



## Oneness and the Higher Duality

Is oneness the absence of separation or a feeling of unity? Who is becoming one with what? Is oneness realized when separation is eliminated and our sense of self is dissolved? Is there one state of oneness or are there degrees of this realization? Is the concept of gradualness in respect to oneness a contradiction in terms? These important questions allow us to open our imagination to a higher exploration of the concept of oneness beyond naïve simplifications. Our intelligence needs to evolve; otherwise, any realization is bound to remain shallow and incomplete.

How does the concept of oneness relate to the idea of non-duality? Non-duality is not the same as oneness, for it refers more to the absence of separation than to the realization of unity. The philosophy of non-duality presupposes that duality does not exist. It does not propose that we become one with reality but rather that we realize the falsehood of separation. So, from the standpoint of non-duality, to realize unity would actually confirm the 'false' assumption that separation is real. For example, the intention to reach unity with universal consciousness would defy the basic principle of non-duality; rather, we need to realize that there is only universal consciousness and no one is reaching it and no one becomes the subject to this realization. Of course, this also leads to a contradiction because even non-duality cannot deny that there is an act of realizing universal consciousness – which must imply the existence of the *one* who is realizing it. Even the existence of the illusion of separation assumes that there is more than one element to reality. One can't just say 'consciousness is all there is'.

In Buddhism, this paradox is solved by the concepts of lower and higher truth, where the lower truth accepts the relative presence of duality. Buddhism is not really advocating the same type of non-duality as Advaita, but we can find similar elements in both these philosophies. This is unsurprising considering that Advaita was strongly influenced by Buddhism; we might even go so far as to see Advaita as Hindu-Buddhism. Still, Buddhism is generally more practical in its approach. One of the great Buddhist thinkers, Nagarjuna, created the concept of 'sunyata' – emptiness – which goes beyond the idea of non-duality and adds to it the very important dimension of non-conceptualization. Emptiness not only designates the unified or non-dual, formless and attributeless nature of existence, but also the absence of conceptualization as the base for realizing the state of 'suchness'. Suchness means that everything is as it is when seen from the pure place of non-abidance. It is a direct realization of reality without

superimposing any concepts onto it. Here, one is neither abiding upon the idea of oneness nor upon the idea of non-duality – nor indeed, upon both or neither.

In Zen, suchness is expressed through the saying ‘the mountain is high, the sky is blue’. The ten ox-herding pictures show the intricate process of self-realization: from the initial awakening to the realization of emptiness to the realization of suchness, and, finally, to going beyond this by returning to the world and functioning naturally. They say, at the beginning the mountain is a mountain (the lower duality, the split between subject and object as experienced in ignorance); later the mountain disappears (the realization of emptiness), and at the end the mountain is just a mountain (suchness). Finally, one has to go beyond even that by returning to the ‘market place’ (beyond enlightenment). One of the main elements of Zen training is to free the mind from being stuck in concepts, even those of a higher degree such as emptiness, non-duality, form versus formlessness, enlightenment, or liberation.

Unlike Advaita, Buddhism has evolved a lot since the original teachings of Buddha. One of the reasons for this was that it migrated to different places in Asia and mixed with other traditions. For instance, Zen perhaps has more the energy of Taoism than Buddhism, and that combination makes it very dynamic. On the other hand, since the golden age of the great thinkers like Shankara and Ramanuja (who, incidentally, being on the path of devotion was in fact defending the duality between the soul and god), Advaita has not changed much and, if anything, has gone into decline. If a spiritual path is not evolving and not keeping up with the evolution of humanity, it eventually deteriorates. The same applies to spiritual teachers: if their teaching is not evolving, it falls into stagnation and regression. We can see how many teachers repeat the same things from the beginning of their spiritual work to the end of their life. It is just the past constantly repeating itself. This indicates that they have stopped evolving, which is not a good thing. To stop evolving is to stop living.

What is the actual meaning of the term non-duality or advaita? In the same way as amorality is not the antithesis of morality, so Advaita is not antithetical to duality; it is simply not concerned with it. Perhaps it is time that the tradition of Advaita began to develop a more elaborate relationship with the dimension of duality. Non-duality cannot exist without duality: it would collapse on itself, self-destruct. When Ramana Maharishi told one of his disciples that he should not take Advaita too literally because it will prevent him from practicing meditation, he was hinting at the need to embrace the dual aspect of reality as well. The problem with trying to revolutionize Advaita in this regard is that we cannot stop at accepting the presence of duality – we have to go much deeper. What Advaita is lacking is the multidimensional perception of evolution, the concept of the soul, the understanding of the nature of me, and the vision of wholeness.



Returning directly to the subject of oneness: if we wish to bring a higher level of clarity into these matters, we cannot be tied to any philosophies, including the idea of non-conceptualization. We must directly and experientially grasp the nature of our evolution and the spiritual path. This understanding cannot be produced by the mind. It must be born from inner realization – and not just any realization, but the realization of all the aspects of our existence. Neither Buddhism nor Advaita can give us adequate tools with which to grasp the meaning of oneness because they have only evolved towards non-dual realization. They have refused to explore the higher role of duality. It is not enough to accept conceptually that there is a dual dimension to reality. To know what oneness is, we must not only realize non-duality, but also awaken to duality. As there is no non-duality without duality, so there is no oneness without duality. Creation demands polarities in order to maintain its ecological and existential equilibrium; otherwise, it ceases to be.

What is duality, really? Duality comes from the word 'two' and simply means that various elements in existence are not one and the same thing; they are in a relationship. The presence of duality is a simple, common sense fact that we experience every day. In truth, life is much more complex than duality because there are infinite aspects of reality that are in constant interaction with themselves. In spirituality, duality refers to the sense of separation between the experiencing subject and the world around him.

Duality is a natural part of life, but that does not mean that things are isolated from one another. The play of life is happening within the complete ecological system of creation. In a way, the fact that things are dual does not contradict the fact that everything is one at the same time. So, what is the big deal? The big deal is that we can believe what we want, but we still suffer from being separated from life. Philosophy can bring satisfaction to the mind, but it will not bring peace to the soul. Why do we humans feel so isolated from life to the extent that we consider arriving at the state of oneness such a high achievement? It is because, in our evolution, we have overdeveloped our mental self, which creates a sharp contrast to the world around us. Our ego has evolved substantially, but somewhere on the way it developed a major flaw – excessive self-consciousness.

Our ego is the structure of the mental self that is fully captured in its inherent mechanism of self-referral. It cannot forget itself; it cannot experience the spontaneity of life anymore. It is at all times aware of itself as the ego-image, thus living in complete isolation from the whole world. Going beyond this flawed duality is not a matter of finding a philosophical solution: it is an existential problem, so an existential solution is needed. Ideally, it is the science of spirituality that is meant to serve this purpose.

Now that we have a slightly higher perspective on the concept of duality, we can realize that our problem is not really duality itself, but the fact that the duality experienced in ignorance is distorted and unnatural. It is not even our ego that is the problem but what it has become in the course of its evolution. In truth, there is nothing essentially wrong



with how we have evolved on the level of ego. Our ego is simply a stage in our evolution, a transitory station between living in the subconscious reality of the animal kingdom and the birth of our higher consciousness. The ego suffers because it is meant to change into something higher: it is in the process of waiting for its transmutation. Without suffering and feeling the acute sense of separation, the ego would never want to change; it would just keep living in the prison of mind until the end of time.

Spiritually speaking, there is the lower and the higher duality. The lower duality signifies the unconscious state of separation, living in the arrogant and ignorant center of the mental self. Everybody lives from the headquarters of the watcher behind their eyes, the energetic knot of identity in the front of the head. There is something terribly wrong with this mental self, locked in the cell of the mind and its own self-consciousness. It is almost demonic in the sense of how much it is disconnected from our soul. However, unlike the lower duality of the ego, there is a higher duality which exists between our awakened self – our higher individuality, our soul – and universal existence. To become an individual is not only to establish the undivided sense of self beyond the mind, but also to become a true partner to life.

The non-dual path creates the illusion that by dissolving our ego we realize unity with existence, forgetting to see the elementary fact that without embodying our true individuality there is no one to experience that unity, there is no one to reach liberation, no one to realize nirvana, no one even to realize that there is no one. To transcend the lower duality without realizing our higher duality is to go from real separation to false oneness. Which one is better? Neither of them is better. Sometimes being in the state of ignorance is safer than evolving in the wrong way because at least one is still keeping one's options open. Non-duality in itself is a fragmented state, a condition of negative oneness, a one-dimensional condition of non-separation. To remain in it is to agree to live in existential suspension without ever meeting the beating heart of life.

Arriving at the state of oneness with existence is not the elimination of duality; it is the elimination of separation. There is a great difference between separation and distinctiveness. When a soul relates to another soul, or to anything at all, she does not experience any sense of separation. She is experiencing everything from her pure nature, from the place of being embraced by the light of creation. She relates to the world from the state of samadhi in the beyond, and yet she knows herself as her unique self, as the unique expression of the creator. She is naturally conscious of her distinctiveness within the context of her relationship with the world.

The soul exists beyond self-consciousness. She knows that she exists, but she is not self-conscious. The information of her existence is fully integrated with her identity; hence, she has no need for self-reference. Because she exists beyond self-reference, she can be total in her relationship with the world in the same way as she is total in her relationship with the beyond. She is the true bridge between the inner and outer dimensions of existence. She is the doorway between realities and the true subject to



the mystery of creation. She is neither in nor out, nor is she in-between. She is everything and no-thing. She is the true intelligence of the now, the divine angle of perception of totality evolving into itself. Her identity cannot be captured by the mind but can be fully realized through the magic of spiritual awakening. For that magic to manifest, we must have true love for our self. Wanting to disappear and dissolve into non-duality is not rooted in the intention of that love. For that love to manifest, we must awaken the profound intimacy with our innermost existence, with the heart of our soul. We must be absolutely honest and sincere in serving the actualization of our higher being, our sacred individuality.

We can never grasp the meaning of oneness and higher duality without understanding of the first and foremost expression of the soul, which is her me. Me is the dynamic aspect of the soul, while I am is her impersonal passive principle. Since me is the active principle, it is this me that relates to creation from the soul as her human vehicle, employing its intelligence and consciousness. Since it was originally me that was responsible for the condition of separation, in order to be an expression of the higher duality, its sense of self has to be fully transformed based on the awakening of the soul. How does me transform into the higher me? It transforms through its surrender to I am. For me not to recreate its past sense of self, the false center of self-conscious ego, it must be merged with I am and integrated into the higher identity of the soul. It is our me that, by embodying the light of I am and merging with the soul, becomes the axis of higher duality, our sacred relationship with creation within the context of universal oneness.

Non-duality is the impersonal state of our pure nature. This is who we are in unison with the universal nature of existence prior to being in relationship with creation. The moment our relationship with creation is initiated, duality is activated as the very principle that makes it possible. Those who do not realize their soul cannot bridge these two dimensions. They are bound to remain split between non-duality and duality, for theirs will be the lower duality. To realize our soul is to awaken to the higher duality and, as a result, to the higher dimension of non-duality – the kind that can embrace duality and non-duality as one. The realization of oneness is beyond non-duality because it is bigger and wider. Oneness is the unity of non-duality and higher duality. Oneness is the prerequisite for arriving at an enlightened relationship of love, consciousness, and intelligence with totality – the inner realm and the outer realm integrated through the consciousness of the soul as one supreme self. That we are.

One of the greatest illusions among ignorant people is to try to realize oneness with the world without having the foundation of the soul. Before we can be one with creation, we must reach oneness with our true nature. Who we are is the very foundation of our experience and perception of the universe. These are our eyes that see the world around us. If we are blind, we cannot see anything; if we are mad, our whole world becomes mad. We are the foundation, but when we are disconnected from our true self, we are a foundation without foundation – our very existence is illusion. Many seekers on the path attempt to dive into experiences of oneness without solidifying their own



sense of self. They sing bhajans, trying to lose themselves in god, or perform all kinds of spiritual exercises in order to dilute or lose consciousness of themselves – and all of that in the name of reaching unity with existence. What kind of unity can they reach in this way? In truth, they are regressing to pre-human consciousness.

Our evolution into our true self – merging of me with I am, becoming our one undivided self – constitutes the very foundation for the realization of unity with creation. Only by being one can we realize one reality. The foundation of our one self is the unmodified ground upon which existence can be met as the one universal self. Furthermore, the realization of our soul is in direct connection to arriving at the state of unity with the source of our existence. In order to contain her pure nature, the soul must be in the state of samadhi in the absolute; she must be merged with the motionlessness of the unmanifested. What this all means is that before we can realize oneness with creation, we must realize both oneness with our true self and with the source. The union of two unions – with our soul and with our source – is the base for arriving at universal transparency within which all of existence, both the uncreated and created, is embraced as one universal being.

Blessings,

Anadi

*For a glossary of the terminology used in this teaching and for further resources, you may visit our website [www.anaditeaching.com](http://www.anaditeaching.com)*

