



Freeing the Mind from the Prison of Non-Duality

The doctrine of non-duality remains the primary influence within all major spiritual traditions which pursue self-realization. Not only Advaita but all the Buddhist schools base themselves around this concept. Moreover, non-duality has also deeply influenced the relatively independent teachers such as J. Krishnamurti who, in spite of his external rebellion against traditions, was in fact expounding another version of this philosophy. Nowadays the whole neo-advaitic satsang culture that has taken root in the collective spiritual mind is but a shallow commercialization of that very same non-dual conception.

So what is wrong with the non-dual philosophy? On the surface it appears rather convincing. However, this perspective lacks imagination and the necessary self-knowledge. Furthermore, the fact that it appears convincing does not make it any more true. Intellect alone is a very limited tool with which to discover the paradoxical nature of existence.

Before we begin to examine the flaws of non-duality, we need to confront the very sad fact that while humanity has developed on many levels since the times of the Upanishads and Buddha, the science of enlightenment has hardly evolved at all. We still live in the dark ages of spirituality in the sense that all spiritual teachings are based on the constant repetition of what was discovered thousands of years ago. We often hear about a global awakening or a new age of spirituality, but who is awakening to what? People are as ignorant of their true nature as they always were. The globalization of spiritual information should not be confused with global awakening. If truth be told, spirituality is just becoming increasingly superficial and so are the spiritual teachers who sell cheap and absurd versions of enlightenment to the unconscious masses. Humanity has evolved psychologically to a large extent, but it appears to have stagnated, if not regressed, spiritually.

There is no one version of non-duality. The concept varies from one tradition to another and from extreme views to more moderate ones. For example, in Buddhism there is the idea of two truths: a higher and a lower truth. The lower truth accepts a certain level of duality on a daily, practical level, whereas the higher truth can be described as the absence of self or emptiness. In Advaita there are also various conceptual approaches, such as the one which accepts the existence of the personal god, Isvara, as an aspect of

the one self, Brahman. It is important to bear in mind that Advaita was deeply influenced by Buddhism via the exchange of ideas between Hindu and Buddhist scholars who were fighting at the time for spiritual and political dominancy in India. Moreover, Buddha himself created a path and philosophy that was deeply conditioned by the non-dual concepts that were already present in ancient Hinduism. Buddha, like Krishnamurti, was a rebel but perhaps not rebellious enough to free his intelligence from a pre-advaitic model of reality.

The intention here is not to over-analyze these different views, but rather to capture the main energy of that mind-perception which forms the major influence on past traditions of enlightenment, a perception which, in many ways, cripples the further exploration of truth beyond non-duality.

The next question to ask is: does the experience of self-realization or awakening naturally give rise to a non-dual understanding? Or is it the other way around – that a non-dual concept of reality conditions the very nature and experience of self-realization? The latter question points to the role of our intelligence in interpreting any awakened state. Here, the first thing to realize is that it is exceedingly difficult to properly comprehend and reflect any awakening experience in the mind. The inner world is totally unknown and incomprehensible to human intelligence when the mind only knows how to function and orient itself in the realm of objects. Therefore, most of those who walk the path have very little ability to understand what they are experiencing when they shift into any of the awakened states. What they may translate as an experience of oneness or non-duality can easily be a trance-like condition of the mind which cannot properly grasp the nature of altered consciousness. As such, being unable to understand what they experience, most resort to interpreting their realization through the concepts offered by their respective traditions. And because the science of enlightenment was originally conceived from a non-dual philosophy, non-duality has become the paradigm for all those who lack the imagination and sensitivity to question its basic assumptions.

Therefore, it is this model of non-duality that determines the interpretation of most of the awakening experiences, not the opposite. Because intelligence has such a long way to evolve, many seekers are as if blind, trying to orient themselves in a landscape that is beyond their ability to see and comprehend. This lack of orientation in the inner world naturally leads one to seek the easy solution. But to do so is to give away the creative freedom of the mind by agreeing to become indoctrinated by an external authority.

Reality demands balance; existence is a play of polarities. The non-dual philosophy has come into being as a rejection of the state of separation, as if offering a simplistic resolution to it. Duality has been defined as a problem to be overcome, but this is a wrong assumption based on a false and hypocritical premise which is rooted in self-denial. Rather, one has to begin by understanding the positive nature of duality. Those who live in unconsciousness of the ego do not experience true duality; they experience



insubstantiality, the pretension of living. Positive, true duality requires one to possess a clear sense of self. Duality is the essence of creation, the force through which life moves. It is present not only within the mind and senses but as an intrinsic aspect of any reality, including all the states of awakening. There is even duality in pure consciousness and in natural samadhi. This duality constitutes the base of the enlightened relationship between our sacred individuality and the light of creation.

Those who do not honor our unique individual consciousness as the true base of evolution and enlightenment are the false prophets of non-duality. They give us the illusion of freedom while taking away our power and dignity. Speaking about oneness and the absence or illusory nature of ego inevitably leads to the denial of human life. But one must be wary of those who exploit such simplistic spiritual notions for their own gain, either using these notions to justify the unguarded pursuit of desire or having the power to subdue their desires and claiming sainthood through rigid adherence to morality. Those who confuse their natural disinterest in the things of the world with spiritual truth have often somewhere on the way lost the passion to live. Overall, such messages have a crippling effect on humanity, spiritually speaking.

Duality is sacred. Non-duality is the passive principle of existence; duality is the active spirit of creation, the precious force through which anything and all can exist. There is no self-realization without duality. Enlightenment does not dissolve duality. On the contrary, it illuminates the consciousness of duality so that for the first time we can see what is truly dual and to whom duality refers.

In all the traditions of self-realization, the most important element and understanding is lacking – *who we really are*. The self-enquiry of Advaita or Buddhism leads us to the wrong conclusions: it begins with the preconception that our unique sense of self is unreal and only the universal is real. Those who perform such dishonest self-enquiry already have their answer, which is based on either trying to either disidentify from our natural, relative sense of self or to identify with the impersonal existence. They are not really enquiring; they are hypnotizing their minds into another false perception, one which is taking them even further from the truth.

No one has correctly answered the question ‘who am I?’ because their minds are not free and there is no space for understanding to arise. Initially, we cannot answer this question at all, not only because our higher self is simply absent, but also because our relative self is completely fragmented. If a mature seeker with the basic stability of mind were to pursue this question with absolute honesty, someone who was conscious enough to know where to look but whose soul is still dormant, he would discover as his answer the fundamental consciousness of me. Me is our innate sense of self, the subject to all thoughts and perceptions. All living beings possess the sense of me, otherwise they would not know that they exist. When our me is sufficiently developed and becomes fully conscious, it can experience itself in separation from thoughts, independent from the mind.



This realization is what we call 'conscious me', which in some traditions was termed 'awareness'. Awareness is not our higher consciousness but the knowledge of me in itself. For the deeper answer to the question 'who am I?' to arise, we must awaken to something that we are not yet; we must awaken to our potential. The light of I am has to enter our existence and integrate with the consciousness of me in order for the consciousness of our soul to awaken. When the soul is not met, not realized, one can very easily misconstrue this state as impersonal, as universal consciousness, forgetting who one is. This kind of identification with the impersonal is one of the major pitfalls on the path as it jeopardizes the actualization of our divine individuality.

Realization of our pure nature is a complex process. Those who simplify it artificially have not realized themselves and are deceiving others. Furthermore, realizing who we are is not the end of our spiritual evolution but the true beginning. That beginning points in two directions: the inner and the outer – the never-ending deepening of our realization of the mystery of the inner world and the constant expansion into creation. The true subject to that evolution is our soul. The soul should not be confused with some kind of ego-consciousness. She is our higher being that must be actualized, otherwise she remains non-existent. The soul, when awakened, embraces our human nature, allowing the human in us to become whole, to reach purification and healing, and to fulfil our essential human desires.

Blessings,

Anadi

For a glossary of the terminology used in this teaching and for further resources, you may visit our website www.anaditeaching.com

