Self-Realisation and Non-Duality

Self-Realisation

Most people are suffering from mistaken identity – taking ourselves to be someone we are not. The goal of psycho-spiritual development is to correct this mistaken identity; not to strengthen or improve our false identity. The self that we think we are does not exist; it is a figment of our imagination. The self that we think we are cannot awaken – we have to awaken from this false-self in order to realise our true-Self. When this occurs, we realise that we have always been our true-Self.

The Labyrinth

Our inner journey takes us through the labyrinth of our ego structures to discover our true-Self, which resides at the core of our being. A labyrinth differs from a maze in that it only has one path which leads to the centre, so the path is already mapped out for us – all we have to do is walk it. If we stop resisting and controlling, the flow of life will naturally carry us to our destination. Some parts of the journey will be tough and others will be wonderful, but they will all be experiential opportunities for the reintegration, development and liberation of our consciousness.

The most effective way of journeying through the labyrinth of our ego structures is to do so with conscious awareness and presence, because then we can process the psychological material (i.e. dissolve the ego structures and reintegrate our consciousness) as we encounter it.

Temporary self-realisation is the result of jumping to the core of our being (our true-Self), typically through an act of will and/or grace, without processing the majority of our ego structures. If this occurs, it is only a matter of time before our ego structures pull us back out again, because too many ego structures remain for the Self-realisation to be permanent.

Seeking Self-realisation before we are ready is unwise because we are seeking freedom from something (the ego-self) that we still require for our development. However, our conditioning can cause us to remain misidentified with the ego-self for longer than is necessary. So here a few simple things that we can do to loosen our identification with our ego-self (in addition to the methods and techniques previously described in this book):

- **Don’t take things personally**: Let go of any definitions or concepts of yourself as a personal “I” and see yourself as impersonal pure awareness.
- **Forgive everyone and everything**: You cannot change what has happened so why hold onto the personal feeling of victimhood?
- **Be selfless**: Put other people’s needs ahead of your own and dedicate part of your life to serving or helping others.
- **Be authentic at all times**: Don’t put on a different persona for different people or different occasions.
• **Have fewer preferences and opinions**: especially about things that don’t really matter.

**The Path to Self-Realisation**

In early childhood, if something authentic (e.g. an essential quality or our true-Self) is not acknowledged and mirrored back to us by our parents, we assume it is unimportant so we repress it and develop ego structures that help us to cope without it. Psycho-spiritual development involves reversing that process – removing the blockages, bringing things into the light of our awareness, and turning the repression into expression. Self-realisation can only occur when sufficient psychological “undoing” has been completed – when our conditioning has been neutralised and our awareness has been purified (i.e. dis-identified from exiles and ego structures).

Even though Self-realisation is an instant event, there are several stages leading up to it that can be used to gauge our progress and guide us on to the next stage of our journey:

- **Stage 1** involves consciously noticing our thoughts, emotions and body sensations.
- **Stage 2** involves realising that these thoughts, emotions and body sensations are not us.
- **Stage 3** involves realising that we are the awareness that is noticing these things.
- **Stage 4** involves developing a felt sense that we are this awareness.
- **Stage 5** involves experientially knowing and feeling that we are pure awareness.
- **Stage 6** involves experientially knowing and feeling that Awareness (God/Life/Universe) is being us.

In a meditation or self-inquiry we might be able to reach stage 3 or 4, but in our everyday lives we may only be at stage 1 or 2. This is quite normal, but we can bring these higher states of consciousness into our everyday lives by Conscious Living (see Chapter 4) and Living Presence (see Chapter 6). When we reach stage 3 or 4 in our meditation practice we can start practicing spiritual Self-inquiry (see Chapter 6); prior to that it is more beneficial to practice personal self-inquiry (see Chapter 4).

**Non-Duality**

Self-realisation results in non-dualistic perception – a direct and intimate union with everything we encounter. But what does it really mean and how does it work?

- **Dualistic Perception**: The true-Self has forgotten who it really is and believes it is the false-self (a conceptual self-image). So the false-self stands between the true-Self and objective reality (as depicted in Figure 25). The false-self perceives the object, and the true-Self believes it is the false-self perceiving the object, so there is no direct perception. There is separation between the true-Self and the object – hence duality. Note: The false-self doesn’t actually do any perceiving (because it is just a thought-form); it is more like a lens that the image passes through (and often gets distorted by) on its way to being perceived by the true-Self.

- **Non-Dualistic Perception**: With the false-self no longer present, the true-Self can perceive the object directly (as depicted in Figure 26). There is nothing between the true-Self and the object, so the true-Self can intimately merge with the object to directly perceive every attribute – hence unity (or non-duality).
Separation and duality are learning experiments. The Self becomes identified with the false ego-self in order to experience duality – to experience life from a different, separate, non-unified perspective. When we have learnt all we can from separation and duality we will naturally return to unity and non-duality (i.e. Self-realisation/enlightenment).

The Mechanics of Self-Realisation

Figure 27 shows the relationships between the authentic personality, the true-Self, the false-self and the ego-personality. The numbered blocks at the bottom of the diagram correspond to the following numbered points:

1. Collectively, the mind, heart and body constitute the authentic personality.
2. The true-Self is the core of the authentic personality.
3. But the true-Self has lost sight of its true nature and believes it is the false-self.
4. The false-self is the core of the ego personality.

The more ego structures we dissolve, the more authentic consciousness is liberated. This gradually shifts the balance of power from the false-self and the ego-personality to the true-Self and the authentic personality. Self-realisation becomes possible when the balance of power has shifted in favour of the true-Self and authentic personality.

Self-realisation (permanent or temporary) is always accompanied by a shift in our essential identity. If there is no shift in our essential identity we are just having a spiritual experience.
Permanent Self-Realisation (Enlightenment)

Permanent Self-realisation is only possible at enlightenment. Prior to enlightenment the Self is centred in one of the personality centres (mind, heart or body). These centres are not three independent units; they are intimately connected and function as a unified “triad”. No matter which centre of the personality triad our Self is centred in, our mind still conceptualises all of our experiences into a virtual-self and a virtual-world. This mind-created virtual-reality overlay is what stands between our direct perception of objective reality and our realisation of our true-Self. So permanent Self-realisation is only possible when the mind has been transcended (at enlightenment), because that is when our mind-created virtual-self and virtual-world dissolve to reveal objective reality.

Temporary Self-Realisation

Temporary Self-realisation is most likely to occur when the Self ascends to a higher centre within the personality triad; e.g. from the belly centre to the heart centre, or from the heart centre to the head centre. The Self is less identified as being a mind-created separate entity during these transitional periods, which increases the possibility of temporarily realising our true nature and our connection with all of reality. Temporary self-realisation may last from a few minutes to a few weeks, but as soon as the Self settles into its new “home” our virtual-world and virtual-self inevitably return.

Life After Self-Realisation / Enlightenment

Many of the things that I am about to describe are often experienced for short periods of time prior to Self-realisation/enlightment, as we are given glimpses of what our lives could be like:

- Most people think that Self-realisation will be something different and amazing (e.g. peace, bliss and unity), but we are already these things – they are our true nature. When we rediscover our true nature we realise that these qualities have been present all along, we just didn’t notice them. So yes, Self-realisation is very different in one respect, but it is also very normal and familiar.

- Self-realisation is like the wide-awake version of lucid dreaming; i.e. waking up within Life to discover that we are an active participant and not just a passive observer (or victim).

- Our new sense of Self is far subtler than our old (false) sense of self.

- We discover a new way of being, knowing, loving and doing.

- Realising our life’s purpose becomes insignificant as our concept of a personal self falls away.

- “I am” becomes “I am everything”, but it also becomes “I am not” as the duality of being and non-being dissolves.

- Without a false-self to defend and reinforce we can relax into our being, which results in a relaxed confidence and general sense that everything is ok.

- The entire personality relaxes under the direction of the true-Self. The need to plan our lives and control everything falls away – without our old fear-based strategies we can relax and just allow life to unfold.

- A sense of direct knowing arises, which means we no longer need anyone else to validate our experiences, beliefs or sense of self. Our sense of self is no longer derived from our thoughts, emotions or body, or from the feedback we receive from others.

- The mind becomes quieter and stiller. The relentless labelling, narration and projection stop, and our personal story no longer seems important.

- The emotions become purer, more authentic and less reactive. The heart opens and personal, clingy love transforms into impersonal, indiscriminate, unconditional love that is more intimate than anything we have ever felt before.
• The body relaxes and becomes more sensitive. Even the ordinary things in life take on a new depth and become extraordinary. It is like seeing the world through new eyes – everything seems so fresh, new, beautiful, intriguing, exciting and satisfying.

• We realise the inherent perfection in all things and know that every-thing is perfect just as it is.

• We realise that we are Life (Consciousness, God, Nature, Universe, Source, etc.) dressed up as a human being, and so is everyone and everything else. There is only one consciousness and Life is playing all the roles; but like a molecule of water in the ocean, each of us is an individual and a unified part of the whole.

Common Misconceptions After Self-Realisation / Enlightenment

Self-realisation/enlightenment can result in misconceptions about the nature of reality because we think we have awakened to the fullness of reality, but actually we have only awakened to one higher dimension of reality. Henry T Laurency wrote, in *The Knowledge of Life Part 5*, “The evolutionary way of man consists of a series of ‘awakenings’ and at these he is seized with the desire to throw ‘overboard’ all that he has acquired so far... This only shows how far he has still to go before he becomes one with all.” This section explains a few of these common misconceptions:

• **There Is No Individual Self:** Some say that there is no individual Self and that there is only oneness. By definition there can be only one oneness (i.e. the entire universe), so if a Self-realised person was that oneness he would be the entire universe and he would be aware of everything that is occurring within the entire universe. But he is not; he is just aware of the part of the universe that is around him. So there is a centre of consciousness after Self-realisation/enlightenment, but it is much subtler than the previous false sense of self was – hence the misunderstanding.

• **Only Nothingness Exists:** The belief that everything is made of nothingness originates from the fact that consciousness cannot objectively perceive anything above its own level / plane of existence, so anything “higher” is perceived as emptiness, nothingness, spaciousness or void.

• **We Have No Free-Will:** Learning from our own decisions is an essential aspect of human development. It is true that ultimately everything is controlled by Life/Universe/God, but we are part of that universal consciousness. Gradually letting go of our individual will and becoming more aligned with universal will is an important aspect of our journey, but at no point do we have to completely give up our individual will. We remain an individual as our consciousness expands into the universal oneness.

Common Difficulties After Self-Realisation / Enlightenment

The profound shift in our identity that accompanies Self-realisation / enlightenment can give rise to some psychological difficulties:

• **Integration Time:** It is quite normal to be a little “spaced out” after completing some deep inner work, while our psychological circuitry re-wires itself. After Self-realisation/enlightenment the changes are much more significant and can have a far greater and longer-lasting effect on our psychological state. So please don’t make any life-changing decisions until everything has settled down.

• **Lack of Motivation:** After Self-realisation/enlightenment our ego’s false-will may no longer be accessible, so unless we have already activated our essential-will (an essential quality) we may be left with no will or motivation. Without anything to motivate us we won’t want to do anything, which could cause our entire life to fall apart. It won’t matter to us, but it will affect those around us. It can take months or years to actively develop sufficient essential-will to enable us to properly function in the world again.

Generally, the more ego structures (false qualities) that remain at the time of Self-realisation / enlightenment the more difficulties will be encountered. So it is advisable to do the inner work first and allow Self-realisation / enlightenment to occur naturally, when we are truly ready.