



The Bliss Beyond Bliss

Our true nature is bliss, yet there are different interpretations as to what this statement really means, and there is even a concept that the experience of bliss is still a part of illusion. For instance, in some Hindu scriptures the nature of reality is described as 'attribute-less', possessing no characteristics. Here the assumption is that any attributes – even love, consciousness, or bliss – would refer to a lower level of reality. They perceive bliss as the final barrier to realizing the pure nature of existence.

Before we question this view, we need to remember the context in which this concept was developed – the context of non-dual philosophy. Their reasoning is determined by the preconception that there is no individuality; hence there is no one realizing reality. In fact, in their view it is only when the illusion of being 'somebody' is dropped that the nature of reality reveals itself. But, to whom? To itself? Why does it need to reveal itself to itself? Well, non-dual philosophy always has some witty way to get out of these paradoxes, or does it? If we were to follow consistently the logic of non-duality, we would need to consider self-realization as being itself an illusion since there is no one realizing anything. And logic of that sort may appear very witty to those with untrained minds, but what it indicates is in fact a low level of intelligence that is unable to grasp the paradoxical nature of existence. It is an anti-intuitive interpretation of reality drawn entirely by the left, linear part of the brain. Many of the conclusions drawn by different traditions are mere rationalizations of their original assumptions. But even if the conclusion seems convincing, when the assumption is flawed, the conclusion that is based on it is even worse. It is like following a broken compass.

There is the nature of reality as a whole, and there is *our* true nature. These two dimensions are intertwined yet different. It needs to be clear that we cannot conceive of what reality is without taking into account the one who realizes it, our own self. In the end, it is the intricate combination and reunion of these two dimensions that constitutes the nature of our realization. In order for our soul to be properly actualized, she must arrive at unity with the divine, for she can become her true self only in the context of samadhi in the inner realm. On the other hand, our realization of the ultimate is, by default, conditioned by who we are as the realizing subject. If we are ignorant, we cannot even imagine what is out there beyond our own mind. Only when the true nature of our soul is actualized can our eyes open to see reality as it is; our consciousness becomes the eyes of god looking into himself.

Things are not always what they seem. It is not bliss that is the final barrier to realizing the ultimate reality which possesses no attributes. It is being attached to the state of emptiness that is the last barrier to bliss. The absence of bliss is an indication of our separation from reality. One who has entered the inner void may perceive it as having no attributes if his realization lacks surrender – he is still an outsider in the inner realm.

The secret of self-realization is not merely to open the space to the inner but to merge with the beyond, while at the same time awakening and embodying our sacred individuality, who we really are. It is however possible to merge with the beyond and bypass the realization of who one is. This is a case of realization of god without realization of the soul. The soul is there as the subject to the experience of unity with the inner realm, but she is not conscious of herself. Not being conscious of herself, she is unable to relate properly to the beyond. This is the major flaw of the non-dual path.

Before we go deeper into understanding of what bliss is, we must be aware that there are many false states of bliss. Illusory bliss is produced by me, by how me interprets an experience – in this case, our me feels blissful. The interpretation of how me feels is relative to its intelligence and sensitivity. Some people are miserable, but they think they feel splendid. Others, who are the complaining type, may feel relatively okay but keep whining about how hard their life is. It is interesting to see the extent to which how we feel is determined by our interpretation of how we feel. Is how we feel in any way objective, or is it just a result of our subjective translation?

One of the reasons why many people refuse to enter the spiritual path is that they think that they are doing just fine the way they are; they refuse to admit that they are in pain. Does it mean that they are not suffering just because they don't recognize it? Everybody suffers even if they are content with their outer life, but it takes sensitivity to register and identify this suffering. The capacity of me to verify how it feels is very limited; it is like someone on drugs, too confused to know what is going on. The truth lies deeper. It is only how our soul feels that can determine our well-being. It is her interpretation that is truly objective. Me can be 'happy', but the soul is in deep pain. This is something that we encounter every day, seeing it in the eyes and hearts of all people. They are not sensitive enough to register how they really feel because they have no soul. And there are cases when the soul feels fulfilled, but me is not able to recognize it, unable to feel gratitude and appreciation.



True bliss is independent from me and how it interprets our inner reality. To be in that bliss is like being submerged in the ocean. You cannot deny it. No matter how you translate your experience, whether you are smart or a fool, you know doubtlessly that you are in that ocean; it is self-evident. Of course, if a person is mad he can deny everything, but then mad people would not arrive at the state of true bliss.

Although true bliss is our nature, there are degrees to the bliss that one can experience before reaching the state of pure bliss. These degrees of bliss should not be confused with various experiences of false bliss. False bliss is not spiritually positive; it is just a distraction. On the other side, relative bliss is real but incomplete. The unfoldment of bliss is directly related to the awakening of our true self; therefore it can only be understood in the context of our holistic evolution. For our evolution to truly begin, we need to first awaken the light of I am. I am is our connection to reality. However, awakening of I am alone does not constitute the experience of pure bliss. One might feel blissful having access to I am, but it is just an interpretation from me of something that it cannot embody. Having access to I am alone without being merged with it has more the characteristic of neutrality than bliss; its function is to open the space for me to surrender into. Whatever awakening one experiences – whether of consciousness, being, or heart – it is not bliss.

The first dimension of bliss manifests through unification of me and I am. It is their unity that opens the energy of bliss. I am is indeed the light of creation, but unless it is embodied by me, it leaves us unfulfilled. From the standpoint of me, I am is an objective space, external to our human identity. Only when I am becomes realized as our higher self, through surrender of me, can it be identified as our universal subjectivity. As there are three dimensions of I am, so there are three dimensions of bliss that manifest when me is merged in consciousness, heart, and being. When they speak in Zen about the clear mind or state of serenity, they refer to the bliss of consciousness. Consciousness becomes serene when the duality between me and I am is dissolved. The bliss of the heart has a different flavor, and so does the bliss of being, each one representing a very specific dimension of bliss. Consciousness is the clarity aspect of bliss, heart is the love aspect, and being is the repose aspect of bliss. In their unison, the three aspects of bliss give rise to one state of bliss, the bliss of the soul.

The second dimension of bliss manifests through the absorption of our whole soul in the dimension of absence, in the absolute. One becomes absorbed in the inner void, the state prior to being, the original ground of creation. The soul merges through her surrender from her three centers into the beyond. Her surrender results in arriving at the condition of samadhi, which is the unification of presence with absence, being with non-being. Samadhi is the higher dimension of bliss where the soul becomes one with the bliss of the universal reality. In this state, the distinction between the bliss of the soul and the bliss of the supreme is forgotten. The soul has been received, taken back into the womb of creation, re-absorbed in the heart of the beloved. It is not a static condition, for the soul is conscious of being contained in the presence of the creator.



Arriving at the state of bliss, she becomes emancipated from the totality of her past so that she can begin her new journey into the inner depth of consciousness, love, and intelligence of the supreme reality. She is one with the universal evolution of the light of creation into the mystery of god. If the ultimate did not have any attributes, there would be no love. True bliss is love. Bliss is how love is experienced in pure existence, how the divine knows herself.

Blessings,

Anadi

For a glossary of the terminology used in this teaching and for further resources, you may visit our website www.anaditeaching.com

