

AWARENESS, ACTION & 'FREE WILL'

On the importance of 'The Enlightened Ego' & 'The Enlightened Intellect' in The New Yoga



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One of the most new and life-relevant dimensions of The New Yoga lies in the way it allows us to reconsider – on the basis of The Awareness Principle – the relation of Awareness to Action, and with this, the question of free ‘will’, human and divine.

In this context, I see it as essential to distinguish what I call ‘aware action’ from what finds expression as ordinary egoic agency or ‘doer-ship’.

My central message is that aware action *always and only arises* from an awareness of *more than one* possible thing we can do or say, and/or *more than one* possible way of doing or saying it.

Hence its connection with free action or ‘free will’ - since *only* where there is *choice* between *alternative* words and deeds is there *freedom* – ‘free will’.

Yet choice itself is not an act of will or ‘doership’ but rather a *letting be or letting enact* of one possible action or way of acting as opposed to another.

In this *letting enact* the ego itself can allow itself to be intuitively *guided* by awareness as such - thus uniting individual ‘will’ with the divine ‘will’.

Essentially however, the divine does not ‘will’ at all in the ordinary egoic sense of being a wilful agent of action or ‘doer’. It just does not *do* doing at all - initiating action in the way that the ordinary ego *believes* itself to do.

Instead it is *as* awareness – as Shiva – that the divine lets innate powers and possibilities of action – Shaktis – unfold and enact themselves freely, from and within awareness.

(This explains also why Iccha, Jnana and Kriya (will or intent, knowledge and action) are not Shiva as such but Shaktis of Shiva, and why *the enlightened ego* is itself a Shakti of the Awareness Self.)

As unbounded awareness, the divine is also a field of unlimited and ever-multiplying *possibilities* of action and actualisation.

Within this field itself all potentialities and possibilities are constantly being actualised.

Within the linear time-space of physically incarnate human awareness however, these limitless possibilities present themselves as *alternate* possibilities and *alternative* choices – thus offering both *freedom* of choice and opportunities for learning.

Freedom, as a *choosing or deciding* between *alternative* actions, is not so much ‘free will’ as *responsibility* in the essential sense of this word: ‘response-ability’.

This response-ability rests in an *awareness* of *different possible responses* – some more fruitful and fulfilling, others less so – both to other people and to all the challenges and opportunities of life.

‘Aware action’ means choosing freely from out of this capacity for response-ability, out of a *responsible* and *responsive* awareness of alternatives.

Action in this sense is not essentially an act of doership on the part of an agent - whether the human ego or ‘I’, or a divine ego or ‘I’.

And yet the ego *does* have a vital role to play in *all* human action, not as an initiator or agent of action but as its *freedom giver* or *allower* – freely letting or allowing one action rather than another to *enact and body* itself.

The *true* function of ‘the ego’ therefore is not to ‘do’ but to responsibly recognise alternative choices, not in order to just *wilfully, impulsively or intellectually* decide between them, but rather to let itself be intuitively guided in its choices by awareness - the divine - that which *alone knows* what the best possible action or response is in any particular circumstance.

God knows best and God’s will is all-mighty and supreme. Yet this is *not* because there is always and only *one* right or wrong thing to do for all people.

God’s ‘will’ is supreme only because that very will is essentially an *awareness*. This awareness embraces and understands - more intimately than the intellect, the full and entire life and world *context* within which the individual is called upon to choose. Thus it can also guide the ego in allowing or letting do what is *right for them* in *their* life world and circumstances - and right also for others within that world.

The ultimate choice then, is not between surrendering our ego to the will of a God or Guru on the one hand, or else ignorantly and ‘egotistically’ willing our own actions on the other.

The New Yoga alone recognises that the liberation and freedom that Awareness bestows demands neither the sacrifice of our individuality nor the annihilation or surrender of the ego or intellect.

The New Yoga alone recognises that the pure *awareness* of ego is itself innately *egoless* – just as the ego itself can become a pure mirror of the self that *is* that pure awareness.

Hence the motto ‘Love thine ego *as* thy Self’ - that is to say, as and from the Awareness Self - is by no means ‘egotistic’ in the ordinary sense.

For it is the true and future role of *both* ego and intellect to recognise and reflect that *awareness*, which both allows us to be aware of more than one possible action and also guides us in choosing *between* alternative actions.

Our innermost Self, being nothing but a pure *awareness* of individuality in all its many sides, is in no need of ‘realisation’ - for it is *already* our most essential, ultimate and divine reality.

The aim of The New Yoga therefore, is not ‘self-realisation’ but the creation of something wholly different and indeed new – a newly enlightened *ego and intellect*.

The Enlightened Ego does not see itself as a wilful doer, agent, or initiator of action. Instead it *recognises* its own source in awareness, and understands its true role within it – to let *or allow* action to unfold freely from and within awareness itself.

It does this through *The Enlightened Intellect* -which is there to reflect the *intuitive* guidance granted by awareness in choosing between alternate possible deeds and words.

The ego and intellect are therefore nothing to be sneered at. For they are that very portion of the divine awareness in each of us which *alone* can grant or allow more free time and space *for* awareness (this being the most basic practice of The New Yoga).

It is *the enlightened ego* that grants *more* time to awareness than the ordinary ‘wilful’ ego - thus expanding that field or *space* of awareness within which *all potentialities and possibilities of thought and action lie latent*.

It is *the enlightened ego* that can say the word ‘I’ in a way that resounds with and reflects the Awareness that is its source – that ‘Self’ whose nature is Pure Awareness, and nothing else.

The enlightened ego is nevertheless quite distinct from that *immature ego* which thinks of itself as possessing or owning awareness, and as initiating or willing actions – and that solely in order to *do or own more*.

The Enlightened Ego can be no wilful creation of or by the ordinary, immature ego – whether in the form of a human ego, a divine ego or the still immature ego of some self-proclaimed spiritual master or guru.

The Enlightened Ego is not an ego ‘with’ awareness but essentially a pure awareness of the ego – itself recognised as that *portion* of our Awareness Self entrusted with the role of *letting or allowing* an expansion of awareness and the unfoldment of specific actions from it.

The Enlightened Ego does not place demands, give commands or impose commandments. It is not a demander or commander but rather a granter and allower.

Its role is not to *rule* over the body or nature, the social world or other people but instead to (1) *recognise* them all as manifestations of awareness (2) *receive* or let them *into* awareness, and (3) *respond* to them *with* awareness – not least the awareness of alternate ways of responding.

The Enlightened Ego is the human eye and mirror of Self and Other - not their ruler or master.

Oddly and alone, The New Yoga recognises The Enlightened Ego as the very 'Third Eye' and Third 'I' of *Shiva* Himself in human form.

For it can shine, radiate and burn with the reflected light and heat of that Supreme Awareness whose power of action or Shakti it *lets be* - whether reflecting it like a broad mirror, differentiating it like a prism, directing it like a laser - or focussing it like a powerful burning lens.

Yet its mundane significance too is immense, being that part of us which grants more time – even if only a matter of minutes - to be more aware of *what else, how else* or *what more* there is we can let *into* or let *arise* from Awareness - or let unfold as Action from it.

The Enlightened Ego dwells within the larger time-space of the Awareness Self. Indeed it is through the spacious expanse of this time-space - the Sky of Shiva and womb of Mahakali - that the ordinary ego is itself en-lightened and en-lighten-ed.

To be or abide in this time-space means not feel confined in some cramped 'now' – the sole focus of the ordinary ego.

Instead it is to feel this and every 'now' as the centre of a vast, clear time-sphere of awareness, and to feel the very vastness of the cosmic space around us *as* this vast sphere of time.

This spacious time-sphere can then be felt to span, encompass and embrace an entire surrounding day, month or year - and more – with all its joys and tears.

For it holds within its spacious Awareness all actual and possible 'nows and heres' - past, present and future - together with all their 'thens and theres' and all that is Enacted within them.

A Response and Questions from Rod Lloyd

Acharya, your new statement on the nature and role of 'The Enlightened Ego', as seen within the New Yoga links within me to issues about freedom, choice and 'allowing' in regard to the full spectrum of the Awareness. Awareness is portrayed as Light, and from your essay there appears to me to be a firm assent to the experience of "allowing", that Light to show us both the choices before us, and the grace of utter freedom to allow us the choice of what we, "ourselves" will allow to emerge. Response-ability has usually implied for me, the ability to respond appropriately to the situation. The word arises from its original root meaning of, "to make one's own". And thus we "appropriate" something. In responding "appropriately", in following your understanding, our "I", enlightened by time given to Awareness, "allows" the choice of awareness to emerge with a sense of, own-ing that choice, but also, in a sense, allowing the situation (also an awareness) to own it and all the ensuing consequences for ourselves and others. It also embraces the thought that we allow the awareness emerging, to own us. I taste also the rasa in "appropriately", of it being a 'fitting' own-ing. It is fitting and appears right, with all that has come to us in awareness, to allow this to emerge, and merge into our lives.

Paths that have a lot of rules of behaviour, and expected responses I expect would be discomfited by this approach, distrusting the inherent "freedom" for an individual awareness to "get it wrong". Conversely, the New Yoga commits to its experiential understanding that out of awaiting upon Awareness, correct individual choices will ensue. If Awareness, Shiva, is as we say, then this is exactly what should be expected to happen.

I am seeking to relate all this to the dark aspect of shakti manifestation from awareness, and how this is embraced, or contained or seen. At its utmost manifestation this is about the "demonic" that arises, the destructive, or the chaotic, that can be seen in tamasic, or rajasic extremes, or both together. My reflections on this in the past have brought me to the understanding that these aspects are "allowed for" as the necessary background of the emerging Light of Awareness, which is that which we both allow and follow as it leads us.

I see a problem arising from the incorrect interpretation of the freedom of response to awareness, leading to the difficulties of relative moralism. "One man's food is another's poison, so, hey, everything is ok, ultimately." This is not so. But errant followings of supposed inner awareness have occurred, in history and ourselves. Often murderous tyrannical systems have been built on lofty philosophies, even today. This is correctly seen as avidya, "not seeing", or ignorance, from which future learning for individuals and humanity can emerge. I think I am grappling with the core of discrimination within the free response to awareness. In Tantric practice, I see it as the connection constantly being formed with the Whole, the mark of Shiva in All, that brings discrimination. What is holistic is wholesome, fruitful, constructive. The dark tends to obscure, separate, and anything separative, ultimately is destructive, dissolving - but this is all also part of the all-embracing Triadic Nature.

Further Clarifications from Acharya Peter Wilberg

To me the most essential key to clarifying the questions raised by Rod Lloyd in response to my piece on 'The Enlightened Ego' - and its relation to free and aware choice - is that Fundamental Distinction, so central to The Awareness Principle. This is the distinction between all that there is an awareness OF, and the light of that pure awareness within which alone all things first stand out or come to light.

This fundamental 'Epistemological Difference' (between awareness as such and all that there is an awareness of) parallels Heidegger's so-called 'Ontological Difference' (between Being as such and all manner of beings).

It needs restating to clarify the essence of freedom and choice. For the ordinary ego, claiming awareness as 'its' individual property, does not act out of pure awareness so much as act in a way that is always a *reaction* to particular phenomena, inner or outer, which it is currently aware OF.

Thus arises the "distrusting of the inherent 'freedom' for the individual awareness" which may indeed "get it wrong" - and is therefore seen as in need of "lots of rules of behaviour". For it is true that many "errant followings of supposed inner awareness have occurred..." Yet is this through following awareness as such or through following limited modes of both inner and outer awareness?

The key phrases are "individual awareness" and "supposed inner awareness", both of which suggest things of which a specific individual is (inwardly) aware rather than the Greater Awareness - that which is the all-surrounding field within and through which all individuals themselves first come to be - and to be aware OF things.

In line with the Fundamental Distinction between "individual awareness" and awareness as such - 'Awareness' with a capital 'A' - the principle of freely letting the latter guide our individual choices must not be *confused* with the false freedom that comes of letting those choices be determined by particular moods, emotions, situations, events or impulses that the individual is aware of - and that their supposedly 'free' and 'spontaneous' actions are nothing but an unfree *reaction* to.

I emphasised in my earlier piece that Awareness always embraces a greater range of alternate possible actions - thus allowing greater freedom of choice - than those arising purely from an "individual awareness" limited to an awareness 'of' this or that. It is that same Awareness that can then also guide the individual in his or her choices - rather than letting these be ruled or dictated - either ruled inwardly by particular moods, emotions or situations or outwardly by "rules of behaviour".

That is not to say that all things we are aware *of*, whether in the form of events or situations, thoughts or feelings, moods or emotions - even urges and impulses - are not each themselves *an* awareness in their own right. The question is then whether the ego first allows time for the particular awareness that is expressed by and held within any

given mood, impulse or sensation to come to light in a larger Awareness – thus making it possible to be guided both by that particular awareness and by that larger Awareness as such, rather than by the particular mood, impulse or sensation itself. Here it may be clarifying to discriminate more explicitly a triad of three distinct dimensions of ‘awareness’, and with it, three ways in which the word ‘awareness’ can itself be understood and used. These three dimensions of awareness can be named as:

1. Individual awareness – as ordinary awareness or ‘consciousness’ *of* things.
2. Particular awareness – THE awareness that each and every thing essentially IS.
3. Universal Awareness or awareness ‘as such’ – that through which alone there can be an awareness OF anything and that which finds particular expression in ALL things.

If we wish speak of “freedom of response to awareness” or of letting ourselves be spontaneously or intuitively guided by awareness therefore, the question of *which* of these three distinct dimensions of ‘awareness’ we are referring to becomes central.

For there cannot be either “core discrimination” “freedom” or “errant choice” in “response to awareness” without that third, Universal dimension of awareness which first brings to light more than one possible choice to discriminate between and follow. It is Awareness in this third, Universal aspect that both discriminates choices and guides us in selecting the right ones to follow. It does this both directly and intuitively – out of pure awareness – and through the Particular awareness that may be held within some thing we are currently aware of Individually - such as the particular bodily mood or state of consciousness experienced as an ‘illness’, or indeed any mood colouring Individual awareness.

It is for this reason and out of this triadic understanding that I believe we can come to a better understanding of and relation to ‘moods’ as such – recognising them as pervasive qualities of awareness colouring our awareness of all things. I see this insight as central also to understanding and relating to those ‘fundamental moods’ described in the Gita as the three ‘gunas’. That is why, in my essay on the Gunas, I saw it as important to:

- (1) Recognise the gunas in their differing combinations as constitutive aspects of Individual awareness.
- (2) Affirm the value of the gunas in bearing within them, like moods, a Particular awareness of potential significance - pregnant insights can in turn guide action.
- (3) Emphasise that the Universal Awareness from which the three gunas emerge (as Particular qualities of awareness colouring Individual Awareness) is not itself a guna but has the character of a fourth (‘Turya’) which is essentially a ‘non-guna’ (‘Nirguna’).

Nirguna is the very translucency of Awareness in its Universal aspect – neither ‘light’ nor ‘dark’ and transcending the representative colours of the gunas (Sattvic white, Rajasic red and Tamasic black).

Hence the words of Abhinavagupta:

Where all splendours are in the light

And all darkness in the dark

Brilliant light and gloomy darkness

I praise that transcendent light

Always new, hidden

Yet old and apparent to all

Shining alone with the brilliance of the Supreme

Resting with and within the Universal or Supreme Awareness (Shiva) we can allow ourselves to fully affirm *all* the gunas – whether Sattvic light and lightness, Rajasic passion or fire or Tamasic darkness and heaviness. Indeed we achieve the aim of ‘transcending’ the gunas all the more effectively by fully feeling and affirming the specific qualities and potentials of awareness (Shaktis) they each constitute. This is not the same as being ruled by them.

The question of the Gunas, as expressions of the Universal Awareness, brings us to what Rod calls “dark” or “demonic” aspects of Shakti - which he relates to Rajasic and/or Tamasic “extremes”. And of course there are extremes of experience and action which can stem from all of the three gunas (Sattva included). Yet these extremes *only* arise from (a) unaware identification with the gunas, (b) egoic judgement and discrimination between them (e.g. Sattva as ‘good’ and Tamas as ‘bad’) and (c) resulting egoic reactions to them. The types of action that arise from identification with the gunas quite different from those arising from an Awareness that both freely embraces and transcends them - rather than judging one or the other as innately better for all people in all situations. There are times, individual and historical, when light and calm is called for – other when fire and passion are called for, and times also when the light and fire of truth can only be safeguarded in relative darkness and invisibility.

- The “light” of Sattva can not only illuminate but also blind.
- The “fire” of Rajas not only destroys but releases new creative potentials.
- The “darkness” of Tamas not only obscures but conserves and safeguards.

From a Hindu point of view, all that finds expression in the world as ‘evil’ is indeed the expression of Avidya (‘non-seeing’) or ‘ignorance’ - and yet it is from this very ignorance that, as Rod writes “future learning for individuals and humanity can emerge”. If this learning is *not* only to occur as it is doing now - slowly, painfully and painfully slowly - through awful and tragic world events and individual experiences, then the sheer extent of the ignorance, both emotional and intellectual, economic and political, ‘scientific’ and ‘spiritual’, that pervades today’s world needs to be clearly and

courageously acknowledged IN awareness and countered with awareness. For essentially ignorance is simply an UNawareness of a sort that both breeds and is born out of fear of 'seeing' (Vidya) and of seeing through this ignorance - a fear that in turn serves to create and reinforce, through projections of 'evil' forces, the very realities it fail to understand. There is no such thing as innate evil, for even the worst acts ultimately stem from good intents distorted by ignorance and fear. Yet there IS such a thing as 'right and wrong'. And out of Awareness, understood as 'pure con-consciousness', comes also an entirely unforced and natural 'con-science' - a knowing of what is Right which requires no rules to enforce. Part of this natural con-science is a deep knowing or consciousness that when we harm, violate or kill another we harm violate and kill a part of ourselves. Awareness itself - as 'pure conscience' as well as 'pure consciousness' - makes us aware that violence or violations of any form are simply and purely *wrong*, period.

One reason I emphasise the importance of 'The Enlightened Intellect' as well as 'The Enlightened Ego' is that what is taken today as the 'rational' intellect is but a façade - an instrument for the artificial *rationalisation* of unaware emotional impulses, defences, fears and reactions. The Enlightened Intellect on the other hand is a rational Reflection and Recognition of a innate and natural awareness of what is Right and True - whether logically, ethically or metaphysically. It is the task of The Enlightened Intellect to turn 'reason' itself into a rational reflection and recognition of the deepest and broadest Awareness of all that is, rather than using it as a tool to objectify the world for the still unaware subjective purposes of the limited ego - something which only results in the most crude (or deceptively sophisticated) forms of intellectual ignorance OF the world.

That is why the 'Jagadguru' or 'Karmayogi' does not only seek an ever greater Awareness of the world, but is guided by Awareness to freely Act for the world and other individuals - using every aware word and deed to free that world from ignorance in each and every way it is encountered - whether intellectually or emotionally, individually or socially, economically or politically, personally or relationally. It is in this way that gurus and yogis themselves embark on a path of 'further' or 'higher' education - an 'Education in Awareness'. They do this through following a path of ever freer and more freeing thought, speech and action of a sort for which the cultivation of The Enlightened Intellect is a vital if not core necessity. On this Path we are not alone but encouraged by the studies and learning of others, supported by their love and gifts - and both guided and empowered by that Universal Awareness of which each is a living 'Avatar'.

I wrote before of the connection between true freedom of choice and awareness of alternative possible actions - including alternate ways of understanding reality rationally and intellectually. For the ordinary ego the 'I' is a fixed identity or set of identities. For The Enlightened Ego, the 'I' that chooses to say, do or think one thing is not the SAME 'I' as that which chooses to say, do or think another. Our every thought, word, and action is, in this sense, the birth of an 'Avatar' - the worldly incarnation of a particular ASPECT of our self as a whole - of our 'Awareness Self', 'Great Soul', 'Atman' or 'Mahatma'.

In this context, I remember only too well how an individual I have never met and who is still entirely unknown to me - but who happens to live opposite to my sister - revealed to

her on hearing her mentioned my name as her brother, that he had himself been studying my many websites for many years, observing the evolution of my thought. Most intriguingly - and yet also most wisely - he referred to the websites as my 'Avatars'. And so they are - just as are my books and letters, just as is this very essay and all others.

The gods themselves do not simply gift us with 'Avatars'. They themselves *are* Avatars of the Supreme Awareness - gifted by IT - and offering us both images of, and a path of access to ITS diverse Aspects and potentials. From these we in turn can become Aware Avatars of the Supreme – but only by choosing *with* awareness which of ITS many godly aspects, capacities, comprehensions and potentials (Shaktis) to express and incarnate - at any given time or in any given place – as the very activity of 'Be-ing'.

And perhaps it is through 'Be-ing' understood in this way, as well as through the mystery of 'Spanda' – understood as the eternal vibration or 'quivering' of the Potential within the Actual - that we can feel the depths lurking beneath the words of Martin Heidegger, words kept safe and in the dark till after his death, with the awareness that they would, at the time they were written, receive nothing but academic ridicule.

The words read:

“Be-ing is the quivering of God godding.”