

Dialogue Series

THE SEEKER

Swami Suryadevananda

Who is a spiritual seeker?

One who has awakened, continues to stay awake and sincerely seeks to know the truth by direct experience is a spiritual seeker.

What is awakening?

When one sees for oneself and by oneself the harm resulting to oneself and others from one's own conditioning, one abandons existing conditioning and finds a way to live without adding any further conditioning. When this quest becomes natural without break—there is awakening.

Why is this awakening so important?

We would all like a solution to our problems but often end up in damage control by attempting to fix symptoms rather than really know the cause. We cannot change the world any more than a wave can change the ocean—both very much a part and inseparable from the larger whole. In awakening, one becomes very interested in understanding—which is, at the same time, the riddance of the cause.

Sorrow is an effect that is felt within us and reason tells us that cause and effect are inseparable. The cause itself blossoms as the effect. Awakening starts with ruthless abandonment of futile searching for remedies to correct the effect and exerts to see the cause directly. It is important to remember that we are not looking for the 'reason for anything' (as reasons do not satisfy or obviate sorrow) but looking within without any interference of thought, intellect, reason or any of these mechanisms to know, 'What is this thing, why is it there and how did it come?' by the light of direct observation. It does not look for answers, explanations or theories but 'to know directly'—and this wanting to know releases tremendous energy.

The awakened intelligence is also awakened latent psychic energy. This now engages itself in direct observation and disallows interference of conditioning, nor does it accept any answers from any form of study. When one truly accepts, 'I feel trapped and must find a way out'—there is awakening. But, one must truly feel this in every cell of one's being so that price tags, however steep, are dismissed because the whole being wants out of the trap. You cannot 'want out' if some of you 'wants in'—very fond of some of the cause of the effects which are our problems.

Awakening is itself the utmost sincerity roused into action and it is its own support or light.

What is conditioning?

The sum total of all notions, ideas, hopes and expectations we have about the world: people, things and conditions which have no corresponding reality is conditioning. It is called conditioning because it conditions (interferes by shaping) our perception and action.

Conditioning rejects things 'as they are' and insists on things 'as they should be' or one would prefer—an obstinate fancy. The content of conditioning is thought vitalized with the energy of wishing or desire. The heart goes where one's desire is, and this desire ruthlessly drags the whole being with it. Repeated flow of oneself in these inner groves makes seeing and responding from conditioning seem natural, instead of issuing forth from reality—instead of actually seeing what is present right in front of us, that which is of inner intelligence, for the very best response without personal preference.

Conditioning is habit finally, and it gets stronger each time it is used till one is completely identified with the bundle of habits that one has created and is also sustained by oneself only.

The more the conditioning, the more the frustration or stress, and therefore a pressing need arises for some form of release because the external world corresponds less and less to the inner world which one has become accustomed to as the reality. The inability to reconcile the outer world of people and things with the inner world of notions and hopes—pressure builds and affects one mentally, emotionally, physically and in one's overall life.

What to do about conditioning?

Awaken and having awakened, stay alert and awake. Awakening is itself abandoning existing conditioning. Staying alert insures that further conditioning is not added. When conditioning does not interfere with perception or action, one leads an enlightened life—a life where this awakened inner intelligence is the light that guides.

How does one awaken?

How do you awaken from sleep each night? When you feel you either need to be up to get things done; or that you are just being lazy and wasting the day (which could have become a daily occurrence); or you awaken proactively knowing that sleep time is over and it is now the time for something else.

First, consciously see things as they are and not as they appear to be which involves coloring by our conditioning or thought. Mostly we do not really see as seeing is interfered with by selfishness and desire. When we harbor these toxins, they insist on interfering with perception and action. Seeing has to become pure.

Next, realize that you are inseparable from all that is perceived or perception could not be possible. You cannot know anything if you are truly separate from it. Now, find a way to do what needs to be done without either involving or creating division.

No division within, no division without—no division at all. Perception shapes experience and if one disallows division in perception, the action will be an expression of non-division and the resulting experience will be the experience of non-division. As is the seed, so is the tree—so we must keep the seed or seeing pure, unadulterated, and this is what awakening does.

Experience, insight and wisdom can bring us to awakening which insists on a direct understanding of things.

Experience: When we directly see that things in the world are more than often quite different from the inner world, there is a wake-up call and one is presented an opportunity to reexamine and see through the conditioning or find ways to endure the tide till one can bring things into favor again. Awakening from experience often does not endure, as once the going gets good, we have other experiences and revert to earlier stages or sink deeper into ignorance. Experience is reactive and with each experience some kindling and a match become available with which we can try to kindle the inner psychic flame or let it dampen once again under the rains of experience.

Insight: Experience can lead to insight if we reexamine and understand the true nature of things. A sincere attempt to understand things as they really are rouses the inner intelligence and challenges existing notions, giving us the opportunity to dislodge them. Insight is a proactive opportunity at the end of the reaction of experience and challenging conditioning is like igniting sparks which have the potential to be kindled into the fire of wisdom.

Wisdom: Steady insight into the true nature of things is wisdom. When the awakening is one of wisdom, it gives full opportunity to realize the truth and is usually durable. Wisdom is proactive and a roaring flame that rejects conditioning because it perceives and acts directly. The full awakening and simultaneous empowerment of the inner intelligence is living wisdom.

Is awakening disgust for the world?

No. Firstly, disgust is disgust and it resides in one (the disgusted) only. With disgust one knows and experiences disgust and with peace one knows and experiences peace.

Secondly, yoga is the discovery of non-division as truth, whereas disgust necessitates division. The means to any end has to reflect the end itself in good measure, because the means not only blossoms into the end, it *is* the end itself in its tender stages of unfoldment just as a young sapling blossoms into the tree.

This said, somehow we have developed the skill of blind infatuation which is also called stubborn obstinacy—something that must be had or experienced, regardless of whether it is

good for oneself and the consequences have a good effect on others. This often goes unexamined because of the *carte blanche* we ourselves have given it. The most amazing this is that we hide and defend our weaknesses vehemently.

Awakening is waking up to the truth of the inner state of chaos and at the same time, a firm resolve never to allow this to continue. Swami Sivananda calls these three essential requisites the seeker's sheet-anchor, and it has three prongs:

- 1) Unbroken vigilance or ever-present reflection into the why and wherefore of life and things or *vichara*.
- 2) Ever-present discrimination between the perishable and imperishable or *viveka*.
- 3) A passionate revolt from selfishness and sensuality or *vairagya*.

This passionate revolt from self-centeredness and sensuality is mistakenly seen as disgust.

1. Unbroken vigilance (*vichara*)

When vigilance becomes unbroken, there is a state of ever-present reflection or a direct seeing into everything to discover its true nature without the interference of thought. This is a state of pure observation where the observer does not stand outside the observed, as both are in the field of observation only.

The inner intelligence is fully awakened and empowered—its awakening is its empowerment. Without empowerment, there is no awakening, perhaps like a lazy stirring while still asleep. Once the inner intelligence is awake, everything is observed without consideration for the many *carte blanche* or free passes we have given to things to be kindly excluded 'because they are okay'. This is friction in observation and we experience these as distractions in meditation and stresses in life. Any degree of selectiveness disallows vigilance as it must be unbroken as the inner intelligence does not function to the ego-self's whims and fancies.

Concepts, notions, ideas and memory are rejected as the inner intelligence observes directly each time afresh. Knowing can only be in the present, the past can never really 'know', as its content or substance is thought.

All of one's being is involved in this observation, and in this state of inner attention there is direct knowledge of the observed because one does not stand outside it. Observation is a total act and an end to itself—the observing is the knowing. We do not observe 'to know'—to observe is to know.

This is why one cannot have a caveat or carrot (*even a golden spiritual carrot*) beyond the observation. Everything for something!—we are used to this, ... there is always something ahead of any action that we do. There cannot be anything to be gained or any result beyond it

or the attention will always be split on the observed and the expected, and since the expected is the end—the heart will be there.

If we have any idea at all of what should come, it is not observation but anticipation of the known—experiencing the known is not discovery. If there is anything beyond vigilance, there will be anticipation of 'that known'. Vigilance, being ever fresh, brings ever fresh discovery and cannot involve knowns or be a means to an end.

The only difficulty rousing vigilance is our appetite and dependency for what we have become accustomed to by non-vigilance. Certain things and conditions come about by being selfish or self-centered but these bring the host of problems that we do not like. We would like to have the 'goodies' without the accompanying 'non-goodies', and this is self-deception. So, we keep trying to experiment to see if it is possible to have our cake and eat it too though years of experimenting prove otherwise. It is quite amazing how fresh we are at exerting in ways that have not delivered the goods repeatedly but are not enthusiastic about trying new ways and abandoning what has not worked.

Selfishness and our appetite are our only problems. Vigilance is a state of attention that itself dismissed both and evolves into direct realization.

2. Ever-present discrimination (viveka)

We have one twofold problem: thought or conditioning interferes in perception and in action. We cannot seem to perceive clearly even though we think we face each situation squarely and we cannot seem to do what is best (not just best for some—me, some person or any reason) and give the very best response to each situation without thinking from the viewpoint of our personal benefit.

Being a part of every situation, we are not only a part of everything—we are inseparable from everything. Throughout the day, we are faced with situations that ask for a response, "Do I do something or not and if so, in what way do I do..." Individual purpose is not part of the equation because the individual himself is not part of the equation. We are one with the landscape of the world that asks for a response but we insist on standing outside and harvesting our own larger self for personal gain of an entity that does not exist apart from it.

If we are vigilant, we see each situation and if we eliminate personal agendas and needs, the best response will surge into action—each situation will ask of itself and answer itself. When there is a need felt for something by one part of your body, it is taken care of even if it is at the temporary cost of other functions, as the inner intelligence knows what is felt most important. This intelligence is not limited to our body—it not only saturates but permeates every cell of creation. If it were any different, different agendas of different intelligences would war with each other constantly like we see in humankind today. But this is not so. There is one indivisible

intelligence that regulates all, and our problems stem from trying to assert ourselves outside of this grand harmony.

The discriminative mind is the awakened intelligence itself that clearly sees the truth of things. Aside from always facing the truth, it ignores untruth which is our conditioning that interferes. When the inner intelligence sifts thus; through the real and unreal or the perishable and changing from the imperishable and unchanging without remission—it is called viveka or ever-present discrimination.

3. Passionate revolt from selfishness and sensuality (vairagya)

The awakened inner intelligence constantly faces reality only, ignoring any attempts of interference by thought. Awakened and knowing full well the danger of conditioning—it passionately revolts from selfishness and sensuality.

The inner intelligence has clearly seen that selfishness stems from unreality and sensuality or the giving into sensual gratification, which is the way the ego-personality strengthens its hold on the whole being—it dismisses all attempts of interference by assiduously facing the truth.

When I face the light, I am not suppressing darkness; when I face good health, I am not suppressing ill-health and sickness. We each have this one choice in all matters: to face the light or the truth of each thing or to face darkness or the truths we have invented for our personal convenience—whatever be the justification. This perhaps is the only choice we have.

To face the light is to turn away from darkness. Darkness cannot and does not exist in light. Steadfastly facing the light or truth in all things is passionately revolting from selfishness and its ambassador—sensuality. This is called vairagya or a state where there is absence of passion.

All three at once without selectiveness

Unbroken vigilance to see the truth of everything, ever present discrimination between the perishable and imperishable and, a passionate revolt from selfishness and sensuality are the three ways the awakened intelligence faces everything. Selectiveness is not possible and if there is—there is tremendous deception.

If the inner intelligence is awakened—*it acts*. If the petty little personality acts—the inner intelligence is unawakened. There is not even a hair's breadth of room for selectiveness—whatever be its justification and social acceptance.

When one clearly perceives the ever-present danger in something, one would not get involved with it and if one does get involved with it, the danger has not really been 'seen'—just conceptualized ... one has not awoken to the truth of things ... one is still asleep.