "it's my karma", "it's the will of God", "it's my fate", or any other fatalistically apathetic excuse for the choice of doing nothing about it.

What is ahimsa and does it have a place in nonduality? - 2019-01-17 06:29

Ahimsa is a Sanskrit word with the root of "hims" which means to strike or "himsa" which means injury or harm. When you put an "a" in front in Sanskrit, it means the opposite or "non". So ahimsa means non-harming or not causing injury. Ahimsa is the principal of non-violence. But deeper than that, ahimsa means no longer desiring for harm or to injure. Mahatma Gandhi used this principal in his efforts for India's independence. He said they would take many blows, but they would not strike a blow and would not fight back.

Ahimsa is sometimes related to compassion. Ahimsa comes from a place of love, peace, and unity. I have said the Way is love, truth, harmony, and unity, and so ahimsa is a manifestation of at least three of these (love, harmony/peace, and unity).

The way we strike back or injure does not have to be physical (i.e. deeds), but also via words or thoughts. When the desire for harm is totally gone, there may not even be the thought of harming or striking back or violence. I have come to feel and understand that this desire for harm and violence can manifest subtly as ill will.

For example, I recently saw a post on Facebook about a lion hunter who slipped and fell to his death. There were comments and replies like: "that's karma", "oh well", and "glad to hear it." In following the Way of love, truth, harmony, and unity...and ahimsa...it is not the Way to wish ill will on anyone or anything, nor revel in another's misfortune or failure, nor revel in their deaths. This desire to see another's demise because they have done wrong in your eyes is contrary to ahimsa. That is the desire *for harm*.

When the revelation that "there is only the Self and no other" occurs, there is clear recognition that the desire for harm or injury...like wishing harm upon another...is to desire or wish harm on yourSelf. It is only in ignorance that one would wish harm upon oneself. And it is only in ignorance and misunderstanding that we believe they are other or separate from us.

Similarly, a subtle manifestation of the desire for harm is wishing to see another fail...to see them brought down. For example, some people are quite happy when President Trump fails...same as with Obama when he was President. But this is the top elected official of the USA with far reaching powers. If the President fails, then we as a country suffer for it...and perhaps the world too. So in wishing for the President (any President) to fail is inherently self-destructive. I wish President Trump would succeed in making improvements for the lives of most Americans (which is the job of a President). I don't believe he is doing well in this, but I don't wish him ill will or want to see him fail as a President. There are too many in the world today promoting a desire for harm. This is not the Way of love, peace, or unity...or ahimsa.

I caution against making ahimsa an absolute rule that must be followed at all costs. You can almost drive yourself crazy trying not to harm anything...and not being involved with anything that causes harm (thus harming by proxy). I caution against going too overboard. Do the best you can and be compassionate with yourself when you think you could do better, but *what is really important is no longer desiring harm*. It starts with each one of us following the Way of love, truth, harmony, and unity...and living ahimsa as best as we are able. As more people come to adopt ahimsa, it could change society, industry, and the world. However, the world as it is currently, some harm is inevitable in living in society.

I will also say that ahimsa is but a starting point...much like tolerance really. When you say you are tolerant of something...tolerance is an allowing, but it often comes from the viewpoint that my life is no better with whatever it is in my life. You just put up with whatever it is. To appreciate and see the value of whatever it is being in your life is another level entirely. Then it is embraced...not tolerated. Likewise, ahimsa is no longer desiring for harm...but another level would be wishing for the well-being for all and good will to all. Blessing all that you encounter perhaps; instead of only not desiring harm upon them.

If there are no others and there is only the Self, would it not be best to only wish for the well-being and good will to the Self...blessing the Self wherever the eye looks? Sure...and this is how ahimsa has a place in nonduality. For only one still in the delusion of duality would harm or wish for harm upon another...not knowing it is the very Self. In realizing the Self, the desire to harm and for harm vanishes.

Isn't the biggest fight of one's life to get to abiding nonduality? - 2019-01-20 06:13

Only for a "me"...for the Self it is quite natural and easy. Only a "me" struggles to be what it already is (due to ignorance). Enlightenment is the revelation that dispels the illusion of duality and thereby shatters the idea of "me". When there is no "me", all that is left is nonduality. Nonduality does not need to try to abide in nonduality. Only if the "me" has not been seen through and is still believed...then there is a "me" trying to abide in nonduality. Of course, a "me" never can abide in nonduality...for the "me" is the very idea and illusion of separation or duality.

There is this misconception or myth that it takes time to integrate, solidify, and live from the realization. This is only true for a "me". If there was a passing spiritual experience and/or a glimpse at the truth that nonduality is the nature of reality, then there might be a "me" who continues on in life wondering how to integrate or solidify the understanding it gained and now believes in. For the Self...which is not other than nonduality...what is there to integrate or solidify? To suggest integration of some kind is needed implicitly suggests an "other" to try to abide in "what it is not yet". The Self is quite comfortable in nonduality, because it is nonduality itself.

This is why if there is struggle and strain in trying to abide in nonduality, then I state the simple fact that the "me" is still believed. A "me" is having difficulty abiding in nonduality. As the "me" is still believed, enlightenment has not yet happened. I encounter so many people who say they have awakened or became enlightened...and then ask for advice on how to integrate this or abide in this. There is nothing to integrate or abide in...you are it. The Self is all there is.

I have had people ask me about my awakening and what happened afterward. They ask, "how long did it take to integrate?" I answer...immediately. Awakening happened, I sat on the couch for a little while, I made myself supper, watched a movie, went to bed, and got up to go to work the next day. There were no difficulties in living or abiding as the Self. I don't believe this is special or unusual; although others seem surprised or shocked by the idea of immediately living as the Self.

It would be far better to be brutally honest with oneself in this situation. If a "me" is still believed...and thus trying to live or integrate some passing nondual experience, this was NOT enlightenment. You are only creating confusion and more illusion by not recognizing this. Instead, own up to the fact that "that was just a passing glimpse or passing spiritual experience...I still believe in a 'me'." As long as the "me" is believed, there will be a struggle in trying to abide in nonduality/the Self...because the "me" itself is the imagined line of separation and thus creating duality. A "me" never abides in nonduality/the Self. The "me" shatters and nonduality/the Self is what remains.

One of the primary ways the illusion of "me" is strengthened is through struggle and fighting. As long as a "me" is struggling and fighting to abide as the Self or abiding nonduality, the "me" is being reinforced and strengthened. The division and duality...the idea of not abiding in nonduality...is reinforced. There is nothing a "me" can do. Instead,

cease doing. Be still and be silent. So deeply silent and still that there is no thought or thinking. Do not "do this" in order to get something for the "me". This desiring is also a doing...of thinking...in relation to a "me"...and thus strengthening the "me". Just be silent...be still...simply to be silent and still.

Nothing may happen...something may happen...it doesn't matter. If thoughts like "nothing happened" or "it didn't do it for me" arise, then there was seeking and desiring happening...which are doings. That is not true stillness and silence. Remain silent...abide in Silence. A revelation may occur that there is no "me" in Silence. Silence is all there is.

Johanne (2019-01-20 14:08:00)

Maybe believing that there are multiple things or a One to be fought is 'My/Our' favorite game? ;)

Does the practice of non-duality inevitably maintain the status quo and non-participation in life? - 2019-01-23 07:01

Nonduality is sometimes thought be a kind of escapism or the idea is to remain removed from life. Some think nonduality leads to non-participation in life and so unable to make change (and thus maintain the status quo). Actually, this is why this blog is called Engaged Nonduality. Per my understanding, nonduality does not mean escapism, lack of participation, inability to change, or be disengaged from life and the world.

This is kind of a trap though that I have seen many within nonduality circles fall into. I continue to go to kirtans, meditate, experiment with spiritual exercises of my own creation, delve into repeating patterns to release them (so to speak), etc. I have had many ask - why do you do these things? Why continue self-improvement when there is no "me"? Why continue spiritual practices and exercises if enlightenment has already happened?

The answer is simply for the fun of it...for the joy of it. Life is play. In a way, it is like playing a game. Once you realize it is a game and play...nothing serious, why do so many assume this would mean we stop playing the game? I sometimes play Space Marshals 2 from time to time. To recognize it is a game does not mean to lose interest in the game. The game is still fun to play. You are just no longer upset or suffering when different challenges arise, things don't go your way, there are some losses, or you die. To realize it is an illusion and a game does not have to mean you cease trying to get to the next level of the game.

Some might retort, "why try to get to the next level? It doesn't really matter." I say it doesn't have to matter. When we were children, did hide and seek serve some global purpose that I was unaware of? Did hide and seek matter...I

missed the memo. No, it is play. It is fun to make it through the challenges to get to the next level. When the next level is reached, we may encounter things we have never encountered before. It may require learning something new or removing a new obstacle or who knows what may be discovered? The fact that "it doesn't really matter" doesn't matter.

Life is the same...it is play. This is why nonduality does not lead to non-participation. Play only happens when there is participation and involvement. How can you play...let alone win or lose...unless you take part? Some might ask me then what is the world game being played. There are multitudes of games being played, but my focus is on the game of embodying and spreading love, truth, harmony, and unity. It is from these that the spiritual exercises and experiments I still do arise. Sometimes it manifests as action. For example, I contributed to the legal fund for immigrant children separated from their parents and put into cages. Over 500K people contributed to a total amount of over \$20 million. This is how nonduality does not lead to maintaining the status-quo. Nothing says that if one sees something that goes against love and unity like separating children from their parents and putting children in cages...that one can not act to change things. Remember, whatever you want to do is exactly what the Self wants to do as you.

However, there is no attachment to doership, no attachment to the fruits of action, nor attachment to getting the desired results. It was not Eric ("me") that did anything...it was the Self. The results...or fruits of action...also belong to the Self. The outcome is also the will of the Self.

This may not make sense to the logical and thinking mind, but the Self (as me) voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016 and the Self (as many US citizens and the electoral college) elected Donald Trump. This is how one can act without being attached to getting the desired results. Another example would be playing a game with someone. You can sincerely play and try to win, but not be attached to winning and just enjoy the game (even if you lose). Again, nonduality does not necessarily lead to just ceasing to play games entirely...what fun would that be?

Nonduality is not about removing yourself from life...physically, emotionally, or otherwise. Nonduality is not escapism. If you are trying to get out of life, then you are resisting and denying the Self. Life is not other than the Self. There is only the Self...and no other. The Self is all there is or ever has been. Trying to distance or remove yourself is an egoic action attempted by an unhappy "me". When there is no "me", it is the Self playing with Itself. Like when a child plays by himself or herself. Life...the game...play...continues on because this is what the Self wants.

cara basmi rayap (2019-02-11 07:04:00)

It's a pity you don't have a donate button! I'd most certainly donate to this brilliant blog! I suppose for now i'll settle for book-marking and adding your RSS feed to my Google account. I look forward to new updates and will share this blog with my Facebook group. Chat soon!

How can you say, 'it was for the best; it was as it should have been'? - 2019-01-26 06:44

These are statements pointing to the total acceptance and perhaps appreciation for the past being exactly how it was. What-is is exactly as the Self wants it to be. Also, I totally accept, appreciate, and love the person I am now. Both of these statements are about being at peace, accepting, and appreciating the present, but the present has come about due to the past. So if you like the person you are now, how can you have a grievance with the past that helped create the person you are now? If the past was otherwise, you would not be the person you are now.

These statements are not something an ego can accept. A "me" will rebel against it. The thought may arise, "how could you dare say what happened to me was for the best or as it should have been?" However, upon enlightenment the illusion of duality is seen through and the idea of "me" is shattered. There is nothing lacking. There is a sense of inherent perfection and that what-is could not be other than what it is. When one is totally content with the present as it is and no longer resisting or denying what-is, the here and now is perfect, complete, and whole.

This understanding sinks and deepens (so to speak) and changes how the past is seen. If the now is perfect, complete, and whole...and what was culminated into the now...then the past too would have to be perfect, complete, and whole. This perfection, completeness, and wholeness is outside of time...or timeless, one could say.

Even after enlightenment, the body/mind may hold some samskaras or repeating patterns/habits. Some deep conditioning may remain. Some repressed or avoided emotions and experiences may remain. I like watching these trapped and stored energies within the body/mind being released or liberated, so I sometimes delve into my own worst past memories to see if anything still has a sting, causes inner-contraction, or otherwise causes a reaction.

For example, when I was a young boy I was picked on and bullied quite a lot. It was usually a couple times a week I would receive a beating from one of a handful of bullies at school. From kindergarten through eighth grade, I often had bruises and ripped clothing. Recently I was thinking upon these times and I felt a pang. An echo of a scared, angry, and shame filled boy who saw no way out of the suffering. I could tell there were some unseen and undealt-with baggage here. Something that has been avoided until now. So I invited all the unfelt emotions to arise...creating a space for them in kindness and compassion. With the feelings and memories firmly being experienced in the now, I simply said to myself, "it was as it should have been...it was for the best."

Some might think this is ridiculous. How could someone say it was alright to be beaten for years by bullies? However my understanding includes the inherent completeness and perfection of now...which requires the past to be as it was in order for the now to be as it is. Saying "it was as it should have been...it was for the best" was an embracing of what happened, appreciating it, and recognizing it is what helped shape the person I am today.

I truly love this life. I would not change a thing in my past, because then the person I am would not be as I am. You see...if you truly love yourself as you are, you have to also totally accept and appreciate the past. They are not separate. No such separation exists. To have a grievance with the past is to have a grievance with the present. A lover of reality...the now...the what-is...does not hold grievances against it.

I felt a warmth and tingling after saying, "it was as it should have been...it was for the best." There was an integration of what has been separated and pushed away (i.e. repressed or avoided). There was seeing of what has been unseen and hidden. There also came elation. A sense of joy and love...and liberation. The sting faded and was replaced by vibrant warmth.

The memories no longer come with a sting. Those memories of the past are no longer charged, because I consciously felt what was being ignored and avoided for so many years. That stored mental/emotional energy was released. This may change habits or repeating patterns, but it is too soon to tell. I can say it was very pleasant for me and left me feeling good for days. It feels good when burdens are lifted.

I have said 'it was for the best; it was as it should have been' because my understanding includes that now is the best and the now is as it should be. This may make far more sense after enlightenment than before enlightenment happens. When the "me" is no longer believed, what had happened in life is not as serious and personal. I guess you could say that the horrible things that may have happened can be looked at more objectively, but this is misleading as objectivity implies a distancing or separation. Closer might be...when a "me" is no longer believed, the horrible things that had happened in life can be looked at and embraced more easily without the investment a "me" would have in the events. When a "me" is highly invested in something it did not want to happen, it is difficult to see or accept that what-was was for the best and should not have been otherwise.

Quick answers to several questions: short Q&A - 2019-01-29 06:30

If you get enlightened in this life, are you born enlightened in your next life?

This reflects a common misunderstanding. It could be said no "me" gets enlightenment, but more clearly stated is that there is no "me" after enlightenment. The separate "me" is an illusion. These ideas that "you" get enlightened and what happens in "your" next life both still imply a separate "you". There is no separate "you". Separation and otherness is an illusion. Nonduality or the Self is all there is.

Is seeing no-self necessarily the same thing as seeing nonduality?

Seeing no-self (i.e. passing glimpse or spiritual experience) is not the same as deeply realizing the truth of no-self. One might see that events are happening without a self (or doer), but not have the depth of seeing (or realization) to see that there is no separation or otherness anywhere. Ignorance still remains and so the illusion of duality is still believed. If there is no self, there is no other. So if the realization occurs that there is no-self, then "other" also falls away and all that remains is nonduality. As long as others exist, there is also a subtle belief in self. If there are no others, then all is one (figuratively speaking)...or nonduality.

When someone uses mystical language to describe nonduality, is that just a love of literary prose or is it truly descriptive?

All language (mystical, scientific, or otherwise) are merely pointers. A map is descriptive of the terrain, but leaves so much absent that it is not "truly descriptive" or representative of the terrain. Or said another way, a map is not the territory. Don't become attached to the language and think of it as accurate descriptions. They are pointers. As a Zen says, don't focus on the finger...look at the moon that the finger is pointing to. The finger is never the moon. As such, no words or phrases are the Truth...but may point to the Truth. Some are more poetic than others. Some are more mystical than others. Some are more scientific than others. Doesn't really matter...the words are merely pointers.

Can the nondual realization (i.e. "the Understanding") be put into words?

Not really, because the fact is that all words are inherently dualistic. Words only have meaning when there are things that are not it. Chair only has meaning when there are things that are not chairs. So any description or verbalization of nondual realization has to be incomplete or leave things out or put in error because we are using inaccurate and dualistic words. That is why there are so many pointers...and sometimes the pointers appear to be pointing in exact opposite directions. Both may be true, but because some are attached to one pointer versus another...they argue about which is true and which is false. Now I talk and write a great deal about nondual realization...but I know I am putting in flaws every time I try to verbalize it. Nonduality does not exclude anything...there is no other; so no dualistic word or phrase would do it justice however the words are used to describe it. In fact, I have had some try to tell me nonduality is dualistic as it is opposed to duality (duality vs non-duality). This is how faulty words are in trying to describe nonduality. I say "nonduality" and people don't understand what I am talking about. People sometimes have a hard time seeing beyond the dualistic words and perhaps seeing the nonduality being pointed to.

When teachers say "it's all consciousness" do they mean that literally? This computer I'm typing on is made out of consciousness?!

Yes. If you were dreaming right now (asleep in bed) and were dreaming about typing out an email on a computer...wouldn't that computer you are typing on be made out of consciousness? Of course it would. Everything in the dream is made of consciousness. The waking world is no different. All is still consciousness. But don't get stuck or attached to the word 'consciousness'...it could have just have been God, That, Emptiness, Energy, or any

number of other terms. If I said everything is made of energy, you would likely have no problem with this phrase. However, it is not blind energy...it is consciousness. Or God, if you prefer. Or the Self. THAT is all there is...and you are THAT.

2019 - 02

Does sin exist in nonduality? - 2019-02-01 06:24

What is sin? Many religions define sin differently. I have heard Christians say sin means "to miss the mark". Basically, a thought, word, or deed against the law of God. Jesus said the whole of the law hangs upon the two great commandments: love God and love thy neighbor. However in Vedanta, sin is ignorance...or more specifically the impurities and/or consequences brought by wrong action due to ignorance. I have said the Way is love, truth, harmony, and unity...so to miss the mark would be to act contrary to love, truth, harmony, and unity. However, in nonduality there is no such thing as a sinner.

The idea of sin may be a pointer for the Way of love, truth, harmony, and unity...but not everything follows the Way. Look at the world. People lie, people hate, people fight, and people split themselves into tribes and so many other ways of separation. This is the game. The world game could not be played as it is if there was no ignorance (or sin). Ignorance and/or illusion is a fundamental necessity to any game. It creates limitation, which is needed to create games.

Say you want to play Chutes and Ladders (i.e. Snakes and Ladders). Only if you play by the rules (the limitations/illusions) does the game have structure. Everyone could just move their piece right to the ending space. However, that is not how the game should be played...this would be missing the mark. Anyone could just climb the chutes instead of sliding down...so that both ladders and chutes are upward...but that is not the game. We have to believe/accept in the illusion/limitation in order to play the game. It is the possibility of downward movement that makes the game fun and entertaining. If upward was the only direction for all, it would quickly end and be far less fun.

Say you want to play poker. You could ignore the rules and go around the table looking at everyone's hands, but would poker really be fun to play if you knew what everyone was holding? The game can only be played because ignorance exists. Same with hide and seek. If you always knew where everyone was hiding, there would be no fun in seeking. Such a dull game would quickly come to an end as you would just go straight to where everyone is...as you would know where they are.

The world too is a game...it is play. We don't know many things...there is ignorance. Due to ignorance and misunderstanding, we mistake many things for what they are not...and so illusion exists. If you always saw what was as it really was, there never would have been ignorance or illusion. Because there is ignorance, we will sometimes

not do things the "right" way. Just like when learning to ride a bike, we fell many times at first before mastering riding a bike. Each fall could be called "missing the mark", but learning and growth arise from failure. You have to fail many times to master anything...including living a life. That is joy in learning, discovery, and growth.

If no people ever hated or lied or fought or had the idea of outsiders, the world would be very different. It would also be a world with much more limited experience available and with little opportunity for learning/growth. That is not the world we live in...and it is pointless to wish we were in such a world. We can only be where we are now. Be a lover of reality - as it is...and the reality is many live believing illusions to be something they are not. Like seeing a mirage and really thinking it is water that is being seen.

For nonduality, sin is not "evil" or even "bad". It is simply ignorance...which results in acting contrary to the Way of love, truth, harmony, and unity. If you knew or truly understood what-is, you would not have acted as you did (under ignorance and illusion). Missing the mark is not something to beat yourself up over. It is not something to feel bad about. It is not something to condemn yourself for. Just recognize what you did and see what really is...and then you would not act the same way again. Dispel ignorance and then actions change on their own. Dispelling ignorance is what it is about. To recognize one's own sin is to have no sin. Meaning...to recognize one's own ignorance is to no longer be ignorant. To recognize what you really did is to dispel ignorance.

Unlike some religions, nonduality (as it comes from Advaita Vedanta) does not have the concept of original sin. In other religions, some will say we are inherently imperfect and sinful (i.e. impure). However, in nonduality, we are inherently perfect and pure. It is only ignorance and misunderstanding that has caused a going astray - which is really also part of the plan (so to speak). However, it is possible to return to our essential being or inherent nature...which is perfect and pure. Sin is a temporary condition due to ignorance and illusion...and sin has nothing to do with who or what we are. See through the illusions and dispel ignorance through understanding...and sin will vanish like an illusion too.

So, post-awakening, is there anything you still "struggle" with? - 2019-02-04 06:31

There are at least two ways this question could be interpreted. One is focused on struggle, which there is no struggle really after awakening. However, as the word was in quotes, I think you may be asking if there is anything I am still working on post-awakening. There is always the opportunity to deepen in understanding and wisdom, so there are things I still am working on.

Due to samskaras, conditioning, and/or habitual patterns...I can sometimes be abrasive in speech or "harsh" (as my wife calls it). So I sometimes work with softening, but I would not call it a struggle. Really, what I am working on more specifically is that I look for ignorance and obstacles that may be delaying the natural softening that deepening understanding brings. Awakening brings a natural tenderization (so to speak), but the body/mind also holds patterns and energies that can perpetuate due to simply being ignored or not seen/touched deeply. Ignorance is the root...and

ignorance is only dispelled by deeply seeing and understanding what is as it is. I sometimes "bark" at my daughter when she is doing something wrong. This is very much how I was spoken to by my father when I "messed up". It is a habit that was learned and substantiated by various beliefs and concepts I was raised with. It is a deeply embedded samskara, conditioning, and/or habitual pattern. I have been untying this Gordian Knot by working specifically on softness and tenderness. The experiment continues.

Actually, these days most of my experiments and practices are pretty heart-centered. Softness and tenderness are heart-centered. However, I have also been working quite a bit with kindness and compassion...specifically self-kindness and self-compassion...and being soft and tender with myself. It is easier to not be hard on others if you are not hard on yourself. Similar to how one's capacity to love others is limited by how much you love yourself. I do have the habit of being hard on myself. Far less so after awakening, but the tendency and habit sometimes pops up in some situations or under specific conditions. When it arises, I am alerted that something else has not been fully seen or in some way avoided...that some ignorance still remains. Then it is time to sit with it, touch it deeply, and understand it. The experiment continues.

Also, I occasionally spend time embracing and experiencing any repressed, suppressed, or otherwise trapped emotions/memories from the past that have been avoided from being experienced. Getting in touch and fully experiencing whatever within that has been unseen, unloved, avoided, etc. As I said, the body/mind can store emotions and memories. Body workers know this very well. Someone could be getting a deep tissue massage and suddenly break down crying and not really know why. Emotions and memories are just energies...and these energies can be stored or stuck within the energy patterns of muscles and body tissue. Often manifesting as tension or contraction. It is interesting what gets stored and watching it be released. Also, it brings greater joy and happiness...and dissolves triggers that cause negative emotions and reactions to arise. It is fascinating really. While much falls away upon awakening, some repeating patterns of emotions/memories may continue simply because they have not been consciously fully experienced and embraced.

Not everything I am working on ("struggling with") is spiritual. I continue to practice my drumming. I found a book and CD combo at the library that breaks down a few rhythms into many simple steps. You start with a really easy beat and then add to it. Then some may be subtracted or swapped around...one step at a time. I find it fascinating because it is like I can almost feel a "short circuiting" in the brain when I try to do the next step. At times I just can't seem to get my hands to do what I want them to do...and I miss the note or hit the wrong tone. It takes a bit of "struggle", but eventually my body figures out what I am trying to do and I become able to play the new variation. It is incremental...every day I become a little better at playing the drums. I would not really call it a struggle or work though...it is all play...but it does not always come immediately or easily.

Awakening simply means dispelling the illusion of duality and a shattering of the "me". Awakening does not make one all knowing or a master of everything...nor remove all samskaras, conditioning, or habitual patterns...nor all ignorance. Some of the wisdom and understanding that arises upon awakening may not be totally actualized (so to speak). Wisdom and understanding can deepen after awakening. It is like an onion really, understanding that is sat with and lived for a while may cause an arising of new understanding. There are subtler and subtler levels that are discovered. I find it is a constant deepening and living love, truth, harmony, and unity more fully every day...as the samskaras, conditioning, and habitual patterns fall away.

Vic Shayne (2019-02-11 13:50:13)

It's nice to see this sort of article, because this is a very lonely path to the Self and the Absolute. The irony is when you realize there was never any path at all. But there are many unanswered questions that few are able to address. So you have to continue on, slowly putting the attention on the remnants of conditioning. I like this part that you wrote, because it breaks down so many misconceptions: "Awakening simply means dispelling the illusion of duality and a shattering of the "me". Awakening does not make one all knowing or a master of everything...nor remove all samskaras, conditioning, or habitual patterns...nor all ignorance."

Where does happiness come from? - 2019-02-07 06:12

Happiness does not come from anywhere or anything. Happiness is our inherent nature. Happiness is the natural state that existed before we took up beliefs/concepts and picked up bad habits to create our own miseries and unhappiness. For example, I don't see many unhappy children. If you go back far enough, there is a point in your life when happiness was simply naturally present in day to day life...and only occasionally did something happen that brought unhappiness. Now many adults experience the opposite...usually unhappy in day to day life and only occasionally happy. What happened?

Fearlessness is similar. It is said that infants are only afraid of two things - loud noises and falling. These are the only two innate fears...all other fears are learned behaviors. We are told things are wrong, disgusting, dangerous, etc. and so we adopt beliefs and concepts. Also, we observe other's fear of things and we imitate it and adopt them. It really is kind of amazing how much suffering we create for ourselves by learning to fear things. What is worse...some believe that without those fears to "protect us" that, even as an adult, we would do foolish things like ceasing to look both ways before crossing the street. We adopt and learn fears and then we rationalize their necessity...and thus never questioning or overcoming those fears.

Through similar processes we have learned and adopted many habits, beliefs/concepts, etc. that create our own miseries and unhappiness. If you believe that money and status bring happiness, then you will be unhappy as long as you don't yet have the level of money and status you need to claim happiness. You could be fairly well off...above average in income...and yet still feel it is not enough and be unhappy because you are "poor" (in your mind). However, there are many unhappy and miserable rich people...and so no amount of money or status will bring happiness. Also on the flip side, there are many very happy people who would be considered quite poor...so money and status don't really mean much to happiness. But because of the concepts and beliefs being held (about money and status), happiness is pushed away because "you are not there yet." This pushes happiness into some point in the future...and maintains an unhappy here and now and future seeking.

As part of the training and conditioning we have received, we believe that happiness is something outside ourselves that we can find. If I get this or that, I will be happy. This is the basis of the question - where does happiness come from? You are asking for an answer to point at something outside of yourself. "From" means not already here and now...but somewhere or somewhen else. This question says, "I believe I am unhappy and unhappiness is my natural

state...where can I find happiness?" This is all wrong, of course, and only reinforces the idea of an unhappy "me". There is no where to go, no thing to attain, and no thing to become.

Unhappiness is really an illusion of sorts. Unhappiness is created in the mind and exists because it is believed. For example, due to something you heard from parents, teachers, elders, betters, etc. - many people have a deep feeling that something is wrong or incomplete in themselves. This belief is wrong, but as long as it is believed...there will always be a feeling of lack. This feeling of lack creates discontent with what-is. These are the seeds of unhappiness. For how can anyone be truly happy if they feel something within themselves is wrong or incomplete...and so they are lacking in some way? What is worse, if what they think is wrong or lacking is somehow fixed in some way...they will likely still feel lacking or wrong - and so look for the next thing to fix. Why? Because of the fundamental belief that something is wrong or incomplete with who/what they are. The only way to really "get out" (so to speak) is to clearly see the error of the belief that something is wrong or incomplete...to the degree that the feeling of lack vanishes.

I have come to find the feeling of lack persists as long as you believe you are a "me". While it might be helpful for happiness in life to unravel and release some of the beliefs/concepts and habits that create unhappiness, I don't think it really is possible to remove it all. The one doing the removing would be a "me"...and a "me" is never complete...never whole. For a "me" is only a separate piece at best...never the whole. A "me" can always find something missing or lacking...because there is an outside and things outside itself. A "me" can always find a higher level or somewhere to go. The Self, however, is all there is. There is nothing outside. There is nowhere to go. There is nothing else to attain to become complete or whole. The Self is complete. The Self is wholeness itself.

While some of our self created miseries and unhappiness can be unraveled, released, or seen through, happiness that is unshakable and everlasting can only be realized when the idea of "me" is seen through and the Self deeply realized. It could be said, no "me"...no problems. This does make a certain logical sense if you consider that children do not have as developed egos (i.e. "me"). Young children have very little "me" when compared to adults. With less "me" involved, it would make sense that there would be more happiness experienced in a child's life.

Happiness is our natural state (i.e. inherent nature)...prior to thought - including the "I" thought. So there is no where to go, nothing to attain, and nothing to become. We just have to see what already is...beyond our beliefs, concepts, and habits that are creating our unhappiness.

[Another Short Q&A - 5 Varied Questions - 2019-02-10 06:20](#)

When is death not sad?

When you no longer have a problem with death...or things ending or things parting. Many people have a general issue with impermanence. They don't want to accept the fact that things will end eventually...it is inevitable. Instead, they try to forever possess...which is impossible. The issue is not just with death, but change...particularly undesired change that happens. Basically, it is attachment to people and things...and maintaining possession of them. More deeply and perhaps at the root is a fear and unacceptability of one's own death. We don't want to die...and so we think it is sad when people we know die. It reminds us that there is an end for us as well. For one who no longer resists or denies change, impermanence, death, and the general lack of control over when and how these changes occur...and instead appreciates what-is and is grateful for what-was...death is not sad.

Regarding enlightenment, what do you make of teachers whose advice is that this is all very simple and obvious and all you need to do is “take a look” to see it?

Just looking is important. Truly seeing brings understanding. It is not simple or obvious, because we have all these concepts, beliefs, and pieces of knowledge that obscure and tint what is seen. So I often suggest looking at the concepts, beliefs, and knowledge and questioning it. Ultimately, all understanding comes from directly seeing. But I am not talking about superficial glances, but deeply looking and with deep seeing comes the revelation of understanding. If you see something that looks like to be water, and say that is water...you cease looking and go on assuming it is water. But if it is a mirage, you would be mistaken. You have to look longer and more deeply to realize it is a mirage. Eventually, you come to understand mirages to such a degree that they never cause confusion when encountered. Fundamentally, enlightenment is seeing what is as it truly is...and right now most are not seeing what is as it is.

Presumably most of the faculty of any university physics or biology department don't believe in an “I” entity or soul, riding along inside the body doing things with free will. Why aren't they liberated? Or are they?

They still believe they are someone. They still believe in a "I"...perhaps not as a soul...but many of them have strong identification and attachment to the body/mind. "I" am a tenured professor and should be treated in a certain way due to my status. Also, many of them fear death...the end of "me". They still believe in the illusion of "me"...and so are still trapped in the illusion of duality...thus not yet liberated.

When teachers say “you are the space in which things happen” do they mean that literally?

Instead of "consciousness", you could use the word "space". It's all space. This is similar to the Eastern concept of emptiness. Essentially, tat tvam asi...you are That. Don't get stuck or attached to the terminology and phrasing. They are pointers only. This phrase, "you are the space in which things happen" does imply a separation between space and things that happen. You are not other than the things that happen...there is no such separation. I have heard the pointer used before and it is a good pointer, but because words are being used...there is always error involved. No phrase is the Truth, but at best points at the Truth. So taking words literally is really fixating on the finger pointing and not looking at what is being pointed to. What is being pointed to is closer to the idea of "the spirit" of what is

being said versus actually what is being said (i.e. literal). That is why it could be said "you are everything" and it could be said "you are nothing"...and both pointers are true pointers; however, in a literal sense, they are opposites.

Now that you're enlightened, do you find your attention always rests in the present moment or does your attention wander?

Typically the attention rests in the present moment...with a mind that is silent and still. I would not say *always*, but what little wandering thought there is does not bother me or cause suffering. It is often barely even noticed.

Typically, the attention is 100% on the experience of the moment...leaving little room for thought. But even when there is no thought, it is natural for attention to wander within the present moment. The eye might look here for a second, then there, and then move onto something else. It is natural for the attention of the eye to wander. The ear does not need to wander, but just receives all sounds. The attention of the ear is all sound that is heard. However, all this is within the present moment. Typically, all the attention is on the present moment...because that is the only moment that really matters.

[Are enlightened people lonely? - 2019-02-13 06:34](#)

Not at all.

I woke up in 2005. Prior, there were many times I felt lonely. Afterwards, there has not once been the experience of loneliness. Being lonely really ceases to be a possibility. It is only the ego or fictitious "me" that is lonely. It is only an illusion of the mind. Enlightenment is seeing through the illusions of the mind.

For loneliness to arise, there has to be an "other". There has to be some feeling of incompleteness. If one is fulfilled and complete within oneself...and there is no "other" or anything more than could be added...then how could loneliness arise? Being lonely is the feeling of not being complete by yourself (in a way)...you need others to be whole. Enlightenment is realizing there is no lack or incompleteness...so being alone is completely comfortable.

Enlightenment does not bring about something new...it is a revelation of what has always been. Duality is the illusion and nonduality is all there is...nonduality has always been the case. There never has been an "other". A poetic pointer is Oneness, but it that is not quite right either. One implies a duality...one versus nothing or two. But for now, let us just poetically go with Oneness is all there is. One is always alone and has always been alone...but there is also completeness and being whole. Loneliness only arises if there is the belief or feeling that something is missing or something more could be added. Whether "other people" are present or not, there still is only One...without missing anything and nothing else to be added.

Now there are times I wish I personally was acquainted with more people interested in nonduality...so I could talk more about my favorite topic. It is more fun conversing in real time...and especially in person. However, this does not become loneliness for me. It is just a faint desire or wish to play the game of life a certain way. Whether it happens or not, I am still at peace and content and happy. Complete and fulfilled either way.

Last November I had a three day solitary and silent retreat. I know three days does not seem long, but I hit a stride (so to speak) and felt I could have gone on for weeks or months happily. I was not lonely when no people were around. The retreat also included no phone, iPad, games, books, TV, radio, etc. I did not hear a spoken word while on the retreat. Three days solitary confinement in a cabin basically. Loneliness did not arise. A thought about being alone did not arise. Within my being I am complete and lack nothing...so being in solitude was actually quite pleasant for a change due to the lack of distractions. In normal life, there is always something to do, something to see, etc.

Loneliness may arise when you feel disconnected from others. However, enlightenment is the revelation that there is only That...Oneness...Nonduality. It is impossible to feel disconnected because there is no such thing as disconnection. Instead there is always the deep (not always conscious) feeling of being at one with all...absolute connection.

Loneliness may arise when you mentally or emotionally withdraw or isolate yourself. However, enlightenment is the revelation that there is only That...Oneness...Nonduality. It is impossible to separate yourself and withdraw. It is impossible to be withdraw or isolate because the required duality has been seen through. Instead there is always the deep (not always conscious) feeling of being at one with all...absolute connection.

Loneliness may arise when you are attached to someone or groups of people...and change occurs and you are parted. Divorcees, empty nesters, retirees, etc. are said to be prone to loneliness because of separation experienced in life. However, enlightenment is the revelation that there is only That...Oneness...Nonduality. As such, the illusion of duality has been dispelled and the idea of "me" shattered. When this happens, attachment falls away. Reality is accepted as it is...and the reality is change. It could be said that no one will stay in your life forever, but parting is an illusion. I like what Ramana Maharshi said to his devotees on his deathbed - "they say that I am dying, but I am not going away. Where could I go? I am here." Enlightened people do not see separation as something that really happens...it is only an illusion. Even now, in my heart, I sense every person I have ever loved...past girlfriends, friends I have not seen in years, grandparents who have died, etc. There is nothing sad in "the parting"...it was inevitable...the miracle and joy is I ever knew them at all. Besides, they didn't go anywhere...they are still here and now.

In conclusion, based upon my experience, enlightened people are not lonely. In this completeness and wholeness which I am, there is no lack, disconnection, withdrawal, or attachment...and so no loneliness.

Do enlightened people have no vices? - 2019-02-16 06:45

What are vices? Bad habits? If you do a search on vices in Google you will see things like gambling, smoking, drugs, and drinking...but you will also see listed things like coffee, sugar, social media, video games, TV, swearing, junk food, etc. Do you really believe that enlightened people are like Puritans and don't even dance? There really is nothing wrong with enjoying junk food, TV, social media, video games, sugar, coffee...or even drinking, smoking, gambling, and drugs. Enlightenment is liberation and true freedom...why would you think such a person would be limited or restricted from some or all of these things?

With this question I immediately think of Nisargadatta Maharaj. He was a chain smoker of beedis (leaf rolled cigarettes). In fact, he was known by some as Beedi Baba. Nisargadatta is considered by many as a great teacher who was enlightened...and yet he was a chain smoker and sold cigarettes to help provide for his family. He also was known for his wicked temper and sometimes shouted at people. Some might say Beedi Baba had vices, but so what...it did not matter.

I have had some question my enjoyment of the game of poker. I sometimes play Texas Hold'em at home tournaments or in casinos. I also play online. Some would immediately call gambling (like poker) a vice or bad habit. I would respond by asking, "what is your basis for this belief?" I don't see playing poker as a bad habit...nor a vice. Playing for money does not immediately make it bad. I have played free bar poker and free online...and I must say people play the game differently when no money is involved. They do risky and stupid moves because "it doesn't matter...it's free". You will see things like careless all-ins and bingo players...which destroys the fun of the game really. However, I don't like playing for much money, so I tend to go to really low buy-in games. Even if it is just for a couple dollars...suddenly people are much more serious about the way they play. I enjoy this far more. However, I never play with more money than I am prepared to lose. I actually start out the game thinking the money is already gone...as an entertainment fee. The chips in the game is simply to keep track of the points. I don't play to "make money", but I do try to win.

Everyone playing at the poker games I have been at do not begrudge the winners. I have never been made to feel bad for winning. No temper tantrums or swearing has occurred at the games I have been in. That is bad etiquette and those kinds of actions will make sure you are never invited back to play again. The games I have played have been civil and friendly. We all just want to have a good time.

Games that keep track of points and have winners and losers are really no different, but gambling involves money (that is why it is gambling). So if you played video games with friends and decided it was a penny a point (for example)...the video game would now be considered gambling. I think the main reason this is considered a vice or wrong is because there is subtle belief that money is unholy in some way. Money is not holy or unholy...and really we could be playing for Monopoly money and then some people would not longer care or think of it as a vice or bad. It would just become a game with fake money involved.

I will also admit that while I have cut out a lot of sugar out of my diet...I do have a sweet tooth and enjoy desserts from time to time. That same goes for junk food. Social media, TV, and video games also are a part of my life. People call these things vices or bad habits, but I question what life looks like if it was lived according to their views...a life without vice. The idea is not to give up every enjoyment or pleasure in life...and live a "simple life" to the degree of bare necessity and austerity. It could be said playing games is a vice, but such people have failed to realize that life itself is a game and play.

This reminds me of something Alan Watts once shared. He was talking about the need or desire some have to scrape or clean everything away to purify it. Like the planet Earth...it's shouldn't have all this messy life on it...it should be scrubbed down to a nice clean rock. This is the puritanical direction some want to move to. However, another way to live is to fully embrace life and live it.

I would really argue that there really is no such thing as vices. Vast emptiness...nothing holy (or unholy - I would add). The idea of vices and not vices is duality and illusion. Also, what is a vice at one time and location...may very well not be a vice in another time or different location. These are subjective preferences determined by culture...not truth. These are creations of the mind...and according to how we are brought up, we are conditioned to see some things as vices and other things as not vices. Nonduality does not exclude vice or virtue...both are just actions or happenings - deemed vice or virtue by the culture...and held in the mind as beliefs. Enlightened people are not required to follow the rules of the culture...be it abstaining from activities deemed vices or not.

If you're completely dis-identified from your body, how can there be any reaction to the pain in your body? - 2019-02-19 06:18

There are several flaws in this reasoning. To no longer identify with the body does not mean there is a cessation of experience through the body...or that the nerves of the body cease to function. The eyes still see, the ears still hear, and pain still registers via the nerves within the one body/mind. Now if the body's hand is burned, it will reflexively be pulled away from the heat and there will likely be a scream or whimper or some other natural reaction. Do you think that no longer being identified with the body somehow makes you like a stone...impervious to pain?

In Zen there is a difference between a stone Buddha and a living Buddha. You prick a stone Buddha with a needle and nothing happens...or you might ruin the needle. You prick a living Buddha with a needle and he or she exclaims "ouch!" A living Buddha may feel pain, because he or she is human. Enlightenment does not bring super powers or special abilities...it is just the seeing of and full acceptance of what-is as it is.

I too have heard some yogis who can walk naked without any concern about their bodies. I have heard of yogis who pierce needles through their arms or lie on beds of nails. These are parlor tricks. Ignoring pain is a skill that can be learned. It does not show lack of dis-identification with the body. For it is possible for one to pierce a needle through one's arm...unaffected by it, but still be concerned with gain and loss for a self (perhaps fame and fortune for being able to pull of the needle through the arm trick) and still be afraid of death.

Being able to transcend pain and not react to pain is not a sign of spiritual advancement or enlightenment. Feeling pain and even reacting to it reflexively (like pulling your hand out of a fire) is natural. The goal is not to no longer feel pain (and become a stone Buddha as Zen calls it). The idea is to no longer create suffering (creating misery for oneself in the mind) and embracing/accepting the pain that may arise in life. To no longer fear pain. To no longer be discontent when there is pain.

Even though there may not be any identification with the body, all the sensations and experience still comes from the single vantage point of the body. The trick really is to no longer be fooled by the sensory point of view of the body and identify with it...and call it "me". No longer identifying with the body does not make the sensory point of view of the body end. And so, if the body is pricked by a needle...the nerve send pain signals to the brain and one may cry out "ouch". It is the natural reaction of the body. This would happen with a baby that was just born earlier that day. That young of a newborn has not yet identified with the body. And yet it cries out...why? Because that is the natural reaction of the body when it feels pain. It is a not a function of a mentally created "me" reacting to pain.

The basic question asked, "if you're completely dis-identified from your body, how can there be any reaction to the pain in your body" shows you are still fooled by duality. You think there will be a "you" impervious to pain if "you" dis-identify from the body. However, nonduality is all there is. There is no "you"...even now...that "you" is a fiction in the mind. So too...identification is an illusion of the mind...any identification. Identification requires a "me" to refer to in order to arise. No "me"...no identification - with the body or anything else.

Tom Slijkerman (2019-02-20 08:43:11)
I do notice I've become less ticklish :)

I mean, when my kids used to tickle me, the "knowing I can't handle it" expectations of going to be tickled actually made it much, much worse. Now that I see that whole psychological process happen, it has become a thing to observe and not personal any more.

Not much fun for the kids, though... :)

If everything is one or nonduality, what is wrong with causing harm or enjoying life's pleasures? - 2019-02-22 06:45

It is not a matter of being wrong, because what is considered wrong depends greatly on the place and time period of the culture in which that determination of wrongness is defined. Smoking in a restaurant was not considered wrong very long ago, but most people who live in places with laws against smoking in public areas would say smoking in a restaurant is wrong. As for enjoying life's pleasures, why would this be something to be avoided or considered wrong? Nothing wrong with enjoying a good meal or the simple pleasure of a sunset. It is a myth that after enlightenment that one would seek to do only the bare necessities and avoid enjoyment. Those who are awake are free to enjoy life...and yet are not trapped or bound by enjoying life. Enjoying life does not lead to suffering - as so often is the case with those who are attached to that which they enjoy.

This leaves the causing harm portion of the question. If you really look, you will see it is impossible to cause no harm. We eat every day...and so vegetables (at a minimum) are harmed through consumption daily. In order to get even those vegetables, if bought at a typical grocery store, they were grown on industrial farms...and so herbicides and pesticides were used to kill bugs and weeds. However, these pesticides may have harmed bees and birds and other creatures as well. Digging up potatoes will harm worms and various bacteria in the ground. To ship those vegetables to the store...gasoline was used in trucks to ship it. How much has been harmed by these industries. It is really impossible to not harm...directly or indirectly. So don't get fixated on "absolutely no harm"...that kind of black and white is really unrealistic.

Some might say, "fine, but what about intentionally harming other people?" After enlightenment, this really is not very likely. Not because it is wrong, but because awakening is coming to one's senses (so to speak) and therefore sane. Everyone knows harming yourself is insanity. We even have clinical terms: self-injury (SI), deliberate self-harm (DSH), and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI). For example, cutting or self-mutilation...people who do this are considered mentally unwell and are sent to psychiatrists. We all know that to harm ourselves is insanity. So if all is one or nonduality, then to intentionally harm another is exactly harming oneSelf. To cause harm to another person is Self-injury or deliberate Self-harm. The Self is all there is. After enlightenment, this is clearly realized. The enlightened will typically do what they can do to not harm others.

You can not make this an absolute rule either. Don't create or buy into a myth that enlightened people would never harm or kill another person ever. There are always problems when people try to create rules for the enlightened. It is not black and white. To help explain this think of a doctor. If you said it is wrong to ever harm another, then a doctor could not use a scalpel to cut out a discolored mole on someone because it might be cancerous. Nor could a doctor cut into someone to do a heart transplant. Sometimes in order to heal or cure someone, you must cause some harm. Perhaps a limb has gangrene and so you must amputate the limb to save the body. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that all harm is wrong and that one who is enlightened causes no harm at all.

After enlightenment, the desire to cause harm has been dispelled. This does not mean that after enlightenment one can not intentionally cause harm to another, but there would be a greater purpose to the need to cause harm...and such a purpose would not be for personal gain. If the harm done to another is for the personal gain or satisfaction of the one causing harm, this would not be an "enlightened action." After enlightenment, the understanding is the Self is all there is. Everything is one. Everything is nonduality. The Way is love, truth, harmony, and unity...and in this there really is little room to harm others...but enjoying life's pleasures can be done freely.

don salmon (2019-02-23 13:23:59)

I like the way Mirra Alfassa put it:

Take pleasure in everything you do, but don't do anything for the sake of pleasure.

When exactly will I begin to experience this so called 'freedom'? - 2019-02-25 06:54

Only when the realization occurs that any bonds were figments of imagination. Of course, the largest bond is the idea of "me". For what is the "me" except limitation? Also, only a "me" can be bound, trapped, stuck, or otherwise considered not free. The "me" is a figment of imagination with a further imagination of the "me" being bound, trapped, etc.

You feel you are trapped, bound, stuck, etc.; and so seek freedom. You don't feel free and so you ask when will you experience freedom. However, you are not trapped, bound, or otherwise stuck. You never were. It is only in thought that you believe you are trapped, bound, stuck, etc.

Have you ever heard of a people called the Yezidi? They were mentioned in "Meetings with Remarkable Men" by G.I. Gurdjieff. Gurdjieff talked about a child who was being bullied and tormented in an unusual way. The child was trapped within a circle drawn in the dirt around him. You see...if a circle was drawn around a Yezidi, he or she could not of their own volition escape from it. This conditioning or belief is so strong, that if you force a Yezidi out of the circle...they fall into a state of catalepsy. There was nothing but a line on the ground stopping the child from running away, but he could not. And so a group of children were tormenting and bullying him...trying to force him over the line...for fun. We are not all that different from the Yezidi. Like the Yezidi, we only believe we are bound, trapped, stuck, etc. and need freedom. However, it is only in the mind...there is nothing actually tying us down. There really is no such thing as bondage and you are already free.

If you can just accept this and let go of your imaginary bonds, then great for you. If you still feel you are bound and seek freedom, then all that can be done is to deeply look at the mentally created bonds and the "me" that is bound. When there is ignorance and illusion (belief in being bound, trapped, stuck, etc.), the only cure is understanding the truth.

It is like the old snake and rope analogy. A person sees a piece of rope and mistakenly believes it is a snake. Fear arises because of the belief that the piece of rope is a snake. What is the way out of this? Only in seeing the piece of rope for what it truly is. You can only investigate and dive deeper. Really look at it. Then the realization may occur that it is a piece of rope...and the fear falls away, because who is afraid of a piece of rope on the ground? This is

power of understanding. Understanding changes everything. Right now, you misunderstand...you think you are bound, trapped, stuck, or otherwise are in need of freedom. You don't see that you are already free. So just look more deeply at what you think is hindering you...causing bondage. Look at the bonds more closely and question them. Also, it is possible to delve into and look at this "me" that is bound. For this "me" also is a fiction of the mind. There is no "me". When there is no "me", there is no "me" that could be tied down. Freedom is our inherent nature. Freedom is what we really are. Freedom is what is when the mind is silent. We have bound ourselves by the concepts and beliefs we hold...and then we ask for and seek freedom.

Just look. Awareness brings understanding. Just as looking at the "snake" more deeply will reveal that it is a piece of rope. Only by seeing through the illusion and dispelling ignorance through understanding will the illusion/ignorance of bondage be dispelled.

Dozen quick Q&A about enlightenment and life - 2019-02-28 06:32

Can one be free sometimes and not free sometimes?

You are either free or not free at all. Freedom that comes and goes is not true freedom. You are still stuck, but you just don't notice it at times and at other times you notice it. Deeper still...a "me" can never be free...for to be a "me" is limitation itself and being bound by thought, ignorance, and illusion.

Do enlightened people still feel helpless in certain situations?

In order to feel helpless, first one still has to believe the illusion of control...and then have lost that control. After enlightenment, helplessness doesn't really exist. Whatever happens is allowed and accepted...and then worked with cooperatively and collaboratively (so to speak). Really the thought and belief "this shouldn't be" must arise in order to feel helpless. After enlightenment, what-is is not denied or resisted so.

What did you lose as a result of spiritual awakening?

Fear, guilt, stress, struggle, boredom, envy, problems, discontent, incessant mental chatter, etc. - suffering in general.

What does enlightenment mean as applied to practical life?

In practical terms, enlightenment means the cessation of dukkha. Dukkha is often translated as suffering, but more holistically also means dissatisfaction or discontent. So the cessation of dukkha would mean the end to fear, boredom, guilt, and other forms of suffering/discontent. Enlightenment means true peace and contentment with what-is.

If there is no “I” after enlightenment, why do enlightened teachers still speak of “I”?

Conventions of speech. One who is enlightened can still speak normally...they are just not fooled by the words used. One who is enlightened can say “I” knowing that it is the body/mind being referred to and no “I” really exists.

I am writing this and you are reading it...this is just normal speech. But in reality there is no “I” or “you”...no such duality of separation exists. Duality is only an illusion. Do you really think that the enlightened lose the ability to use pronouns and must create some new form of speech or not talk at all?

Can someone reach enlightenment while living a busy lifestyle in society?

Yes, all that is needed for enlightenment is always here and now. There is no where to go for it. There is nothing to do for it. In fact, the “me” which could go somewhere or do something is an illusion. Enlightenment is seeing this illusion for what it is...instead of continuing to be fooled and believing the illusion.

How do you know if you are enlightened?

There is a knowing that enlightenment happened, but the following substantiates it:

- Silence of mind
- Cessation of suffering
- Joy & happiness in life
- No longer seeking or struggling
- Living without fear
- Lack of boredom
- Non-attachment

How do you deal with bad karma coming to you?

By completely not resisting what-is...and thus labeling it as good or bad karma does not matter.

Why is there more sorrow in life than joy?

The typical child would disagree with this assumption...for most children are typically happy and joyful with little to no sorrow in life.

We have just learned bad habits, picked up bad beliefs and concepts, and create a whole lot of sorrow for ourselves. So what have you done to yourself (consciously and unconsciously) to create more sorrow?

What is the real cause of human psychological suffering?

By and large, resisting and/or denying what is....and not focusing on what is in the present - instead fretting over imaginations about the future or agonizing over memories of the past. Suffering really is all in the mind.

What is sadder than a loved one's death?

Not having known them in life at all. To have met/known them and to have had them in your life at all is worthy of appreciation and gratitude. It would have been far sadder to never have known/met them at all.

Why is life so unfair?

It is neither fair nor unfair. Life is simply what it is. Flowering branches grow naturally...some short...some long. Only if we believe that they should all be long do we then believe it is unfair that some are short. It is only our ideas, concepts, and beliefs that create the idea of fair and unfair. The world simply does not follow the rules we have in our heads.

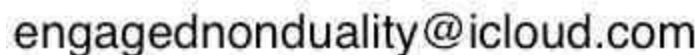
2019 - 03

Blog, moving to Florida, and such - 2019-03-03 09:31

I have no question to answer today. This is the 239th post. I have written a blog post every 3 days for just about 2 years (couple weeks shy). Without a question that stirs something to cause an response/answer to arise...the typical format and regularity of this blog may have to change or cease. For now, I intend to post again when another question strikes me or something else arises.

My wife and I will soon start preparing for our move to the Clearwater, FL area in June/July. I intend to start a bi-weekly gathering/meditation group in our home. I hesitate to call it a satsang...only because the term seems to have some baggage. Starting gatherings is a funny thing - unless it is regularly held, I think it is difficult to get many people. I have tried one-off meetings to gauge interest, and several people will say they are interested and may say they will come...but then no one comes. So I thought it would be fun to try again, but this time a recurring schedule. Monthly really is not enough. I have been at Meetups for various topics and if it is held only monthly it doesn't seem to get a lot of traction. However, weekly is too much. So hopefully bi-weekly hits a sweet spot. But then time of day and day or the week are issues too. I am not sure if I want to try mid-week nights, weekend nights, or Sunday morning. I don't need to know now, so I don't worry about it. The answers will come...or a decision will be made when I need to make a decision. Anyway, should be fun.

My wife says I should turn these two-year's worth of blog posts into a book. I might do that...not sure yet. If you have any opinions either way, please let me know. In order to cut down on spam, I share my address via image below:

engagednonduality@icloud.com

Also email me any questions you may have as it may keep the blog going a while longer. Not all questions appear on the blog, but I will reply with a response at a minimum.

Thank you for reading my blog.

Zabina (2019-03-03 13:42:39)

Thank you for taking your time to make this blog and keeping it active. Although I mostly lurk, I visit your blog a couple times a week and have found it very useful. Much appreciated! Unfortunately, I live in a different country so I won't be able to attend your satsang. Writing a book sounds like a lot of fun, and I would definitely buy it if you

were to release one.

Hopefully this blog would stay active for many years to come.

Do you believe you are God incarnate? - 2019-03-06 19:32

God is all there is. You and I are the same Self (as Ramana Maharshi said). All incarnations are God. Furthermore, the "you" in such a question is a figment of mind and mental imagination. That "you" refers to a body/mind...and history and story. But there really is no "me"...there is only the Self...or God (take your pick of labels).

I know there are gurus who are referred to as "my Lord", "my Master", etc. or regularly have their "holy" feet kissed or they are bowed to, but I am not one of them. Some call me a guru, but that is only due to the pointers or teachings I offer when asked or the writings/[videos](#) that I make public. Those pointers are usually pointing to the fact that who/what they really are is the Self. As the Self, there is no such thing as superiority or inferiority. Such determinations require two...or duality...and that is just a concept in the mind. Nonduality is all there is...even now. There are no others...no separation...even now.

I know there are some devotees who will say (about their gurus), "I don't kiss your feet, I kiss the feet of the God of the universe." I would never allow my feet to be kissed. If someone insisted on "kissing the feet of God", I would say there is a homeless man I would like to invite them to. True knowledge or jnana is that there is no place that is not the "feet of God". You could kiss your own hand and that would still be "kissing the feet of God".

I am of the same mind as Ramana Maharshi...don't treat me differently or special. People would try to make Bhagavan special meals or drinks (for example)...and he would say to divide it among everyone or he wouldn't accept it. "If it is good for me, it is good for everyone." He resisted any special treatment. This is due to the deep understanding that - as a jnani - "you" are not special or superior. And allowing "others" to treat "you" as special or superior only reinforces the illusion of duality. A true guru brings light into darkness....understanding to dispel ignorance. Reinforcing the illusion of duality through special-ness or superiority only compounds ignorance and darkness.

I know Advaita Vedanta does teach "aham brahmasmi" or "I am Brahman"...which could be translated as "I am God." But again, I am God, you are God, everyone is God...all there is is God. This is why I like "namaste." Namaste is sometimes taught as meaning "the divinity in me bows to the divinity in you." I would just say...God is bowing to God (i.e. ItSelf). Namaste is really a kind of acknowledgement (in an advaita point of view) that you and I are the same Self. It is Self-acknowledgement. I will gladly accept a namaste, but stay away from my feet...those are two very different intents and meanings.

D. Samarender Reddy (2019-03-07 11:16:20)

I wanted to "Like" this post, as I often do for your posts, but you have not chosen to give the "Like" button.

I feel this message of yours should be heard by all the "gurus" out there in the world.

Ron Nichols, a hopefully always humble student (2019-03-19 22:23:21)

Thanks for the clarity given on this subject, especially the words expressing that loving-certainty of "equality." "My" tendency is to agree with what has been said with heart-felt gratitude from ALL (singular word), joined together here within Quora.

Can you explain how it is not egoic to refer to oneself as "awakened" or "enlightened"? - 2019-03-10 09:01

It could be, but not necessarily egoic.

It could simply be a statement of fact. No one would say that stating that it is sunny today is an egoic statement. Nor that one tree is large, another tree is small...or that dog is asleep...etc. Likewise, (like the Buddha) it is possible to say "I am awake" and this is not an egoic statement.

Usually when people feel it is always an egoic statement, that is because they have already assigned "awake" as a statement of superiority...and they happen to then feel inferior. When the Buddha said "I am awake"...this was not a statement of superiority. Being awake does not make you better than people who are not awake. However, the egos of some people will consider hearing "I am awake" as being diminutive to themselves because they don't see themselves as awake. This hit to their own egos makes them react and project egoicness to the one who made the statement.

Also, after enlightenment, it is still possible to use the word "I" and use it in sentences like everyone else. The difference of course is that after enlightenment the illusion of "I" has been seen through. Using the word "I" simply means referring to this specific body/mind. So it is quite simple and natural (for example) for a very short person to say "I am short". After enlightenment, this would be a simple statement of fact regarding the body...for those who are not awake it may mean so much more. It is possible to say "I am short" as a statement of fact...and not have egoic baggage involved. Likewise, it is possible to say "I am awake" as a statement of fact...and not have egoic baggage involved.

Enlightenment/awakening refers to a happening that occurred to the body/mind. This happening does not bestow superiority nor does the lack thereof mean any inferiority. Without the status of superiority and inferiority for the "me", how could a statement be called egoic? Again, saying "that tree is short" will have no effect on the ego and thus not egoic. Saying "I am short" could involve mental/emotional baggage and a feeling of inferiority...and thus such a statement could be egoic. But it is possible to be said as a statement of fact without any feelings or baggage of inferiority. To be egoic, the ego must be invested in it. Saying "I am awake" is not enough to determine if the ego is invested in the statement or not. Again, it could just be a simple statement of fact.

What do you think about gurus having sex with students and disciples? - 2019-03-17 12:05

First of all, after enlightenment, one is not required to be celibate. A guru may or may not be enlightened. There are many gurus in the world who teach, but are not enlightened. Some gurus are swamis who take a vow of celibacy...so they should keep their vows or leave any swami order that requires celibacy. But this is not a simple question. There is no cut and dry or hard and fast answer.

If an enlightened guru is married or in a relationship with another...and their partner desires or expects monogamy, then out of respect and care for their partner's feelings they should not "cheat". However, if the guru is married or in a relationship with a partner or partners who are fully polyamorous...and that is the agreed upon relationship (being "open"), then having other sexual partners is not cheating. One who is enlightened is not required to be monogamous. In such an agreed upon relationship, there are no hard feelings or ill will for having sex with someone else. As it does not harm any of the guru's partners (emotionally), then nothing says it can not be done.

While many may want to have sex with well known gurus, like fans of any rock band or movie star (groupie sex)...there is the perceived aspect that a guru is in a position of authority...like a priest with children in their church...and so is automatically wrong. This may or may not be the case though - as some gurus actively resist being elevated or put in a position of authority. In nonduality there is only the Self...there is no other to be higher or lower. So it is possible for a guru not be in a position of authority in a sexual relationship. If gurus say or imply there is any spiritual benefits or merit to having sex with them, this is misrepresentation and substantiates a position of authority. In nonduality, there is only the Self...so the specific body/mind does not matter. There is no benefit or merit to having sex with one who is enlightened. To believe so only reinforces the illusion of "me" and "other"...and lack and gain.

Now there are sexual practices in Tantra. So in Tantra sex can potentially be a way to quicken awakening and merge with God. But this has more to do with how sex is understood and done by an individual person and less to do with who they have sex with. So again, having sex with a guru is of no benefit or merit.

Keep in mind the personal gain aspect of a guru having sex with someone at the loss or harm to another. This would include a lack of coercion or convincing of another to have sex. If someone requires convincing to have sex with you, they really don't want to. Sex, when looked at in a spiritual way, is more about giving than it is about taking or receiving. What kind of guru would try to override another's will not to have sex with them through manipulation in some way? That is taking and an egoic action for personal gain (regardless of what other's want).

So if someone freely and of their own will approaches an enlightened guru for sex...and it is clearly understood there is no merit or spiritual benefit to having sex with the guru...and the guru and other person have no vows to celibacy or commitments to monogamy with another, then what is the problem? There is no benefit or gain...so there would be no authority. There would be no broken vows. There would be no betrayal or hurt feelings of people wanting a monogamous relationship. There was no coercion or manipulation to get the other to have sex. As long as both parties understood what commitment or lack thereof was involved with having sex, it could be possible in this scenario to have two people come together...one who happens to be a guru and the other who happens to be a student/disciple...in a giving way to each other that would not harm anyone.

I would conclude in saying it is not that it can not be done or should never be done, but there are several factors that would weigh in and have to be considered.

2019 - 04

After enlightenment, did your confidence grow? - 2019-04-05 08:24

No, confidence did not grow. Confidence is something personal...pertaining to a "me" and ego. What we normally call "confident people" are rather egoic people. People feel confident when something is known or certain. Fear is often of the unknown or uncertainty. After enlightenment, there is being comfortable not knowing and uncertain...not fearing the unknown and uncertainty. Enlightenment does not make everything known or certain in any way.

Isn't it a realistic expectation that truth can be presented in a way that we can understand? - 2019-04-17
12:21

Truth can only be directly realized. Truth is more akin to experience than knowledge/facts. We like to think that truth can be told to us and we should be able to understand, but it doesn't work that way. I can only offer pointers. I can point at the moon, but I can't make you look and see the moon for yourself. Just describing the moon and giving you the facts is not the truth. As it is said in Taoism, the Tao that can be said is no the eternal Tao.

Let's illustrate this using the old snake and rope analogy. Two people are in the dark jungle at dusk and they come across something. Person-A perhaps catches a glimpse and thinks it is a poisonous snake...and wants to run. Person-B sees much more clearly and realizes it is a piece of rope of the ground. How can the truth of it being a piece of rope be presented in a way that Person-A understands?

Any explanation or talking will be met with resistance, because Person-A believes he knows what he saw...it's a snake. He doesn't want to get anywhere near it. At best, Person-B can perhaps get Person-A to doubt what he thinks he saw and then get Person-A to take a closer look. However, if Person-A refuses to look...what can Person-B do to "present in a way that Person-A can understand?" Person-A doesn't want to understand...Person-A is convinced it is a snake and does not feel the need to look any further. Person-A believes they already know what the truth is.

As I said earlier, the truth is not knowledge like facts or concepts. If you have never seen or heard of an orange before, I could show you a picture and read the facts out of Wikipedia...but what do you really understand about an orange from this? This is belief in second hand facts...not direct understanding. You really don't understand anything at all. Firstly, I could have mistakenly shown a picture of a banana and read the entry about bananas on Wikipedia. If you believed me, then you would think a banana is an orange. Secondly, if I brought an actual orange with me...if you could hold it for a while and then eat it...you would understand far more about what an orange is than reading from any book about oranges or hearing any teacher speak about oranges. You would understand directly what an orange is.

Truth is directly realized...and that is realized for yourself. I can not make you realize anything. As the truth is not any words, phrases, or concepts used...saying the word orange is really meaningless unless you have eaten one yourself...it is not realistic at all to expect that truth can be presented in a way that you can understand...especially if what is being presented is not something you know at all.

I talk about nonduality, but most people are convinced that duality is the natural state of the world. I can say...nonduality is all there is and duality is an illusion...which is true, but as this is not your experience you will not really understand. I presented the truth, but it can not be understood just like Person-B saying to Person-A that the snake is really a piece of rope. Presenting the truth does not automatically lead to understanding...it is only meant to inspire the person to look for themselves. Only if there is a doubt or something within Person-A that makes them go "huh?" and turn around and look closer is there the possibility of direct understanding by seeing the piece of rope to be what it is.

This question over-estimates and over-values words and talking. The question comes from the belief that through words and talking that one can understand and realize the truth. This is not the case. Direct insight is needed...you need to see the moon being pointed to and words/talking alone will not suffice.

Andrew White (2019-04-25 11:46:58)

Thanks Eric, that's a clearly written piece. I think there is a value in posting about nonduality, even if it's to note how we can't rely on thought, words, discussions. I've come to believe that even though we talk about it, point to it or whatever, the most valuable thing we can offer is to encourage others that awakening or realising nonduality is possible. Then it's up to them to investigate and put the effort into looking or inquiring deeply for themselves. Some people seem to like to read about it but not investigate, which sort of reminds me of a person who collects beautiful tools but never uses them for the purpose intended, but rather keeps them as ornaments.

BlogBook v1.1,
L^AT_EX 2_ε & GNU/Linux.
<https://www.blogbooker.com>

Edited: May 04, 2019