

## Why Be Duped Into Dissatisfaction?

So, I thought tonight we would continue with our reading of the *Ashtavakra Samhita*. This is probably the last reading until after the retreat, and I think it's good preparation for the retreat if we can really grok what is being transmitted in this extraordinary text.

I think we're up to chapter two, and this chapter is titled “The Joy of Self-Realization,” although I don't see the Sanskrit of that anywhere. I don't think the chapters had titles in the original. Usually everything that's in the actual text is first in Sanskrit and this is not, so I assume it's a later interpretation of the chapter by whoever did this translation. And it's an odd translation for one reason: the word *joy* never appears in this chapter. There is one appearance of a word that's translated as *bliss*, but it's not actually that in the Sanskrit. So that's also somewhat anomalous.

Self-realization certainly is joyous, and there's no doubt about that joy. Anyone who attains Self-realization has no doubt that great joy (in fact, *mahasukha*) is an inherent attribute of the state of the Real Self. But it's not expressed. It's there in a way between the lines. So let's look at the lines because they are very interesting.

The last chapter was the sage Ashtavakra speaking. This chapter is his disciple, King Janaka, speaking in response to the teaching of the previous chapter; and he's saying, basically, “I get it, I realize the Self.” He says, “Aho” [very similar to the *emaho* of the Buddhists—in fact, identical] . . . “Aho, I am [it's translated as ‘I am spotless,’ but what it really means is ‘I am without malas, without maya.’ I am without any identification with a body or a person. I'm free of that stain of mistaken identity which comes with a huge amount of baggage [as we all know firsthand, I'm sure].” So he's saying he's free of that. “I am tranquil.” The word in Sanskrit is actually *shanta*, which can mean “tranquil,” but it can also mean “silent” and “still” and “peaceful.” But mostly it's the inner silence that brings the tranquility. “And I am pure consciousness” (consciousness here as *bodha*). So, in other words, Buddha, Buddha-Mind has been realized—if you want to use, let's say, the rival approach to understanding the state of nonduality. But it's important to understand that it is through the realization of the Self that the consciousness has become pure.

And he says “beyond nature [beyond *prakriti*].” *Prakriti* is the body, but *prakriti* is also the thinking apparatus. And in the Samkhya system of duality of *prakriti* and *purusha*, *purusha* is the pure spirit—not the mind that thinks, but the pure consciousness. So what he's saying is that he's beyond *prakriti*, which means he was never born; he realizes he is uncreated spirit. And then he ends this *shloka* (or this transmission) by saying, “All this time I have been merely duped by illusion.” OK? So what does he mean “all this time”? He means until he met Ashtavakra and received these teachings and he got it—until then he was duped. Duped by whom? We could say in duality he was duped by his ego, but didn't he dupe himself into wanting to believe he was the person (the character) that his consciousness was enacting?

Now, one can understand his attachment to the character. In his case, he's a king; he's very powerful, very wealthy; he has the power of life and death over his subjects; this guy is a big shot. And he now realizes he ain't the king. Only the Absolute Self is the King, is the Lord. He is nothing and yet everything. But he is not the person he took himself to be, and that's what brings the joy of Self-realization. You're not the person you think you are and whom you experience as suffering, because there's no such thing as an ego who isn't suffering. That's why there's joy when you realize you're not the ego.

And what is the actual content of this duping? It's the belief that you are the body and the very limited consciousness of that body that has a personality and attitudes and karma—a past, a shadow, a subconscious full of nigredo (full of dark unpleasant secrets). If you are in the ego, you are split (fragmented internally and in a war with yourself), and that internal war is projected out into the world. Therefore, if you are in ego consciousness—if you are duping yourself, if you're not Self-realized—you are going to project that you are in a world that is causing your suffering, a world that has brought you unhappiness and continues to bring you unhappiness. You're duped because you don't recognize that this is your dream. It's not the actual world that causes any unhappiness, or the situation you are in in the world, or the situation you are in in terms of the state of the body. The ego is suffering because it is projecting its own shadow.

The problem with the ego (and the reason it's not in a state of joy) is that joy comes from love. It's love that produces joy, and the ego has no love. So the ego will tend to project that it's in a world that has no love. And wherever it goes it will criticize that place and those people for not being loving enough, without recognizing that it's its own lack of love that is causing that projection to take hold. That will haunt it wherever it goes because it's not something external. It's a lack of love in your own heart—for yourself, for the world, for the Self, for God (who is the source of love)—because you're cut off from that. And because it's cut off from that, the ego is in a state of paranoia—not *metanoia*, which it would be in if it was in love of God.

So the ego (being loveless) projects a world that lacks beauty, because love also triggers the realization of how beautiful it all is. Egos can't see it. Egos can only critique it and wish it was more beautiful. They look in the mirror and they criticize their own body; they criticize others; they criticize whatever, because criticism becomes the fuel of the ego. The ego lives on anger and sadness and wishing things were different. It feeds its world-weariness and its nihilistic tendencies with its projection of its own darkness into the world. This is the problem of why there is no joy in Mudville (you know, in the ninth inning in the world, if you remember that old poem). So our job, and the reason people should be living in an ashram, is to stop duping ourselves. (I hope everyone here is no longer duping yourself, because otherwise you won't be happy.)

OK, second shloka. I'll read more quickly now because he goes through simply a cascade of similar revelations. “As I alone reveal this body, even so do I reveal this world.” Why? Because it's my dream. So therefore, I am the one who reveals it to myself. “Therefore, mine is all of this world or verily nothing is mine.” Nothing because there actually is no world; it's only your projection; it's only a reflection of the shadow of the ego if you're seeing through the ego. If you're in Self-realized consciousness, you're seeing the infinite beauty of the God-Self in its explicate order from your place in the implicate order, and the nonduality of both is realized. So you are everything and nothing, and you have everything and nothing.

And then he says, “Aho! Having renounced the world together with the body, I now perceive the Supreme Self through the secret of wisdom.” OK, so what's the secret of wisdom? It is the renunciation of identity with the body and its operating system. That's the secret, but it's an open secret. It's constantly told and somehow never (or rarely) internalized. Then he goes on to explain how that is: “As the waves and the foam and the bubbles are not different from the ocean, all is water, so the universe emanating from the Self is not different from it.” The world and the Self are one.

And then, in shloka number five, “Just as cloth, when analyzed, is found to be nothing but thread; so this universe, when analyzed, is nothing but consciousness, the Self. . . . Just as sugar generated in sugarcane juice is wholly pervaded by that juice, so the universe produced in me (in the Self, by the Self) is permeated by the Self through and through.” So if there is sweetness in the Self, one will perceive sweetness in the world. If there's bitterness in the subjectivity, then the world will produce that bitterness.

Shloka number seven: “The world appears from the ignorance of the Self, and it disappears with the knowledge of the Self, just as a snake appears from the non-cognition of the rope [that it really is] and it disappears with the recognition that there's no snake, only a rope.” So, you realize there never was an ego, there is only the Self. Even if the Self is duping itself, it's still nothing but the Self. The Self likes to play hide-and-seek with itself, but it never stops being the Self. And, when the Self is realized, there's no world because there never was.

Shloka number eight: He says, “Light is my very nature. I am no other than Light. When the world manifests itself, verily then it is I that shine.” In the East, they generally speak of God as light; in the West, it's more God as love. But the two are not really different because the light of pure consciousness that creates the illusion of the world does it out of love. It creates a world of beauty if you see it as the divine light that all of this really is . . . if you understand that this world is made of the light and the intelligence of God, it's perfect just as it is, and you are not the mere character who is perceiving it from within it but you are also beyond it.

Then in the ninth shloka he says, “Aho, the universe appears in me conceived through ignorance, just as silver seems to appear in the mother of pearl, or a snake in the rope, or water in the sunbeam [the mirage].” He's basically repeating this—it's just an error, an optical illusion. “And just as a jug dissolves into clay [it's made of clay, it'll break into clay], a wave dissolves into water, and a bracelet dissolves into gold, so the universe which has emanated from me will dissolve back into me.” So think of the world as your dream, and it's your dream within a dream because each node of consciousness has its private dream within a common dream. The common dream is mostly the shared quantum wave functions collapsed in a certain way. But the subjectivity (the private dream) is the qualium waves that create the sanskaras that cause you to see something with a particular attitude toward it that creates an illusion that is personal to that node of consciousness. But all of it is the same, the same light.

And then in shloka number 11 he says, “Wonderful . . . [it's still *aho*, but now it's translated as “wonderful] . . . *aho aham* [“Wonderful am I,” if you want to do that. But it means, “How great I am, I adore myself.” This is not narcissism, you have to understand that. It sort of seems like it (and they don't even capitalize Self here, but they should). “Adoration to the God-Self who knows no decay and survives [I would say, “is”] even after the destruction of the world and is beyond Brahma down to a clump of grass or anything that appears.” So the entire dream of the cosmos is in your mind. And all the end of time is that moment when you withdraw your attention from the dream and—poof!—the dream is no more. It never was, and all there is is the awakened light of consciousness in its pure potentiality again. That's the moment we're heading toward, the Omega Point that is the Alpha Point of a new creation.

Then he goes on in shloka number 12, the same: “Wonderful am I, adoration to the Self who is through with the body and realizes the Oneness, who neither goes anywhere nor came from anywhere but abides pervading the universe.”

Shloka 13: “Aho, wonderful am I, adoration to myself. There is none so capable as I, who am bearing the universe for all eternity but without touching it.” So the universe is an appearance within the consciousness, but you never touch that consciousness. You are made of it, but you can't touch it because you're non-different from it.

Shloka 15: “Knowledge, knower, and the knowable—these three do not actually exist [because they emerge in the illusion]. I am that stainless self in which this triad appears only through ignorance.”

Shloka 16: “Aho, the root of misery is duality. There is no other remedy for it except the realization that all objects of experience are unreal and that I am one pure unitive consciousness and I am [here it says] *bliss*.” But the Sanskrit word is not *ananda*, it's not *sukha*; the word that is used is *rasa*. That is interesting because *rasa* technically means taste, right? But it is used in these nondual texts as the taste of God-Consciousness—the feeling of it, the energy of it, the raw power of it. And the taste is also the aesthetic sense, the awesome beauty of it that is directly perceived as the beauty of the Self. So it is in that (let's say) aesthetic sublimation channel that the upper death drive works to bring one from the ego self-duped state into the Self-realized state of total Self-adoration, because there is love of one's own infinite beauty expressed as the beauty of every being for whom there is unconditional love—not for their ego, but for the realization of the Self that is behind the ego of every being and directly perceived. Egos are not perceived; only the Self is perceived by the Self.

So we'll read a few more in this chapter, maybe we'll get to finish it.

Shloka 17: “I am pure consciousness. Through ignorance I have imposed limitations upon myself. But constantly reflecting about this, I abide in the Absolute.” So, in other words, the sadhana that King Janaka has performed very rapidly is simply the reflection that what I am is pure consciousness and there can be no limitations in consciousness. It has no boundaries. Try to find the boundary of your consciousness. Try to find a limit to its depth. Try to find a limit to its intelligence, to its joy, to its love. Once you're outside the frame of reference of the ego (which limits your ability to feel love and joy and to perceive beauty, etc.), that's all you perceive. That's all there is. And that's why there is joy in Self-realization.

And his shloka 18 comment: “I have neither bondage nor freedom [because he was never in bondage so he didn't need to be free]. Having lost its support, the illusion has ceased . . .” (the illusion of the ego, which is also the illusion of the world, because the ego and the world are one—its world, its perception of its circumstances, let's put it that way). The ego and its circumstances are a single projection, but he no longer supports that illusion, that projection. He has stopped supporting the belief in being the character. The illusion ceases the moment you do not give it the energy of your own belief, your own attachment to that state of being duped. “Oh [he says], the *vishva* [which is translated here as *universe*, but it's *world*] . . . the world, though it appears in my consciousness, does not actually exist in a reality outside my consciousness.” So the world is only my consciousness.

Shloka 19: “I have known for certain that the body and the world are nothing [they're not real; they're not actual things, because there's only the light of consciousness] and that the Self is pure awareness alone. So on what is it now possible to base any imaginary constructs?” All illusions fall away once you realize that the world is your own dream. And once you recognize that, if the world is giving you back information of a kind that is

producing suffering, it's obvious that you're duping yourself. You're not seeing the world as it is; you're seeing sanskaras, stains, illusion; you're not seeing the Real; your third eye is not open. That's how you tell if you're Self-realized. It's very simple; and, once that is realized, there is no more imaginary register of consciousness. No more are you a subject in a world of objects that disappears.

So then he says in shloka number 20: “Body, heaven and hell, bondage and freedom, fear, all these are just mere imagination. What have I to do with all these—I, whose nature is pure consciousness?”

In shloka 21, he says, “Aho, I do not find any duality anywhere. Even the multitude of human beings, therefore, has become [here it says, ‘like a *wilderness*,’ but I think he means ‘like a *desert*.’]” In other words, I realize there's no one here because everyone is a dream figure. There is only the Self, the Self in all its possibilities of permutations of beauty (of ways that the infinite beauty of the Real can play—including as ignorance, including as ugliness, including as darkness, including as demonic tendencies—and yet it's all beautiful). So it's that unconditional capacity to see the Self in all that brings the joy of Self-realization. And he says then, “Because there is nothing but the Self, to what or whom should I become attached?” There's nothing real besides the Self.

And then he says in shloka 22, :”I am not the body, nor do I have a body. I am not the *jiva*, [meaning the ego character who is operating the body], but I am the pure awareness that is beyond all qualities. This indeed was my bondage, that I had a thirst for life.” That's interesting, a thirst for life—life as an ego. I had a thirst to dupe myself so that I could have a life as a body in a world and feel the intensity of the jouissance that that could occasionally bring (but at the price of suffering, boredom, criticism, anger, etc.). So that thirst has now disappeared because there is eternal life in the Self. Why have a life that leads to death when you can have life that is free of that duality?

And then in shloka 23 he says, “Aho, in me [in the Self]—the limitless ocean of consciousness—when the wind of the mind rises, it creates diverse waves that create the illusion of worlds that are forthwith produced.” But they are all produced by the waves of my own consciousness because those waves have a desire, a thirst for experience. Thus, worlds in which I feel I am someone who is living become the content of my dream.

Then he says in shloka 24, “With the calming of the wind of the mind in the infinite ocean of myself, the ark of the universe [which means the ship, the ark is the boat, right? Noah's Ark, the ark of the universe] . . . unfortunately for the *jiva*, who is a merchant traveling on that ship, that ark meets destruction.” It sinks in the ocean because it was never real. If you want the ark of your suffering ego to sink so that you can become the tranquil blissful ocean of consciousness again, it's good news; otherwise, it's bad news.

And then he says, in shloka 25, “How wonderful! In me, the shoreless ocean, the waves of individual selves rise, strike (each other), play for a time and disappear, each according to its nature.” But it's all a play . . . it's a play . . . it's literally a play—a play written by the great Shiva Sheikh Trishula. (Trishula is his spear. So he's Sheikh Spear; but it's a three-pronged spear and that means the play can be either a tragedy, a comedy, or a scientific study of reality and all of its absurdity.)

That's chapter two, and I would say the essence is in the first shloka, in which he says that the key is no longer duping yourself into believing you're the character. You don't have to do anything else—you don't have to improve the character, you don't have to make it more saintly or more open to perceiving beauty or being friendly or whatever it is your character lacks. You don't need to do any of that. All you have to do is drop your identification with it, and the Self is realized with all of its perfection immediately. So why take the gradual path?

Now it's interesting and, in line with that, I was reading a book recently called *Zen in Therapy*, if anyone's interested. It's not a bad book by Manu Bazzano; and, in the epigraph of the book, I found this quote, which was very interesting. Let's see if I can find it.

This happens in 2016. A man named Prince Charles (who has now taken the throne because he got promoted since then, and I suppose he's the head of the Anglican Church as well now) . . . but anyway, he visited Japan. And there's a little story here:

*Prince Charles, questioning a monk in Kyoto about the road to enlightenment, was asked in reply if he could ever forget that he was a prince. "Of course not," Prince Charles replied, "One is always aware of it. One is always aware one's a prince."*

*"In that case," said the monk, "he would never know the road to enlightenment."*

So, I think that sums it up for all of you princely souls out there. That seems to be the one thing that you will never stop being aware of, that character that you're playing and that you seem to be completely obsessed with and attached to and unwilling to transcend. The solution is simple, but (obviously) the ego cannot transcend itself. It's impossible. It's not part of the repertoire of an ego to realize that it's not Real, that it's fictional. But the You who is playing the part of the ego knows that your ego is fictional. You do know it (everyone knows it), and that's why they say, at the final judgment, you won't have any defense of ignorance. You knew it, but you didn't want to know it. You suppressed that information so you could continue to have the jouissance of your suffering. Don't complain that you didn't get the grace of God and you weren't raptured up in the light at the end, because you've chosen to stay grounded in a false identity.

But your soul knows better (every soul knows better). Every soul knows the source of consciousness is not the body. "I was conscious before I was born." Everyone knows there were other lifetimes. The soul exists after death; there's hardly anyone now who doesn't realize that. There's so much evidence from the near-death experiences, etc. Everyone's had out-of-body or paranormal experiences and has experienced states of consciousness beyond the ego. It's known and yet it remains denied. And in a sense this is the Zen koan, I think, for every ego. "Why? Why deny myself the bliss, the joy of Self-realization? Why continue to dupe myself? Why not choose what is Real and be free?"

Namaste,  
Shunyamurti