

ENLIGHTENMENT TRAPS

Shortcuts to Enlightenment?



by Robert Sniadach

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Verum Loqui
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I'm told that 'real books' have a number of important sections in them. Here you go:

Dedication

To the real you. You'll know it when you become it.

Cover Photo

Heliamphora heterodoxa – [Carnivorous pitcher plant](#) from Venezuela. Attractive colors and shapes get your attention, enticing fragrances from the sweet nectar lure you in, slippery leaves assure your downfall into the liquid trap waiting below. Clever plants!

Foreword

“As far as I can tell, this guy knows what he is talking about.” - Swami Pastrami

Preface

The contents of this book will probably provoke, irritate and offend you. Good. That will get you thinking.

Conversely, what you read here shouldn't irritate you, once you grasp what I am saying. It's actually a big relief.

It's short book; basically a summary of my own experiences, insights and comprehension of the comedy-drama called Spirituality and Seeking Enlightenment. Perhaps some of my

experiences will help shed some light on your own experiences. Then we can both laugh together, already secretly knowing what the punch line is.

Introduction

Why should you read this?

If you are a devoted spiritual seeker, you probably shouldn't read it.

If you are getting extremely frustrated with your endless spiritual seeking and practice, you probably should read it.

Notes

These are supposed to be at the end. So I'll put a few there.

Acknowledgments

Brahman, Shakti, Shiva and all the rest of The Gang – you guys and gals are the best. Impeccable hosts, always providing outstanding entertainment, and never a dull moment. I love how you hide seductive mysteries behind every obstacle. It's an endless treasure hunt.

OK, now it's a real book! Albeit a very short one.

With that out of the way, let's get on with it.

What Is Enlightenment?

Can't really say what it is, only what it is like. And what it is not. One can describe the effects, the feeling of it, the daily reality of living it.

Enlightenment has been portrayed as total awakening, liberation, the final truth, eternal bliss, perfect love, abiding non-dual awareness, permanent freedom from suffering, and the ultimate destination of all spiritual practice.

Sounds pretty impressive, yes?

My personal description of enlightenment:

- Full sunlight shining through; grey clouds dispersing. Dim fogginess gone.
- Direct knowing occurs; ignorance gone.
- Simple unbound awareness exists; illusion gone.
- Unbroken wholeness is; the feeling of separateness gone.
- Agape – abiding oneness filled with unconditional, impersonal love.
- Always being in The Natural State; clear, clean, unfettered, unencumbered, easy, simple.
- A profound experience of having awakened, as if I had been sleeping and dreaming all along and didn't know it. This new state of consciousness does continue to evolve in unexpected ways, but it does not disappear; it is not temporary.

- All desire to continue seeking for spiritual answers completely ceases. All questioning stops... the questions themselves have vanished.

- The voices inside my head disappeared permanently. I no longer hear any inner judging of my thoughts or actions; no inner congratulation or punishment for my choices; no more 'shoulds' or 'should nots.' Human-created, interpreted and dictated morality has disappeared. My consciousness is merged in the flow of a Far Greater Consciousness which has everything under control. I flow with it, automatically.

- Doubt no longer occurs about anything. My next step, next action, next 'choice' is automatic.

- A million other free bonus prizes, such as the inability to worry about anything, anxiety is gone and does not reappear, inability to attach undue importance or seriousness to situations, the sense of personal motivation is gone but everything necessary gets done, no concern about goals or results and yet things work out just fine, continually present 'now' moment awareness and engagement, zero regret about the past and zero worry about the future, profound relaxation of the body, greatly improved well being, many health concerns eliminated or minimized, automatic ease with anyone at any time, and many more.

Sounds good? Interested?

Seriously interested???

“So,” you ask, “Where can I get it? How can I get it? What must I do to awaken into enlightenment? Who can give it to me?”

To achieve enlightenment, there are hundreds, maybe thou-

sands of systems, practices, theories, disciplines, and rituals prescribed by an unending stream of gurus, masters, priests and shamans. All claim that they have got it, and that their method is your answer, guaranteed to make you enlightened. With all of these professionals available, sage advice offered, and thousands of books and instruction manuals floating around, you would assume that spiritual enlightenment was happening left, right and center, with millions of fully awake and aware people walking around the planet, creating a paradise on Earth.

A quick glance around, however, shows you that it just ain't happening.

Why not?

Very Good Question.

Seems that either the wisdom offered is flawed, no one has proofread the manuals, the practices are not quite accurate, or the teachers themselves are not really doing what they say they are doing.

In the final analysis it comes down to this: In the three-ring circus we call spirituality at this moment in human evolutionary development, there are hundreds of radically different paths you can take. How can you know which one is correct for you?

Perhaps you can imagine it as many different instruments being played, but the musicians are not aware of each other. There are brilliant and accomplished musicians, and others who are just learning how to play. You hear discordant melodies, bizarre harmonies, strange counterpoint and conflicted rhythmic movements happening simultaneously.

This mad soundscape is a cacophonous spiritual symphony orchestra overseen by no one; no conductor or musical director to be found. You enter the spiritual scene without any map or user guide – you are on your own and winging it, any way you can. You may lock into one particular spiritual path, led by an accomplished authority. Or you may jump from master to teacher to preacher to guru. But the larger spiritual scene, the whole circus, is overseen by no one. Whether you haphazardly sample every musical chair and every instrument, or you stick with one of them for many years, in the end it always comes down to the Final Movement of your own spiritual Opus; your own Final Awakening. That's where the real action is. Everything else, including every 'spiritual' practice you have engaged in, is just warm-up. All along the way with every practice session, you have simply been learning your instrument, tuning it up and learning how to play.

If you are lucky, in this human lifetime, you may be destined for the grand finale. Your final spiritual movement, your final, permanent awakening and its climax is a rip-roaring, mind-blowing, utterly terrifying, self-consuming, self-destructing, yet completely natural process. It is, without a doubt, the most difficult process a human being can go through. You – everything you think you are, feel you are, believe you are and hope to become – will be progressively disconnected, dismantled, hollowed-out and annihilated. Permanently. Forever. 'You' are being eaten alive, from the inside out. What could be more terrifying than that?

Your final spiritual enlightening process cannot be artificially brought on or sped up by *anything* you do. It will commence *only* when the hidden Divine Maestro knows you are truly

ripe and ready for it – at your soul level. Only then will He raise His baton in a grand flourish, signaling the orchestra to unite and ready itself to roar into your Final Awakening Movement. Your personal enlightening process happens when it is meant to happen; you cannot force it, no matter how hard you try. When it begins to occur, you cannot stop it, no matter how badly you may want it to stop. And as it kicks in and plays out, it is not, *in any way*, under your control.

Reread the previous two paragraphs. Several times.

Got it?

Good.

OK, now we proceed...

The Path Rarely Taken

With that said and understood, let's be clear about this: Enlightenment is NOT the same as Sainthood. I define Sainthood as the attempt to purify and perfect your sense of self identity; which is overseen and guarded oh so carefully by your ego. Think of seeking sainthood as turbo-charged self-improvement. The path to Sainthood includes an infinite variety of practices, beliefs, therapies and apprenticeships under presumed authorities. The issue of Sainthood vs. Enlightenment is almost universally confused, so I discuss many of the issues below.

Is sainthood, i.e. the perfection of the ego, even possible?

No, but that doesn't matter. The whole point is the attempt. Have fun with all of the sights, sounds, thrills, chills and odd-ball characters along the way. Nearly everyone you see who is engaged in spiritual pursuits to become enlightened is ac-

tually working toward sainthood, whether they know it or not.

What is important is this: Seeking and working toward sainthood does not magically or automatically lead to enlightenment. They are not on the same time line, or even in the same dimension, though oftentimes they may ride together on the same bus.

Enlightenment can *seem* to require lots of self-improvement work. Indeed, most spiritual improvement programs, which are actually ego build-up and refinement programs may, by coincidence or accident, launch you into the opposite process of ego breakdown.

Getting more and more perfected, more and more purified, evolved and refined, are not listed in the handbook of enlightenment requirements. There is no mandatory pre-enlightenment qualifying work of rooting out and fixing every psychological trauma, weakness, split, shadow, distorted program and odd personality quirk you hold inside yourself. Working on your issues is not the issue. Every human being has a large bucketful of these mental/emotional defects in their ego structure. That's life. Every individual who has ever awakened into abiding enlightenment has entered their Final Awakening Process carrying at least a small backpack full of personality defects with them. No worries. The Process itself will manage and transform these so-called defects exactly as is necessary to finish your enlightening work.

You don't emerge from the Awakening Process as a psychologically-perfected saint. You emerge Enlightened. If we see sainthood as the very hard work of perfecting egoic consciousness, then enlightenment is taking an involuntary 90°

right turn into a completely unexpected direction.

If that is so, is improving one's 'ego-self' a worthwhile thing to do?

Sure. Always a good thing, more or less. Seeking self-improvement naturally implies that you recognize that the current state of 'You' vis-a-vis life on Earth is far less than it could be. We've all got areas of our life, personality, character, talents and abilities that can use some upgrade and improvement. The complete progression through the developmental stages from childhood into a fully-functioning, self-confident, self-reliant, self-determining adult should be what is normal for all human beings.

Looking around, however, you can see that's not the case. The vast majority of 'adult' humanity is stuck at some grossly incomplete level of development. In their early years, everyone started their climb up the maturity ladder. On their way up, most people stopped along the way to have a look around. And they decided to stay. That's where they remain... at 50 years old, they are essentially a mental and emotional 10-year-old who has been refining that undeveloped state of consciousness for 40 years. Or he could be a 50 year old person who still looks, talks and acts like a teen-ager. You can see signs of this all around you, with nearly everyone you meet, when you look carefully.

Nevertheless, you will encounter a few good people along the way. Real adults who have eased smoothly into full maturity, and who move with ease, quiet confidence and grace. They may not be enlightened, but they are true adults who have embodied the defining traits of maturity, and are thoroughly enjoying the experience.

Ready For Liftoff

For a few rare people, however, this is still not enough. A gnawing, grinding dissatisfaction and deep yearning inside keeps pushing them forward. This yearning for more does not stop. Ever. This spark of yearning is constantly pushing, always restless. It wants answers, it wants truth, it wants to know what the hell is going on around here. It wants to get back to the Source. To go Home, where things are real, true and authentic. That spark inside grows brighter, getting wilder... seeking, pursuing... and its agitation grows exponentially worse with every frustrating dead end it encounters.

If it so happens that the Wild Spark inside you is aroused, belligerent and determined, this might be your destiny. You may be poised and primed for your Final Awakening. For you, this spiritual craving inside you is getting serious, and you cannot waste any more time. If this sounds like you, then this little article will strike resonant chords inside you again and again. This is written for you. We'll have some fun with spiritual concepts, but no BS.

If you are someone involved in spiritual practices, but for some reason you are not yet quite ready for your Final Awakening, then this article is likely to irritate and rile you. Good. We are trying to get to the truth, after all. Every bit of spiritual irritation and frustration stokes the fire within.

Likewise, if you give this article to your favorite guru/teacher/holy man for their opinion and guidance, there's a good chance they will rip it in half, warning you of the dangers of reading such subversive material.

The sobering truth is that there is no person, no thing, no

practice and no knowledge that will *give* you enlightenment. And yet, everyone seeking spiritual enlightenment is trying to get it through some person, some thing, some knowledge or some practice. Usually all of the above.

With everyone trying very hard to get enlightened, the failure rate is right about 100%.

How can this be? With so many people, trying so hard, for so long, surely *someone* has figured out how to get it, right?

Short answer: No.

Since no one has figured out exactly how to get it (and won't), the next best thing we can do is to examine what has failed over and over again. We can learn something from that.

So, what are some practices that *do not* produce enlightenment?

Meditation Does Not Produce Enlightenment

Meditating for hours every day does not 'slowly but surely' morph into permanent awakening. There are plenty of long-term meditators, going at it for decades, who will attest to this. No matter which style of meditation you practice or how much you practice it, it will not produce enlightenment.

And this is the perfect place for me to restate the main point of this whole article: Meditation (and every other spiritual practice) will not *cause* enlightenment to happen. In regards to enlightenment, the best that any practice can do, maybe, is to help prepare you to some degree in case the enlightening process kicks in. As I look back on all the spiritual prac-

tices that I engaged in pre-awakening, I can honestly say that some of them helped greatly, in some ways. But most of them didn't help me very much, if at all, to prepare for the Process. I say this because the Process itself was way beyond anything I expected it to be. Heck, I didn't even know there *was* a Process. More about this later.

So, returning to meditation... is there any benefit to it?

Meditation is an excellent practice to relax your body, balance your breathing and calm your mind. Deep and consistent meditation practice will allow you to slowly become a much better dispassionate observer of your thoughts, and cultivate a much better ability to detach your perceptual awareness from the content of your thoughts. You will gain insight into the mechanics of how your mind works: how thoughts are produced, where they come from and how they function. As meditation goes deeper, you may become aware of the Deep Stillness and Peace that lies behind all thoughts.

This deep stillness and peaceful awareness is the marvelous jewel of meditation. A beautiful jewel it is, but in and of itself, it goes no further. *Meditation does not directly or permanently remove the obstacles causing illusion inside you.* It merely allows you to bypass them temporarily, at least sometimes. Meditation practice does not accumulate, in the sense of gathering more merit points and getting you closer and closer to enlightenment. No permanent enlightening changes occur because of meditation. When even your best meditation session is over, you re-engage with your ego-self and with the world, and that is what forces you to go further. And further you must go.

Regular meditation does give you a stronger foundation for weathering the storms that come up now and then in your life, which is very helpful. Also you may come to understand the difference between biological thought (necessary) and psychological thought (superfluous). These insights are indeed quite provocative and helpful. They are not, however, a goal in themselves.

Marathon meditations may produce captivating altered states of consciousness and strange sensations in your body. These may be pleasant or painful, profound or just weird. All these experiences come and they go, which should immediately tell you something very important about your quest.

These altered states are fascinating to experience and explore. But they have nothing directly to do with enlightenment and do not bring you any closer to it. Meditation greatly improves your overall mental health and well being, and that is a very good thing. However, from the getting-enlightened point of view, endless meditation sessions keep you idling in place, if not actively taking you further from it.

Chanting Does Not Generate Enlightenment

Toning, chanting, devotional kirtan singing, repeating a mantra, drumming, free-form dancing or speaking in tongues does not produce enlightenment, or move you closer to it. But they are a lot of fun!

Immersing yourself in these practices can produce sublime states of consciousness and even more strange and delightful sensations in your body. You can have feelings of being tuned in to a bigger flow of life; feelings of connection and

rhythmic unity with All That Is. You get into the Groove and it is a Blast.

Awesome!

Then, in an hour or two, the regular old you is back, along with your regular old reality.

Right at that moment when you fall back into regular old reality, you may talk yourself into believing that Grooving like this is 'getting me out of myself,' helping you make spiritual progress towards lasting unity and permanent bliss.

But... you are not. All the old hidden, unexamined crap still firmly resides inside you; you've just spent a little time pleasantly distracting yourself.

Use these practices for having fun and for experiencing very cool altered states of consciousness. But don't fool yourself into believing that they are transporting you on the soul train to enlightenment.

Religious Practice Does Not Bestow Enlightenment

Dozens, maybe hundreds of religious belief systems are on display for the happy shopper at the Religion Super Market. You can pick and choose from a wide assortment of beliefs, involving one god or many gods, the universe within or the universe without.

You may choose to worship saints or devils, mother nature, heavenly father, their sons or daughters, stars, constellations, archetypes, gurus, priests, statues, paintings, animals, philosophies, theories, your belly button, your heart, your third eye, sex, your body or the body of someone else. Pick

one. Or several. Mix and match. Enjoy.

Highly Esteemed Tradition based upon Ancient Teachings spoken by various Prophets and Messiahs may be your calling. There are a few well-worn religions that have many centuries of thinking, tinkering, argument, elaboration and fine-tuning included in their history. All their believers and followers greatly revere their sacred books that contain many layers of translations and mistranslations of special words and chat sessions spoken by a guy who is believed to have lived way back when.

Very specific prayers, practices and rituals are prescribed, others are forbidden, and diligent practice is mandatory if one is to progress up the ladder to final salvation. Lifetimes can be spent mastering all the details and intricacies. At the end of it all you may find yourself to be quite learned, pious, saintly, compassionate and kind. A highly evolved human being!

Enlightenment, however, is in the other direction.

Special Diets Do Not Fuel Enlightenment

There are countless diets advocated, physical exercises recommended, purification rituals encouraged, endurance trainings demanded and rejuvenation elixirs prescribed in order to help you to become the perfect vessel to receive and embody the highest of the secret teachings. Only by achieving the utmost fitness and purity can you become a Light Body: one who is worthy to be called Holy.

These physical states of being are indeed wonderful, and the powerful feelings of energy and aliveness are their magnificent rewards. But, like every other experience, they are

temporary and fleeting. To try to maintain them permanently will keep all of your attention and efforts completely involved in them. Seeking body perfection is not seeking enlightenment. Seeking body perfection is seeking body perfection. Enlightenment does not require it. The awakened do not need to continually 'work and practice and purify' to maintain their enlightened state of being.

That said, is there merit to having a high level of health? Sure, why not? If you are going to live on this planet, you might as well have the health to fully enjoy it. But you must be careful where you place your energy and focus. You can study and learn that your physical body has definite and specific biological needs that can be provided for in definite and specific ways, exactly as is true for every other living thing on Earth. You learn what you biologically need and why, and then you supply those needs in a most direct and simple manner. It's easy.

But that's not what we have been told... according to most of the experts, achieving and maintaining high-level health seems to be difficult; quite complex and involved. As you might expect, in the midst of this complexity, for you and for most people, pretty much everything you currently believe in and do, to and for your body, to get it healthy and keep it healthy, is... wrong. Or at best, what you are doing every day for health reasons is far more complicated, expensive and difficult than it needs to be. Most people have beliefs, lifestyles and dietary habits that do not provide for their simple biological needs in the most appropriate, positive and natural manner. Learn the basics about your body and how to feed and care for it, and it will give you many years of trouble-free operation. An excellent bargain!

Anything above and beyond this, however, is ego obsession. The desire for body perfection often morphs into cult-like attachment to whatever fad diet or lifestyle happens to be popular in the moment. And when it comes to achieving a sexually desirable appearance, oh my. Face, body and fashion obsession is a multi-billion if not trillion dollar industry the world over. There is no shortage of people out there who are very concerned about how they look. Egoic self identity wears infinite costumes; whatever turns you on!

If enlightenment is what you want, then your body should be kept in good condition – good enough to keep your mind sharp and focused, and your desire strong and penetrating. Do not get distracted by detouring all your attention into total purification of the body, ultra-fitness of the body, perfect health of the body, immortality of the body, or other perfection of the body.

Remember: you will die. Your body will return to dust. Intense contemplation of death, especially *your* death, is the best hard-core, life-focusing exercise available.

While we are on the topic of purification, it should be noted that the natural, organic and healthful practice of periodic fasting is somewhat analogous to the ego deconstruction that the enlightening process takes you through. With fasting, your body and mind is in a very accelerated state of toxin and obstruction removal, repair of damage, and overall rejuvenation of your system. Your body is cleaning house and fixing things up using every bit of energy its got.

Likewise with the ‘cleansing’ process of enlightenment. Your conscious life force energy – aka Kundalini - will take charge and conduct a manic, yet exquisite and precisely controlled

demolition and rebuilding of your body and mind. It is a cleansing detoxification process like no other. The end result is your healthy, natural enlightened state... far beyond compare to any state of being you have ever known before.

So remember, all obsessive body perfection practices have absolutely nothing to do with enlightenment. Get your body and mind into good shape by learning and regularly doing the things necessary to get it there – simply and easily - and then don't give the subject any more attention.

Practicing Tantra Does Not Stimulate Enlightenment

Intense sexual desire, passionate sexual activity and exquisite sexual orgasms are powerful experiences. You can pretend to be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, metrosexual, antisexual, celibate or androgynous. Perhaps you are involved in sex with a partner or sex with yourself; group sex, casual sex, or sex only to make a baby. Sex can be gentle and loving, or rough and mean... or a little of both. There is no end to the variety of sexual experience available.

Every critter, from amoeba to zebra, seeks to reproduce. To insure that happens, the urge to merge is hard-wired into the most primitive parts of the brain, and a mighty powerful urge it is. Going as far as killing a rival challenger in order to copulate with a desirable female is no problem for many species.

And the actual release of sexual tension – orgasm – is likewise an extremely powerful altered state of consciousness. Pleasure beyond measure.

Sexual activity can simultaneously connect us to our most primal instincts and to a most sublime transcendental state

of bliss. So, naturally, after the bliss wore off, someone thought, 'Why not conjure this up to be a secret system of sacred sexual practices that will catapult the devotee to spiritual enlightenment?'

Along came the sexual rules, regulations, correct acceptable practices, incorrect forbidden practices (which eventually became acceptable), and the inner circle of tantric masters who come from long lineages stretching way back before written history. The tantric melody has tickled the ears of countless eager disciples who show up with an erotic gleam in their eye, ready to get to work. The more work the better.

There is no doubt that sexual activity can and does launch you right out of your mind, and for most people, going out of their mind is a wonderful thing. Normally the mind is so full of stress, worry, anxiety and conflicted crap that silencing it, even for only a few minutes, feels reeeeeeally good. The experience of a silenced, blissed-out mind, coupled with a wonderfully relaxed body from orgasmically spent sexual energy is right near the top of the list of peak human experiences. And not only is it free of charge, it is available at any time.

The enlightenment angle falls along the lines of working with sexual tension to try to keep the blissed-out-mind thing happening for as long as possible, 'letting go' of oneself as completely as possible, and delaying as long as possible, or eliminating altogether the actual ejaculation of orgasm (if you are male). If you are female, then riding continuous waves of orgasmic delight for hours and hours sounds about right. If you get good enough at all of this, maybe, just maybe you can get yourself so maxed out in pleasure for so long that the silenced mind and abandoned ego can sort of

flip over (flip out?) into permanently enlightened bliss.

Ohhhh Yeahhhh.

Um-hmm... Maybe you can see the hormone-juiced, teenage fantasy of it all?

Focusing your mind, sensations and awareness ever more carefully on the feelings and states of consciousness that sex can provide will give you pleasure you can scarcely imagine. It is amazing, wonderful and beautiful. Enjoy it.

If you want enlightenment, you have other work to do.

And by the way, the Celibate thing won't go there either. There are times where a spontaneous period of celibacy will probably occur in your enlightening journey. But long-term enforced celibacy is exactly that – enforced. The battle between your enforced celibate willpower vs. your innate biological sex drive will not end well. Celibacy practice will teach you some interesting things about how strong your built-in reproductive urge is, how intensely, dominantly and thoroughly it can mess with your mind, and what happens physically when you suppress it. And if you are really into this, you can attempt to redirect this primal urge upward, inward, or whichever way you like. Interesting experiences, to be sure, but ultimately you are fighting and mucking with your most fundamental biological drive... kinda like enforced starvation or deliberate dehydration. Bad idea.

Your creative sexual drive is closely tied to the seat of your conscious biological life force, your Kundalini. But sexual energy is a *byproduct* of personal life force energy; it is *not* the source of it. The Source of your primal life force energy is infinitely greater than your tiny reproductive urge.

A quick shower and moving right along...

Acquiring Special Powers Is Not Enlightening

Whether you have special powers, or you are inquiring of others who have them, these powers will not help you toward enlightenment. If you have the ability to see the future, find hidden objects, channel the presence of discarnate entities, penetrate the hidden meanings of esoteric knowledge, read the thoughts of others, diagnose hidden diseases, manifest material objects, see auras, control your dreams, exude charisma, hypnotize crowds, make other people nervous and lovers swoon, then you may be quite special and talented.

But not enlightened.

And even if you are just a regular guy or gal seeking answers to the biggest questions of Life, you will get no permanent, lasting help from psychics, astrologers, numerologists, tarot readers, prophets, priests, shamans, channelers, gurus or wise men. The most helpful thing they can do is to hasten the day that you finally get sufficiently irritated and frustrated with all of them that you stop asking for their help.

So, chuck the Ouiji board, burn the Tarot cards, and keep moving...

Holy Status is a Different Destination

Are you seeking sainthood, guruhood, priesthood, pundit-hood, any other 'hood, or highly evolved state? Then you need more and more knowledge, more and more practice, more and more wisdom, more and more questions answered, more and more discipline, more and more purifica-

tion, etc., etc.

All of these things are wonderful, of course, and highly treasured for their benefits. Supposedly, once perfected enough, whatever enough actually is, then you are formally ordained to be a high-ranking member of the 'hood.

It is graduation day, and now your friends can help you prepare for your grand initiation ceremony. That is when you get to wear the cool new outfit. Maybe a cool new hat, too. Now you are the Guru, the Master, the Swami, the Avatar, the Learned One, His Holiness, Her Highness. Such an exalted status!

And such high responsibility. Now you've got standards to uphold, appearances to maintain, rituals to preserve, lineages to honor, and statues to revere. And don't forget the swarms of disciples running around you, begging for answers to all of their questions, desperate for your daily presence, your touch, your command and control. It's all quite detailed and involved. Rules and regulations and traditions and disciplines and meetings and speeches and teachings, and, and...

Does that sound free and liberating?

You may suddenly realize that many years ago when you took that road toward high-ranking spiritual status, you missed the right turn toward enlightenment.

Throw away the fancy hat, get out your compass and redirect.

Drugs Do Not Induce Enlightenment

Human beings have been ingesting every imaginable substance since long, long ago. When trying to find food, everything is up for grabs. Now and then someone ate a new flower, root or mushroom and Boom! Off they went to places unknown. Afterwards, they told everyone in the tribe about their trip to the Magical Place, and they told it over and over and over again. Each retelling got more and more complicated, exaggerated and absurd.

But that didn't stop their tribe-mates from believing it; before long the story became Sacred Oral Tradition, the storyteller became a Prophet, and everyone wanted to join the Party. Elaborate rituals and secret ceremonies sprung up, wild new artwork, dance, music, jewelry and attire soon followed. Human beings are most certainly wired to experiment with anything that alters consciousness and provides a buzz. We love our altered states, and the fads that spring from them.

Indeed, it very well may be true that the evolution of the brains of our ancestors was shifted into overdrive due to the effects of mind-expanding, naturally-occurring psychedelic chemical compounds. There is no doubt that prehistoric humans regularly ate an incredibly diverse cocktail of nutrients compared to today. They ate everything they could get their hands on.

Some of these ancient mind-blowing practices of psychedelic stimulation survive today, if they have not been beaten into submission, or even extinction, by the too-tightly-wound self-righteous control freaks among us. But hey, that's pretty much the endlessly recycled story of human

history – insecure control freaks mucking things up for the rest of us. Sacred today, illegal tomorrow.

Nevertheless, people keep doing it anyway, no matter the risk. The partaking of mind-altering substances continues onward. The clever chemists have created synthetic drugs that are even more powerful.

While the experiences triggered by psychedelics is an inherently amazing phenomenon, and the insights provided may indeed give a glimpse of the boundless infinity that everyone's consciousness is capable of experiencing, the final bummer is that the drug wears off and one comes back down to regular old reality. And regular old egoic me.

But! That glimpse may provide such a reality-exploding experience that the user is catapulted into seeker mode. By that I mean that the psychedelic experience can temporarily dissolve ego boundaries, touch on essential truths of existence, and permanently alter one's inner sense of what is possible in this lifetime. A Spark may ignite deep inside you.

Temporarily blowing out our self-imposed boundaries is a Very Good Thing. After the intense trip, with the lingering aftertaste of the infinite slipping away, the user may begin serious spiritual seeking to try to re-ignite that experience once more.

Of course, one can simply take the drug again. And again. But eventually it is seen that this will go no further, as you inevitably come back down... again. Not to mention the damage that may be occurring in your body and brain. With luck, the frustration with drugs might lead to even deeper seeking; a spiritual seeking for natural and permanent feeling of

peace and bliss. And if luckier still, years of frustration with that spiritual seeking will lead even further...

Guru Juice Does Not Rub Off As Enlightenment

Joining the clique and becoming another Bliss Bunny at the Love Lounge, with Baba Bananaji presiding, will not rub off as enlightenment. Enlightenment is not contagious. Passively acquired enlightenment and collective group ascension sure sound lovely, and being a member of the inner circle vibe can be very addictive. But like any addiction that tantalizingly teases with its blasts of bliss, the satsang setup becomes a merry-go-round that never ends.

Whatever your endeavor, it is true that the company you keep will make a huge difference in the quality of your life. Depending on your own degree of development, level of consciousness, maturity or whatever you want to call it, hanging out with others of a similar vibe can be great fun and the best support when you need it. And when it comes to spiritual seeking, having others around who sing the same song with you in the choir is delightful and fun.

The guru thing actually has some gray area to it, meaning that there is some real benefit possible. More often than not, the true guru will have a significant degree of spiritual wisdom at his or her disposal. They can see deeply into you more clearly, and can more accurately 'point a finger toward the moon' for you than others can.

Even more mystical and enchanting is when the guru has the Guru Juice. This is what I call the mysterious entraining spiritual energy that the guru seems to be able to unconsciously emanate, or directly transmit to those nearby. The inten-

tional transmission of this energy, usually by touch, is called shaktipat, and many seekers swear by it. Depending on the readiness of the recipient, this transmission of energy can trigger stunning experiences of spiritual bliss and cosmic union. For a lucky few, shaktipat may even temporarily spark the stirrings of Kundalini Awakening, which is the actual and only real spiritual transformer that lies dormant within you. Guru Juice can pack a big wallop, far better than any drug. If you experience it, you will immediately know how powerful it is.

**

[Hit the Pause button]

Kundalini

At this point, it is necessary to pause for a few moments and talk about Kundalini.

From my experience and point of view, Kundalini is not some esoteric, inscrutable and mysterious power that only a lucky few get to experience. Kundalini is simply the active, alive, animating and extremely intelligent **life force energy** operating within you. And within everyone else, too. Don't get hung up on the word Kundalini or all the fantastical beliefs that surround it in books and traditions. If you allow yourself to get caught up in the desperate search for 'Kundalini awakening,' you'll find yourself on another spiritual merry-go-round, stuck again in another spiritual enlightenment trap. Like the above-mentioned spiritual belief traps, the perfectly natural Kundalini awakening process has been hijacked, marketed and turned into its

own 'secret program for enlightenment,' requiring teachers and gurus and practices and postures and purifications and diets and chants and meditations, and, and, and...

Kundalini is simply another word for your innate life force energy. This same energy is moving within all living things. Kundalini life force energy has been highly active in you from the moment you were conceived. It is the energy that guided and built you from a microscopic fertilized egg in your mother's womb into a fully grown adult human being. Every moment of your life Kundalini is active inside you, guiding, repairing, rebuilding and sustaining you, always pushing you to evolve further.

Imagine Kundalini (your bioenergetic life force) as water flowing through a faucet, like the one on your kitchen sink. In 99.9% of your normal daily life, Kundalini flows at a mild rate and pressure; let's say 5-10%, sufficient to sustain you in your usual daily activities. Profound insights, joyous experiences, moments of deep love for another... whenever these more intense experiences occur, your Kundalini life force energy inside you will increase significantly, perhaps briefly hitting 20-25%. Kundalini has 'opened its faucet' a little more, instantly amplifying your normal conscious awareness into a temporary state of superconsciousness, which you perceive as a profound new feeling of enhanced awareness, keen insight, animated excitement... you feel wonderful!

In your soulful evolution, all Kundalini-driven superconscious moments progressively evolve you into an overall state of greater spiritual readiness. Spiritual readiness is the combination and sum of sufficient life experience, sufficient deep insight, and sufficient wisdom attained over many lifetimes. It is a matter of soul development. When your soul says it is

ready, then you are ready.

When your spiritual time is right, life will conspire to provide the circumstances and environment necessary that is perfectly suited to your full awakening. Kundalini will naturally and spontaneously 'awaken' within you in a big way. Your conscious life force energy faucet opens to 50%, 75%, maybe even 100%. This radical state of superconsciousness is unprecedented in your life. You have never felt anything like this before, and this massive increase in pure consciousness energy flowing within you stays at this high volume and intensity for hours, maybe days, maybe years without ceasing. It cycles up and down, stronger or softer within you, governed by its own supreme intelligence. Massive blasts of altered states of consciousness, incredible mystical experiences, amazing insights, indescribable joy. From that moment onward, if you remain open, attentive, committed and surrendered to this awakening process occurring within you, your whole life will be radically changed, permanently, in completely unimaginable ways.

The core potential for enlightenment *already resides within you*, waiting for the correct and appropriate time to fully engage. Kundalini is *the one and only* naturally integrated intelligence capable of properly initiating and conducting your own process of awakening. It is not something you need to 'get' from somewhere else, or someone else. You've already got it... but you cannot force it to turn on or off. Remember, it is the conscious life force that created you, that sustains you, that already knows everything about you, because it is you. It is your direct connection to Infinite Consciousness. It is what makes you alive. Only Kundalini is capable of conducting the full, insanely-intricate and exquisitely precise

process of the surgical extraction of your egoic blocks. Kundalini seeks out the blockages, disconnects them, discharges them, dissects them and eliminates them. Nothing else can do this work... not self-improvement practices, not psychological work, not trauma remediation, not regression, hypnosis or any other such therapy. And it is Kundalini, alone, that decides when the job is finished, revealing your permanent establishment in the enlightened, natural state.

**

[Hit the Resume button]

So yes, time spent with a spiritual guru can have its place in your preparatory journey. Couple that with any number of other practices and daily routines that may be happening in the ashram (meditation, chanting, selfless service, better diet and exercise, etc.) and you are in for an exciting time of it. The helpful guidance and reality-exploding experiences can strongly compel you into intense and focused spiritual work.

But the bottom line, as always, is that the final transformative work is done inside you, for you, and only by you. Others can sometimes help a bit along the way, but the time will come when you must say goodbye to the guru. After all your other-and-outside-directed efforts at spiritual awakening, when you are truly ripe, your final step will be to spiritually individuate fully... to go forth by yourself... companion-less, guru-less, savior-less.

That's when you know you are finally standing on the edge. You are being prodded to jump off the cliff; it's now or never.

Pretending You Are Already Enlightened

A fairly recent fad has arisen in Western spiritual circles, loosely based on the original Hindu system called Advaita Vedanta: You are already enlightened and there is nothing you need to do! Every one of us is already enlightened... we just do not realize it. So all you have got to do to get enlightened is... nothing at all. Just realize it. Realize it now. Understand. Believe. Have faith. You are already enlightened. Stop pretending you are not enlightened, and you can start enjoying your enlightened state right now.

Cool! Just *beee-leeeeeve*... and so it is. Amen.

Most people, actually every single person, believes all kinds of things. Beliefs become extremely important to most people, and they cling to their beliefs very, very strongly. They have to, because beliefs tend to be slippery and are inherently impermanent. To hold onto their beliefs, people must reinforce them over and over again.

And it can work! Try it for yourself. Pick out something to believe about yourself... for example, 'I am a very wealthy person, I am rich, loved and admired by everyone.'

Now keep thinking that thought every day, many times a day. Look into a mirror and affirm out loud to yourself as often as you can, 'I am rich! I am loved! I am admired!' Study about rich people and how they achieved it. Find some of them and ask them how they did it. Attend seminars, read books, watch instructional videos. Manifestation in action. Put it all into practice every single day, and never stop your affirmations.

Then comes that morning when you add up your bank ac-

count, your investment portfolio and the stash under your mattress, and viola! Your net worth is now \$1,000,003. A millionaire! You are now rich! A very satisfied smile creeps across your face.

Now that you see how it works, simply apply the same technique to spirituality: 'I am already enlightened!' Affirm it day in and day out. Read about it, study about it, ask about it and practice it every moment of every day. Reframe all your old experiences and every new experience to fit into your new belief system.

Or, forget about all that hard work and take the Direct Path—No Work Necessary™ approach and drop everything right now. Announce to everyone (and command even more strongly to yourself), 'I Am Enlightened!!!'

That's it. You're done.

Right?

Well?

Nothing to do anymore, so you can just sit here groovin' on your new-found enlightenment. Whenever any random thought pops in about enlightenment, such as, "Is this really all there is to it?" ... or, "How should I look and act now that I am enlightened?" ... or, "I don't really feel very enlightened; how am I supposed to feel?" ... or, "Honestly, nothing actually seems any different than it was yesterday, so maybe something is wrong here...?"

Be honest. It's just another belief, like all the other ones you've carried around your entire life. You exchange your previous belief, 'I am a seeker of enlightenment' for the new

belief, 'I am now enlightened.'

This advaita-based belief trap is primarily a mental one. The essence of it is to use mental logic to get to the 'truth' (to determine what actually exists, what is 'real' or not). The methodology is to 'negate' (make false) anything that is possible to negate, which includes pretty much everything. Once you reach the point of mentally negating everything, then you're finished. Enlightened!

Your mind latches onto the advaita concepts, bounces them around tens of thousands of times inside your head, debates them endlessly with others, and the whole paradigm slowly gets cemented in as your new identity. You've found the answer! Now you know!

Your ego feels quite proud of itself, as this new identity feels unassailable. You've got a negating answer always at the ready. The Negator Gun in your holster can shoot down any question or opposing point of view that pops up. You are ready to take on anyone and anything. Quick-Draw De-Claw.

In fact, IMO, Advaita Vedanta is true, correct, accurate. You clearly see that the essence of Advaita Vedanta is accurate and makes perfect sense when you experience it for yourself *after* having awakened. And there's the rub: before the awakening process has cleared the way within you, if you take interest in the concepts of Advaita and really get into it... studying it, believing it, understanding it, comprehending it, absolutely and completely grokking it... none of it really gets you anywhere. You have simply bought into and mastered a new mental philosophy. That's all. And you've mastered it so well that you have thoroughly identified with it. Advaita Vedanta is a very high level, trippy philosophy to

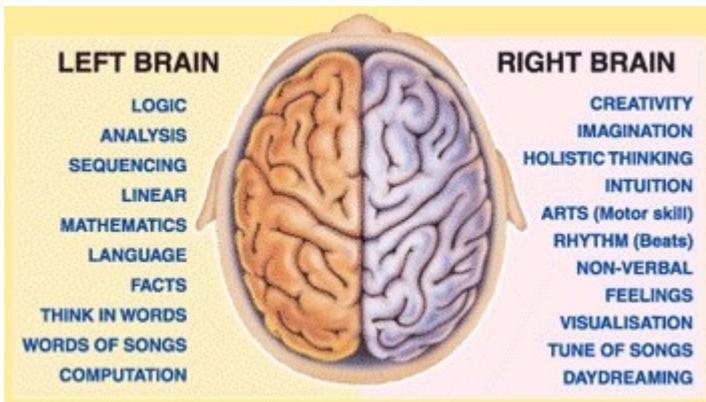
be sure, but when all is said and done, it's only a bunch of words. To know it because you *are* it is a completely different matter.

Privately, deep inside your own mind, you know that this is just another belief system. You *don't* become it because you believe it. You are not enlightened by pretending to convince yourself that you are... logically or otherwise. 'Fake it 'til you make it' doesn't apply here.

Time to stop childishly fantasizing and lying to yourself. Close your eyes, shake your head rapidly back and forth a few times, and snap out of it.

Why Have I Been Doing All of This?

Questions may arise at this point, 'Why have I been doing all of this, all these spiritual practices? Why am I so drawn to them? Where did I learn about them? Why do I trust the person who told me to do them? Why do I believe in the practices themselves? Do I really know if they will give me the results I want? Are any of the personal success stories I see written on the testimonial web pages actually true?'



A big part of the answer is this: With all the practices described above, you are trying to experience, at least temporarily, a much stronger activation, synchronization and integration of the right side of your brain. With full, balanced, synchronized and coherent whole brain function, a whole new and higher reality emerges in your awareness. In other words, as much higher level communication between left and right hemispheres occur, the frontal lobes of the brain are also highly energized and more active. Apparently, according to an insightful researcher Erik Hoffmann¹, the shift is from parietal lobe/left brain dominance to left/right/frontal dominance. This shift has great positive effects on one's overall state of being, and potential spiritual growth.

In the human species, certainly for the vast majority of us currently alive, the traits of the left brain have become dominant. Though the actual ratio of left-handed to right-handed dominant people is about 60:40, nearly everyone is force-trained to be right-handed. Up to 95% of people appear to be right-handed, which generally demonstrates left-brained dominance.

Much of the world has largely accepted and adopted this point of view. For example, virtually all the scientific, legal and technological realms pretty much solely rely on left-brain reality to function... which forces everyone else to tag along, whether they like it or not.

Some investigators suggest that with this overemphasis on left-brained activity, the left brain is not only dominant, but it is also overworked, damaged and impaired. This could be due to many biological and psychological reasons which we won't go into here.² With the left brain having become dominant, and thereby dismissive and repressive of our right

hemisphere reality, the lefts' specific functions have become greatly exaggerated in importance, overwrought and strung out to ridiculous proportions. Your left brain has become your very own ruthless dictator.

The left side of your brain can be viewed as the domineering seat of your ego self. The clever, tricky, deceptive ego has figured out that left brain functions are very useful for its purposes. Right brain processes can always be brought in when needed, but Ego decided to place its throne in the left side of your head.

As the left brain processes 'reality,' it naturally only trusts itself as the final arbiter of that reality. Its cognitive biases, its moral and ethical structures; along with all its cherry-picked supporting evidence for them both as being correct and true... all of this plays perfectly into a nice and tidy self-reinforcing reality. The left brain considers right brain experience as not being equal, trustworthy or dependable, and certainly not capable of being in charge of anything.

You know this because you can feel it. You feel the constant yet vague sense of incompleteness and imbalance that exists inside you. This incompleteness triggers a deep longing for wholeness, for internal balance, for freedom from the tyranny of the constantly chattering, overbearing and judgmental left brain. When you have experienced your right brain being dominant and free, even for only brief periods, those are the times you felt connected, expanded, joyful, creative and in the natural rightness of the Flow state.

These right brain feelings and processes should be occurring regularly, fully integrated within all adults, but they are so severely repressed nearly all of the time that we strongly de-

sire to reunite with them... we crave that sense of Whole Self that we have lost. All of the 'spiritual' practices mentioned above are ways we try to reactivate and reconnect to our right brain, while simultaneously reducing or even shutting down the left side altogether.

For those few of you who already live primarily in the right brain reality, you almost certainly feel yourself to be an alien on this planet. You rarely seem to fit into this world, and the only people you can hang out with are likewise strongly right-brained people. The same question for you, of course, is how right and left brain-balanced are you? Very, very few of us inhabit that sweet spot of balance at all, much less full time.

We try our best to get that balance back, to find that sweet spot, using one or more of the practices I have written about above. The problem is that the tyrannical yet impaired and incomplete left brain always retakes its egoic throne, every time. Your lopsided brain always falls back into it; mostly because the world all around you constantly demands it. You cannot conquer this warped situation; you cannot force its correction by willing it into submission, consciously suppressing it, or beating it down until it stops happening. This brain impairment is something you cannot willfully fix, though you can temporarily minimize the imbalance somewhat by indulging the practices above. Self improvement, psychological and spiritual practices *do* have their effects, and sometimes those effects are quite helpful... if for nothing else than to actually experience what we are truly capable of. Our strong craving to fix what is broken inside our heads will compel us to try everything available to restart our right brain, even if we have no real idea of what

we are doing, or why. We latch onto one spiritual practice after another, convincing ourselves that we are doing the right thing, and we continue to believe it as we go. This convincing-and-believing-routine is what keeps us on the merry-go-round.

Remember, your ego is your dictator and chief executive officer. Ego runs your show. Your ego cannot remove your ego. But you can tilt the playing field such that your devious little ego is exposed to the light and arrayed against itself as much and as often as possible. (That is why I do encourage some of the above practices for those who are seriously seeking, depending on where they are in their process, and their current level of progress.)

Add

All the spiritual practices that you do to transcend your ego-self are inherently 'self'-centered. They require your ego-self as your baseline reference, they consult with the ego-self along the way, they strengthen the ego-self with every step, and in the end they reinforce the ego-self, making it stronger and more in control.

All of these approaches to spirituality and enlightenment are all about trying to improve and perfect the ego by *adding* new beliefs, knowledge and experiences to it. You say to yourself, 'Just a few more years of diligently working at my practice of ____ (fill in the blank), and I will be enlightened.'

And to lock it in permanently, you must practice again and again, habituating your mind and ego to act in this preferred new way. You are trying to erase old habitual mental grooves and replace them with new and improved habitual

mental grooves; new beliefs to replace the old beliefs. New identity to replace the old identity. New morality, new rules, new 'shoulds and should nots' to replace the old ones. In the end you've still got beliefs, rules and morality, and these are the very things that obscure reality, creating illusion.

Beliefs

What are beliefs? Beliefs are untested assumptions, unproven opinions, unverified points of view. Beliefs are not true, they are only believed to be true. Indeed, they are only temporary mental constructs, with no certain truth to them whatsoever. Like pixie dust, they appear, they dazzle, they are believed in and identified with, and then they fade away. Eventually.

Remember your belief in Santa Claus? The Tooth Fairy? True Love?

You can easily verify this for yourself: Are the beliefs you hold today the same beliefs you held one year ago... 3 years ago... 10 years ago... 20 years ago... 50 years ago? Things have changed, yes? If those old beliefs you had were that flimsy and impermanent, why do you believe that your new ones are any better? What will you believe 10 years from now? And most importantly, how will you know that your new beliefs are actually true, or not?

Do you seek Truth? Or do you just seek new and more exciting beliefs to replace the old ones when you get tired of them?

For most people, beliefs are the Stuff of Life; they become the foundation from which we live out all of our days. They are our islands of stability, or so we hope. Religious beliefs,

personal beliefs, career beliefs, political beliefs, social beliefs. Tons of beliefs, all weighing us down, fogging up actual reality so that we can no longer see it or feel it directly. Too many beliefs in the way.

Do you actually need beliefs to survive? Can you live without beliefs? Are you afraid that if suddenly all your beliefs were gone, you would go insane or become an unhinged, evil person?

Since your beliefs are not really known to be true, only secretly and desperately believed to be true, you can never have total trust in them; you never have completely solid footing with them. To deal with this nagging unsure feeling deep down inside, you command yourself to pretend very, very strongly, "My beliefs are true!" When you do that, you feel better. Your faith has been restored. Do that long enough and hard enough and eventually you'll cement your beliefs into place permanently. You'll make yourself literally incapable of believing otherwise; indeed, now you are willing to die for your beliefs. And perhaps you will even go so far as to kill other people for not believing the same as you do.

Notice: Your perceptions and your beliefs *are* you. What you believe in is what makes you you; your beliefs are how you define yourself. They are your identity. *They* are who you are.

Try a belief on for size:

Male, female, black, white, yellow, brown.

Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Muslim, Jew, Atheist, Agnostic.

Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Greenie, Socialist, Nationalist, Anarchist.

Biker, gangster, thug, juvenile delinquent, bad ass, desperado.

Law abider, taxpayer, model citizen, loyalist, patriot.

Doctor, teacher, plumber, farmer, scientist, athlete.

Meditator, vegetarian, eco-crusader, animal rights activist.

Smoker, drinker, gambler, druggie, Anonymous member.

Straight, gay, lesbian, metrosexual, asexual, ad infinitum.

Rich, poor, player, pretender.

Hip, cool, nerd, dimwit.

Bum, hillbilly, sophisticate, oddball.

Pick one from column A, another from column B; or perhaps just pick a few at random. There you go! *New beliefs = new identity = new reality.*

If someone challenges your beliefs (i.e. challenges you and your pretend reality), then you strongly feel that you must defend yourself. The only reason you need to defend your identity and beliefs is because you have very powerful attachments to them.

Attachments are beliefs with very strong emotions tied to them. Emotional energy keeps your beliefs alive, thereby keeping your ego alive, which keeps 'you' - your identity - alive. This is your script; this is the role you play, every day. You are living 24/7 through your beliefs. Likewise, everyone

you see around you is expending nearly all their life energy keeping their own beliefs and scripts energized, acted out and defended every moment of every day.

Phew! Exhausting. Imagine how much human life energy goes into this identity maintenance business. Everyone's doing it, all day, every day. Everyone keeping their egos alive, wearing their costumes, playing their roles, completely in character. Every person unconditionally believes in their own character and script. Everyone also believes that everyone else's character and script is real and authentic, and the Grand Illusion is complete. Everyone validating and reinforcing each others' pretend reality.

BS-Generating Machines

For the most part, human minds are bullshit-generating machines. *We like* living with mountains of BS inside our heads. *We like* to believe in outrageous and absurd spiritual stories, and *we want* to wrap our identity around them, for three main reasons:

- 1) The story often has a solid beginning, reasonable middle and happy ending, which can fit the bill as a believable 'how-to' guide for dealing with life;
- 2) The story usually has the assertion of a divine seal of approval; and
- 3) A whole lot of other people believe the same story, and we like to hang out with other people who sing the same song that we do.

Combined together and gently stirred (not shaken), these three makes us feel more secure inside. Feeling secure feels

good. Put a bunch of believers together, and everyone will feel even better. More secure. More self-righteous. More deluded and stuck in place.

The true spiritual quest begins when you realize that you simply cannot pretend to believe any of this BS any longer. You know there is something more, something bigger than this small thing you currently call your life, which is ruthlessly ruled over by your beliefs. You can no longer stand it. Going along to get along has run its course and is finished. You realize that the belief box you voluntarily (but unconsciously) agreed to live inside is now far too cramped.

Distressed, you suddenly realize that going along and getting along, living the beliefs and dictates of others, is what you have been doing your whole life. Constantly told what to do, how to do it, what to think, how to look, how to dress, how to act, what to believe. Your own unique and bold creative abilities now pretty much snuffed out of existence, you realize you have not had an original, creative thought of your own for a very long time... if ever.

To break out of this box, what is required is to go it alone, to summon up the strength of conviction to break free of what you have always done, what you have always thought, what you have always believed. You have to want it, and *want it bad*. Want it so bad you are willing to drop everything else. Time to turn off the television and computer, throw away your books, your trinkets and your teachers. Time to sharpen your machete and get on with making your own rules and cutting your own path.

When it is time for you to do this, time to remove your perfectly tailored and beautifully accessorized ego straitjacket,

no matter what it takes, then all sorts of things may partially or completely disappear from your life: your career, your marriage, your friends, your money, your health. In other words, all your attachments, everything you believe is important to you. Remember, your beliefs are your identity, and *your identity is your most precious possession*. Everything in your life revolves around your identity, so everything that helps to define, support and maintain this oh-so-carefully constructed persona will have to go... if you are to wake up from your dream state.

Make no mistake; **this is no trivial matter**. In absolute fact, it is the most daunting, terrifying and difficult series of personal battles you will ever take on in your whole life. Breaking through your own egoic BS is muddy, bloody, grueling and exhilarating... permanent self-destruction at its finest. Nothing compares to it, nothing else comes close. Running an ultra-mega-giga marathon, scaling Mt. Everest, overcoming terminal cancer... all are great achievements, but peanuts compared to this.

And when your time does come, when you are ripe for it, you are now clear that this is exactly what you are here to do, exactly what you are built to do, and the only thing remaining to do. Click! The Kundalini-driven awakening process begins.

Your awakening process will require courage you do not think you have. Time after time it will require a paradoxical courage-to-fight and letting-go-into-surrender that you cannot begin to understand. Everyone thinks you have gone insane. This is the culmination. The bell has been rung for your Final Round. It is truly the only game in town.

If you *really* want to break out of this incredible, wonderful and bizarre ego-saturated game we are all playing with ourselves and with each other, the answer is not to add to the character, not to add to the script. Not to add more new-and-improved beliefs, knowledge, practices, purity, or anything else.

Subtract

The answer is to subtract. Subtract everything. Question, examine, scrutinize, test, remove, burn away, jettison, detoxify, eradicate, dis-integrate and eliminate both your character and your script, and *all the beliefs that created them*. Kundalini will drive this process, in the exact sequence and intensity necessary to do the job right. As this happens, beliefs falling away one by one, or even whole chunks at a time, all the emotional circuits firmly attached to them will release their stuck, pent-up energy which will quickly flow through and out of your body. You will literally feel this happening within you.

Simultaneously, as beliefs are dissolved and their pent-up energy purged, a rewiring, rejuvenating and strengthening process occurs in your nervous system, hormonal system and other body systems. Your subtle bodies will be reworked in ways you can barely perceive. All this is done so that the new, higher and stronger energies you will soon experience within can be conducted and channeled without frying your circuits.

The awakening process is an amazing process – extremely challenging, unstoppable, and, in the end, totally liberating. Once you are free of all these internal encumbrances, you shall see clearly, and live an ongoing life of clarity:

Vida Clara. The Clear Life.

Bottom line: *You do not try or hope or expect to get enlightened with practices, purifications or anything else. Instead, you examine and strip away everything you carry around within you that creates illusion. Once you are done with that, enlightened awareness is what remains.* Truth alone is. As you truly are. As you always have been, but previously could not see it or feel it.

How does this happen?

Do It

When it comes to waking up and staying awake, how successful you will be *directly depends* on how willing you are to face the truth about yourself; to not quit, not distract yourself, not run away. You must show up for the Process, every time, without fail. You must stay with it, no matter what. You must utterly surrender yourself to That which is far bigger and greater than you. And you must clean up your mess after every battle and successful breakthrough.

Directed by the Kundalini life force power within you, you use your mind and your inner conviction ruthlessly, like an ultra-sharp knife, to slice and dice every single belief you hold to be true. Challenge every single belief, opinion and assumption that makes you who you think you are. Challenge what you call yourself - doctor, teacher, athlete, artist; catholic, protestant, muslim, jew; believer, agnostic, atheist - and the assigned, believed and accepted roles you play as these characters.

What roles are you playing today? Why do you play them? Whose rules are you following anyway? Your own roles and

rules or someone else's roles and rules? Does following the roles and rules that other people demand of you make you feel good inside? Do you feel real, do you feel authentic? Are you... the real you?

Challenge your secret cherished beliefs about the kind of person you believe you really are. Do you consider yourself a nice guy, a sweet gal? Think you are smart and beautiful? Think you are ugly and sickly; wild and crazy; cultured, refined, or obnoxious? Who says so? Who told you these things? What sales pitch sold you on these beliefs? How did you sell yourself?

Do you look into the mirror and tell yourself these things? Why do you believe them? Why do other people and their opinions matter? Why does your opinion matter? Your opinion is based on what, another belief?

Where is all of this coming from? Why do you do this?

Peeled Away

Take away your name, your career, your relationships, your smart phone, your bank accounts and your credit cards. What remains? Who are you without these identifiers, these crutches?

Let's take it to the limit. Imagine you've just gotten bonked on the head real hard and now have total amnesia – you don't remember *anything* about your past. Now here you are, a week later, a healthy functioning adult human being with a big bump on your head and zero past history. No name. No job. No family. No address. No identity.

No nothing. You don't remember a thing. Don't know who

you are, what you are, where you are, when you are, why you are or even how you are.

Nevertheless, here you are! Aliveness is happening... Awareness Exists. But, do you still exist? Does your ego self identity still exist? Who do you think you are? What does it feel like to have zero identity, in the midst of surroundings that are strangely familiar yet unidentifiable? How does it feel to be 'no one'?

Now what? What do you know for sure? What remains? What is your identity? Who am I? What, exactly, is this thing called me?

Afraid

When you finally come to intensely examine your own self, your own beliefs, the way you see things and the way you do things, you realize it is all vanity, all pretend, all fake, all BS. You make it all up about yourself as you go along, or perhaps you follow the lead and instruction of someone else... and now you see that all of it is pointless posturing. *You are an impostor.*

When you grab hold and violently shake the walls of your rickety house of ego, it is all gonna start falling down on your head. And when that happens you will feel fear, and feel it hard. It will grab you and shake you right back. It will stun you, shock you and overwhelm you; it'll knock you to your knees. You have never known such terror. Abject fear and panic is what happens when you believe you cannot handle this stark realization about yourself. You are afraid that you cannot make it through this mental breakdown... and the truth is, you might not.

But if you have come this far, your chances are good. You now know what your beliefs really are: made-up illusions. And fear of failure is just another belief.

Your unique, personal, natural, majestic, Grand Intelligence-guided Kundalini awakening process carefully strips away all of this belief and identity crap. It will take time - years. You fully let go, and Divine Intelligence takes the wheel. *It* is now in charge, and *It* is what runs this show. Do your best to stay with it, surrender to it, especially in the early stages, when the whole Process is severely freaking you out.

If it is truly the right time for you, for this Process, then you really have no choice; there is no backing out. In fact, deep down, you welcome it, you crave it.

Along the way through the process, more and more, you notice the little voice of authenticity deep inside you is now strong, fierce and unwavering. It is raising hell! Now is the time. Latch onto that voice, merge with it, act on it. With its help, your way through, battle after personal battle, always becomes clear.

Days, weeks, months, and many more months are spent in this process: facing yourself, facing your beliefs, your assumptions, your loves, hates, prejudices, judgments, opinions and all the rest, one after another after another. Relentlessly the hidden pieces of your false persona come up for examination, judgment and execution. You will celebrate victories, grieve losses, recover from nuclear explosions of personal annihilation. Small pieces of you... big pieces of you breaking off, burning up, disintegrating into nothingness. After each personal battle you stop, turn around to see what remains, and there's nothing there. Mountains of beliefs and

BS inside you simply disappear, permanently. On and on it goes. You are exhilarated, exhausted; awe-struck, amazed, spent. Time and time again you feel you cannot go on. You summon up the courage to take another step forward. Your resolve is strong; damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.

Then comes that one fine day when, totally unexpectedly, it all stops. The final obstructing layer of your identity detaches, falls down, crashes and burns. Stunned silence and perfect clarity take over.

The Process is complete. It is done. It is finished. What seemed like a personal war that would never end; what pushed you past your known limits time after time; what you firmly committed to take on, and see through to the end, even if it literally kills you... it all suddenly just stops.

The Other Side

Now standing on the other side, you look back across and realize... there is no other side. Where you came from is... gone. All that you thought you were is... gone. Where you are now is... unknown and uncharted territory.

You stand, awestruck, and breathe it all in.

Now you begin a new life. Now you explore a new world. Now you feel utterly open, hollow, without substance... yet expanded beyond all boundary, fully merged and fused with all that is. You cannot explain it, you cannot wrap your brain around it, but you have never been more certain of anything in your entire life: You are home. And you are free.

On Good Authority

Enlightenment requires no special knowledge, requires no esoteric practices, requires no bizarre beliefs. It only requires ridding yourself of that which obscures clear perception, that which blocks clear seeing and understanding. If the time is right for you, the immense power and intelligence of your full Kundalini life force will ignite. Under its insistence and its guidance, as you begin to intensely challenge yourself, soon you will see how you created your filters, you created your illusions, you created your beliefs about who you think you are and who you thought you wanted to be.

Subtract all of this and what remains is what you truly are.

Enlightenment is utterly and completely about asking yourself your own questions and getting your own answers, for yourself, by yourself. *Ultimately, you must be your own authority in all things spiritual.*

There is no group or collective awakening. It is always and only a solo undertaking.

In preparation for this process, you may need to spend considerable time, maybe lifetimes, seeking outside experts for help. You will have a million spiritual questions, and so you look to exalted masters and their teachings for spiritual answers. Soon enough, however, you'll realize that what you now have is an even bigger head-full of second-hand information, opinion and advice; aka: More Beliefs.

Also along the way, you may feel the deep need to give yourself over to some cause, some faith, some guru, or some practice. In other words, you are so overwhelmed that

you feel the only way out is to stop trusting yourself, and place your full trust in someone or something else. You may feel a desperate need to experience the bliss and love of the guru, the wisdom and certainty of the sage, the ecstasy and connection of the twin soul. These are all wonderful and exciting glimpses of what lies ahead, but they are all temporary. Eventually you will get severely frustrated with all of them. Your frustration will hit the breaking point; at that precise moment you will nullify everyone and everything 'out there' and make the Grand U-Turn back into yourself. It is now time to directly confront yourself – head-on, full speed, no brakes. What you now seek is That which is Permanent, Unmovable, Unshakable.

No One Else

In this very personal and very crucial quest, the bottom line is that you can rely on no one else. You must make the decisions. You must make the choices. You must summon the courage. You must let go and surrender. Above it all you must remain resolute. There is no other option, no other way. Ultimately, every other approach is a left turn to nowhere; every practice, book, religious figure and guru a dead end street.

At this critical stage in the Process, accepting answers from anyone else makes you lazy. Doing so will only weaken your own ability to find your own answers. One by one, you will find yourself casting aside all books, beliefs, theories, practices, scholars, priests, gurus and deities... and commit to finding your own answers from within. In the final analysis, you – your mind, your heart and your desire are all you need for this journey; no other person, thing or practice is re-

quired.

Never forget that *the power to begin, carry out and complete the Awakening Process is already inside you*. It is the vast intelligence and wisdom of your innate Life Force. This same Life Force is inside every one of us. This incredible power, your Kundalini, is what created you. Kundalini is also what created the false self, your ego-self, for purposes you do not yet understand. When you are ready, and the illusion of ego-self has fully served its purpose, Kundalini will very carefully and surgically remove layer upon layer of your false self, escorting you home. This occurs when you are ripe, your soul is ripe and the time is right. You cannot force this magnificent process. But when it occurs, Trust It. Totally. Implicitly.

'Believe nothing just because a so-called wise person said it. Believe nothing just because a belief is generally held. Believe nothing just because it is said in ancient books. Believe nothing just because it is said to be of divine origin. Believe nothing just because someone else believes it.

Believe only what you yourself test and judge to be true.'- Buddha

You *can* do this. You *will* do this. If every Enlightened One throughout history did it, then you can do it. If it is truly time for you, then you can rest assured that you are sufficiently prepared; ready, willing and able... even if you find yourself wide-eyed, freaked out and shaking in your boots. You cannot see what lies ahead, yet you summon up the courage and walk boldly forward anyway.

If you are *not* ready for this, you will find endless fault and error with what I have written above. That is good, and nec-

essary. Pick at it, examine it, tear it apart. Prove to yourself that I am wrong. Prove it to me. Let me know what you find.

If you *are* ready for this, then you will know it because everything stated above rings true, even if some parts of you may still strongly resist.

My call to you is to get going. Now. Nothing in this world matters compared to this. And nothing else in this reality will ever make sense until this is done. After it is done, and you are done, you will see. And you will know.

Sharpen your blade. Lock and load. Saddle up, jump on your horse and ride. Ride straight and ride hard. Keep going. Always further. Stop for nothing, burn your bridges, take no prisoners and never look back.

You literally cannot imagine what awaits you.



Footnotes

1. See newbrainnewworld.com, a concise website detailing the work and insights of Erik Hoffmann regarding whole-brain function, kundalini and awakening.

2. Very fascinating and profound insights about the human brain, with its aberrant imbalances and malfunctioning can be seen in the work of Tony Wright and his book: *Return to the Brain of Eden: Restoring the Connection between Neurochemistry and Consciousness*, and his video channel here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsALCqrjX38PD_7ko-h7WwKQ

Another fascinating experience is recounted in Jill Bolte Taylor's book and video: *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*

And her video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyyjU8fzEYU>

A short quote from Jill, as she describe the essence of her awakened right-brain reality: '... open to the eternal flow whereby I exist at one with the universe. It is the seat of my divine mind, the knower, the wise woman, and the observer. It is my intuition and higher consciousness.'