

ENLIGHTENMENT

To an illiterate person, learning to read would be enlightening. Anyone who learns and understands a new concept is enlightened. Relieving the burden of mental and/or emotional distress, which can feel heavy like an actual weight, is enLIGHTening. Thus, there can be many types of enlightenment.

There are typically believed to be two primary types of enlightenment – intellectual and spiritual – forming two opposing camps: science and religion. I believe a blend of the two is essential if we are to become truly enlightened.

In a secular or a non-Buddhist context enlightenment is often used to mean full comprehension of a situation, or having gained some spiritual insight about a situation. Enlightenment is also construed as being a state of freedom from desire, suffering, and ignorance. The term enlightenment has been broadly and loosely used to indicate the opening of one's eyes to a spiritual realm. It can also mean a greater spiritual understanding and appreciation, or a "deep" or lasting realization of the true nature of existence and of one's own Basic Nature, one's true essence. The Japanese Buddhist term for this is Satori. Almost all religions and philosophies have some concept of a blissful state to which they believe we should aspire.

To me enlightenment in the spiritual sphere is greater spiritual understanding, appreciation, passion and compassion, encompassing all areas of life. Enlightenment is relative to each individual in a different way. It would have to include the capacity to experience self, to accept self, and to understand self in relationship to other Beings, other life, the cosmos, and as part of infinity.

To the uneducated there is only one right way, one right God, and one right belief system. Everything that is not in line with their right way is wrong. Anything that makes one question one's beliefs are considered especially wrong and dangerous, for they seduce one from the one true belief. It takes education to become aware that there are other possibilities, that things are not just right and wrong, black and white, good and evil. There are an unlimited number of possibilities in all directions. Unfortunately, education can be seen as evil because it can rock the belief system and therefore must be the work of the devil.

An enlightened Being would be someone very wise, kind, and able to see through the veils of hypocrisy and intellectual bias, and someone trustworthy with impeccable ethics. An enlightened Being would have reached at least the Personal Sovereignty level on the staircase to enlightenment, and probably the Spiritual Empowerment levels. S/he would also recognize and respect the sovereignty of other Beings.

Aspects of Enlightenment

Someone once asked me what is the difference between awakening, enlightenment, sovereignty, and liberation. I think this is a very good question worth giving some thought to. I believe that awakening, sovereignty, enlightenment, and liberation are all aspects of the broader term "Spiritual Enlightenment".

Samsara is the cycle of birth, death and rebirth (i.e. reincarnation) within Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Bön, Vaishnavism and other related religions. In everyday language, "Samsara" can also refer to a general state of overt or subtle sufferings that occur in day-to-day life.

Within the Buddhist tradition several other words are closely related to the word enlightenment. Satori and Kensho are experiences at the start of the path to full enlightenment, roughly equivalent to the bottom of the Dynamism staircase.

Satori is a Japanese Buddhist term for "enlightenment." The word literally means "understanding." The translation of "Satori" is a flash of sudden awareness, or individual enlightenment. While Satori is from the tradition of Zen Buddhism, enlightenment can be simultaneously considered "the first step" or embarkation toward Nirvana.

Satori is frequently confused with a related term known as Kensho, which translates as "seeing one's true self" or "seeing one's true nature". The initial insight of the Basic Nature or True Self is referred to as Kensho and is usually a brief glimpse. It is sometimes referred to as "awakening". Distinct from Kensho, which is not a permanent realization but a clear glimpse of the true nature of existence, Satori is used to refer to a "deep" or lasting realization of the nature of existence.

The Buddha described Nirvana as the perfect peace of the state of mind that is free from anger, craving, and all other afflictive states. The student gives up obsessions and fixations, is at peace with the world, and has compassion for all. This peace is achieved when the existing conditioned thoughts of ignorance are placated, and the conditions for the production of new ones are eradicated. In Nirvana the root causes of craving and aversion have been extinguished such that one is no longer subject to human suffering or further states of rebirths in Samsara. Scholar Herbert Guenther states that with Nirvana "the ideal personality, the true human being" becomes reality. The Buddha says that Nirvana is "the highest happiness". This highest happiness is a persistent, transcendental happiness essential to the calmness and peace attained through enlightenment, rather than the happiness derived from impermanent things.

Sovereignty is experienced as a result of cleansing the spirit – clearing tainted Dynamis (also known as Chi, Ki, and Life Force) – bringing the individual closer to source. There is no need to do drugs or to go to seminar after seminar, seeking ascension experiences such as out-of-body experiences, to reach some temporary idealized state called bliss. The whole person is made up of body, mind, heart and soul, so there really is no separation anyway. Separating the soul from the other aspects of self can inhibit spiritual understanding of some areas of life.

Personal sovereignty is the state of being which occurs when a person is at the center of their own universe, creating their own life, and functioning from their own Basic Nature. It is the state of full responsibility for one's existence and the interactions they have with other Beings and the universe.

Liberation or Nirvana is the perfect peace from a calm state of mind that is sovereign and free from anger, craving, and all other afflictive states. This means that one has compassion for all, is at peace with the world, and gives up obsessions and fixations.

second phase will produce emotional purification and coordination with the gross physical, and completion of the third phase will produce mental purification plus the function of the will is developed and coordinated with the emotional-sexual and gross physical functions. Passing through all of these phases is optimally nurtured and guided in a spirit of love and trust.

Few, if any, of the teachers of The Law of Attraction include mental, emotional or bodily adaptation, and that is the major reason most people get erratic results at best from affirmations, visualizations, positive thinking, and all the other forms of the Law of Attraction. However, once you move into the fourth phase manifestation becomes quick and easy. For more information about the seven phases and DTSG, contact me and ask for a copy of "The 7 Phases of Life".

Spiritual Counseling

As you are learning and integrating any of the above three practices into your life, guidance and support is often useful. You may contact me for one or a series of private coaching sessions. Realize that you, too, can move from being a seeker to a finder of spiritual renewal. If you are ready for your experience of life to be easier and happier, contact me and we'll get started.