

The rabbit in the hat
(Wolter Keers, 1923 - †1985)

What does an enlightened one see and feel?

Even though the answer to this question is extremely simple, it is at the same time completely incomprehensible. The enlightened one feels everything and nothing. Why is the answer incomprehensible? Because the one who asked the question has hidden 'the rabbit of his personality' in the hat of the enlightened one, seeing him, whether he wants to or not, as another personage. The extension of the personality of the questioner is the personality that he projects on the enlightened one. There is no such thing as an 'enlightened person or personality'.

As long as one sees oneself as a personality, that is to say as a point of view, everyone else appears as a personality (also the 'greatest' enlightened one before him). The questioner sees a mister or a madam, because he sees himself as a mister or a madam. And in addition he sees a mister with all kinds of characteristics. Some of the 'enlightened men or women' radiate holiness and then the personality is immediately ready to say that this is a case of 24 carat gold. But others, who are also called enlightened, seem to be in a bad humor or be irritable or afflicted with all kinds of things. Such a person can not be enlightened...

In fact there is no criteria that applies. There is no behavior from which one can deduce whether someone is enlightened or not. There are people about whom it is claimed - and about whom 'acknowledged enlightened ones' claim that they are enlightened - who behave like the village idiot. Who can understand that someone who can get angry or shows worry and so on is nevertheless 'an enlightened one'?

In a certain sense the enlightened one is only enlightened from the one impersonal point of view. He is happiness itself, but not that which the personality calls happiness. The personality speaks of happiness when a certain deep emotion appears. The enlightened one is that from which the emotion is made, where it arises, and wherein it again dissolves like ice in water without leaving a trace behind. What he calls 'happiness' is always present as the background of everything, also for the movement of feelings, including rage, concern and other things. He knows that he is not limited by any state of mind. He is like the Indian prison inspector about whom Shri Krishna Menon told: 'sometimes the inspector had to visit an out of the way police station where there might not be any hotels. So, he slept in a cell, just like the robber in the next cell. So, at least on the surface there was no difference between the inspector and jailed thief. But if you look deeper into the situation there is a world of difference: the prisoner has to stay in the cell, whether he wants to or not. The inspector can go out any moment he so wishes.

Seen from the outside, that is the position of the enlightened. Maybe there is an appearance that comes over as a personality with all kinds of desires and aversions, but the enlightened can, any moment he wishes, be out of the cell. This is possible from the moment that he has seen the situation as it actually is: from the instant that he sees with

his whole being that all these things that he felt until then as 'I', are no more or less than fleeting appearances, because this can only be seen from an 'observation post' outside the personality, outside the framework of body, senses, thinking and feeling. And 'outside of the cage' one is not someone who is now free, but freedom itself. And that is what the old traditions designate as 'being enlightened'.

Question: When I hear you speaking I can follow it perfectly well in theory, and I believe that I understand it. But I find it extremely difficult to apply all of this in my daily life. Can you give us a remedy? What must one do in certain situations?

W.K.: In the course of the last years we have again and again discovered that the idea of being a someone who does all kinds of things, is nothing other than a projection. In fact such a 'someone', such an active person does not exist. The person is only imagination. Your question is based on the assumption that you have done all kinds of things in your life, but you have never done anything. After the finish of an action or a thought, a feeling or a sensory perception, an 'I' projects itself at the end, as a sort of tail. During listening there was no I. But, at the end of the story an I who heard the story, is manufactured.

How can an I, that isn't there at all, hear a story? The 'I' is nothing but an invention. There is no such I and you have never done anything in your life. Things do themselves. You are the witness of the movements of the body, also of the movement of what you call 'your will' and that possibly precedes an action. You are, whether you want to or not, and without any effort, witness of fleeting thoughts and feelings. And you are - and that is the most important thing to see - also always witness of such an I-thought that you tack on like a tail behind a thought, a feeling, a perception or an action. The I-thought is just a thought, similar to the thought about a nephew or niece, or about the Eiffel tower. It is one pan in the row of pans on a kitchen shelf. You are no more the one 'I-pan' than you are the other big and small pans.

Thus, there is no way to act in daily life. The only thing that needs to be done is to see exactly that. There is no one who behaves this way or that way. You have never done anything and the only thing that needs to happen to consciously be the freedom that you've always been, is to pull the I-projection out of activities, body, senses, thinking and feeling.

Question: So, an enlightened one sees himself as someone who is not active, even though other people do see him as someone who is active?

W.K.: Yes, exactly. To put it even more accurately: for what you call 'an enlightened one' it is completely self-evident that 'he' is not someone who is active; the idea never occurs to him that he could be an active someone. Even if he says: 'Now I'm going to polish my shoes' there is no idea or feeling at all in him that he is someone who is going to do something.

The difficulty remains that one meeting someone, always sees the other at his own level. I remember very well that it was a puzzle to me to see Ramana Maharshi eating. I was convinced that he was enlightened, but how was it possible that he also ate, and slept, and walked, I could not understand. That was because at that time I identified myself with a body and action. In my case there was an I-feeling after polishing shoes or before, and after eating and other activities. Therefore I saw the projection of things on 'my' body also projected on 'his' actions and so forth.

A short while ago I was talking with someone for whom as a matter of fact I have very warm feelings; he suddenly asked me: 'So, are you happy?' I had the nerve to answer 'yes' whereupon my friend cried out, banging his hand on the table: 'No!'

There we are...

He thinks, as many others do, that being happy means always having a sunny disposition. But in fact, that has nothing to do with happiness. Real happiness is invisible. It is freedom itself and that means that happiness is not determined by the feelings that happen, but by standing apart from the feelings. Exactly as the sky is not influenced by the clouds passing by at a certain level, and entirely independent of whether they are beautiful or ugly clouds. Space remains space, and in our comparison that is happiness, the space that remains unmoved even if such ugly clouds are drifting by.

Question: But isn't that almost unattainable?

W.K.: Not 'almost', but completely unattainable. How can a passing cloud reach the sky? That doesn't make any sense. No one can attain it, because the one who wants to attain is a complete illusion. A fantasy image can never attain anything. Only if the fantasized I disappears with everything that belongs to it, does the immeasurable reveal itself, independent of body or psyche or any behavior whatsoever. Being happy means: being so completely convinced of the fact that you are not a someone that the idea that you are not a someone doesn't even occur to you.

Question: Maybe I formulated my question wrong, but I still think it is hard to achieve. Let's just say that getting the apparent-I out of the way is difficult to achieve.

W.K.: These sorts of remarks are an escape. Self-realization has nothing to do with easy or difficult. You don't need to do anything to look. Even if you close your eyes images come up. In this room there are at least four people who have completely seen what they are and what they are not. Why them but not you? Because they have opened themselves up to anything that wanted to come up for witnessing, sometimes slowly, and in some cases quickly. They never bothered with the question of whether it is easy or difficult. They consciously held their 'eyes' open and looked in clarity, surveyed. That is the only possibility.

People who find this all too difficult are only lazy, nothing else. They are not destined for self-realization. The only qualification one needs to have is complete seriousness; that one is ready to jump into the abyss. But, whoever continues to listen to their fears, their cozy comfort, their laziness, remains where they are life after life: someone who thinks it

is very difficult. The most important has remained undone at the end of his life, because he hasn't taken the trouble for it. So he is forced, to trudge the same little paths over and over again... to remain swimming in an immense plate full of gray, sweet, sticky gruel.

Question: Nevertheless it remains difficult to see that it isn't difficult.

W.K.: Whoever is in love, which literally means 'in the state of love', is a good lover, and if the partner is also in love, they are a beautiful couple. But whoever is neurotic thinks that they should love more than they do. In other words, whoever lays the accent more on himself instead of the beloved, and thinks that he, the personality, has to produce love, for him even love is an impossible task.

If you, you, you just don't do anything; if you just allow yourself to dissolve in the love that you are in the deepest part of your being, all other problems are solved. Then, the way that we call Jnana Yoga is as light as a feather and you would never again pose questions about easy and difficult.

From: Yoga and Vedanta, June 1976

(illustration: Shunyam)

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