

# Vedanta and Internet Enlightenment

There is an ongoing argument among non-dualists between the traditional and non-traditional teaching of non-duality. On the one hand, there is the traditional teaching, Vedanta. On the other is Neo-advaita, the non-traditional view, what I've long called internet enlightenment. Long ago Vedanta was just word of mouth but today this format has expanded because the internet has given it full sway. Both teachings are the same in this respect. Both also agree on the basic knowledge (1) that Reality is non-dual (2) that you are That, meaning non-different from Reality and (3) the personal self and the world are not real.

They diverge, however, in the method of teaching, which means the end result is strikingly different in some ways. Right away the rubber hits the road when we consider the differences. But if I say to a Neo teacher, "That's great to say reality is non-dual, except not a day goes by that it doesn't seem like reality is a duality. I contend that for all those great words, it sure seems like I am a separate self." And the Neo teacher doesn't have an answer for this reasonable objection. He just says, "if you understand that the experiencing you and the world are unreal, you are done. He does not take the question seriously.

But traditional Vedanta provisionally accepts duality and proceeds to step by step address the believed-in separate person even though technically it agrees that just the knowledge of non-duality is freedom. It does not agree that you can just listen for an hour and your seeking is over. Teaching that reality is non-dual is the easy part!

The vast majority of Vedanta's method revolves around "extricating" your non-dual Self from this believed separate person, which may take years! This is simply a reality due to the intransigence of the ignorance surrounding the nature of the self. It's true that the Neo-advaita teaching can free, but it seems to me only the most ripened soul will respond to it. The rest of us are little, green, tart, hard fruits that that don't fall off the tree of suffering very easily.

**This lack of methodology for removing the the ignorance of what I am is my whole point. I don't think Vedanta has a problem with what much of what the Neos says (as far as it goes), nor does it have a problem with whether a Neo teacher is enlightened or not. If reality is non-dual consciousness everyone is enlightened. The entire difference revolves around the methodology. Simply put, Neo-advaita hasn't any.**

It's obvious to see why removing hard-wired ignorance is so hard. If reality is non-dual and therefore there is no creation, then reality can never be objectified. There is no object, no perception, feeling, or thought that can be used to objectify it, so all that stuff we see is all we know. How on earth do you "prove" non-duality? Vedanta says you don't. But it provides complete comprehensive teachings that gradually chip away the ignorance of non-duality until you are eventually free.

A good metaphor may be helpful. Pretend that your eye can know. It sees numerous kinds of things away from it; it plainly sees duality. Vedanta tells the eye that reality may look like a subject-object duality but it's a non-duality. It argues that even though the eye is one and real,

the many things that appear to it are not. The eye can never see itself, objectify itself. The best it can do is see itself in a mirror. The eye is not the reflection, but understanding the reflection can be very helpful because it allows the eye to intuit, to understand itself as a single unit.

Vedanta states that the separate person is not real, but that it seems to be real. Just as a mirror allows the eye to intuit or understand itself, Vedanta acts as a sort of reflection, a word mirror. It's teachings and methods aren't out to "prove" anything, they are simply a trick to get you to intuit non-duality.

In a sense, Vedanta is a kind of work-around. Most people think that if their web application has a problem, it has to be fixed. This isn't always true. Often in programming even if the reason for a problem is unknown, it can be fixed with something else entirely. For example, I may be able to tweak the server and the application starts to work! Similarly, Vedanta cannot show you non-duality, but it says it can fix the problem of ignorance if you understand how persistent ignorance is and are willing to commit yourself to patiently remove it.

Neo-advaita doesn't really do this. Instant internet enlightenment only works momentarily. I'm not dissing it in any way. In fact, I absolutely needed it! It tells you about you, non-dual reality. For me this was huge. It really rang my bell. But after a thorough investigation I put it all down because I felt I was more or less done with it. For a long time, it was great, but after months (or years) you begin to realize something is missing because nothing in my experience was actually different different at all! I thought my ignorance was gone but it had come crawling back like a cat in the dark. Neo-advaita is like elementary school which is absolutely important to your education. But there is much more to education than elementary school.

Similarly, there is much more to understanding *You are That* than meets the eye. Understanding non-duality is a theory that needs to be put into practice. Neo-advaita does not regard this believed-in separate self as part of the equation. They are right that it isn't, but they are wrong that there is no need to investigate it. As I said before, most of Vedanta is simply investigating your believed-in self and the world it experiences but it's so damn tricky without a comprehensive science of reality! If I disregarded my separate self, it is plainly unhelpful. I remember watching a Neo satsang where the inquirer was having a hard time understanding a discussion about freedom. He asked the teacher if he could somehow explain it better. The teacher responded, "No, because there is no one there who can understand it".