Learning How to Learn

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The most important aspect of learning how to learn is to immerse oneself completely and without reservation into the knower.

For within each of us that unimaginable place, our Real Self, known by a variety of names in various times and cultures, listed by Stan Grof: “Brahman, Buddha, the Cosmic Christ, Keter, Allah, the Tao, the Great Spirit, and many others.” This Self, which dedicated explorers find to be intimately connected to every aspect of the Universe, seems to hold infinite knowledge. From this perspective, if we have become totally free, vast knowledge is available.

To become one with this Self, one must become free of all attachments, conceptualizations, judgments, investments, reifications, and unconscious barriers, until the mind can be held perfectly still without distractions. Mind training and disciplining as taught by the Buddha, Hindus, and other wisdom traditions are valuable procedures to accomplish the required state of quiescence. A powerful tool for accelerating this process is the informed use of psychedelics. Informed use includes preparation in understanding the nature of psychedelic experiences and possible outcomes, deep intention, and integrity in the form of honoring the experience and the commitment to put what one learns into effect in one’s life. It may take a number of experiences at varying dose levels and settings to achieve a glimpse of the Ultimate Self.

A common experience for those who penetrate deeply into the levels made available by psychedelic experience is the realization that we are all One, that we are all intimately connected through the life force that manifests in every living thing and every aspect of the universe. This being so, we can understand the Buddhist precept that our own ultimate realization depends on committing ourselves to the happiness and welfare of all sentient beings. I have personally found that my own adverse judgment of certain individuals puts a definite lid on my own development.

Sri Ramana Maharshi, according to Ken Wilber, “is arguably the greatest Guru who ever lived.” He has stated that the only reason we are not enlightened is that we do not know that we are already enlightened. While this is no doubt true, I have in my own some forty years of psychedelic exploration, enhanced by Tibetan Buddhist meditation practice, uncovered a vast variety of conditions that seemed to form barriers to this realization. Some of these are listed in the second paragraph above. While I have found meditation practices extremely valuable, and an important factor in deepening and increasing the profundity of psychedelic experiences, I have found properly conducted psychedelic experiences to be the most powerful aid in rapidly resolving the obstacles that separate us from full realization. But it is well to remember that experiences alone, as influential and valuable as they may be, may not accomplish completely freeing the mind without dedicated application of newfound wisdom. An excellent way of focusing, clarifying, and applying learned wisdom is through a good meditation practice.

All the following factors promote effective psychedelic application: preparation, intent, honesty, set and setting, a qualified guide, experienced and dedicated companions. As interior obstacles are resolved and transcended, one sinks deeper into the intimate, priceless connection with our inner Being. As one develops proficiency and the ability to hold the mind steadily focused, one can discover that the most promising activity is to search out, encounter, and then maintain the connectedness with the Heart of our own being. For me, this has led to the most satisfactory outcomes.

I do not want to create the impression that this is a simple thing to accomplish. I have found this kind of straightforward surrender very difficult to achieve and maintain, often because we resist the
feelings or experiences that spontaneously wish to arise. It may take exploring with different attitudes and occasionally focusing our attention on various considerations, especially if we are prone to getting tense by trying too hard. Things that may work in one situation may not work the next time, and a fresh approach is required. And since we are all different, results may well vary considerably from person to person. For it is fresh, unmediated experience that we are seeking, just reading this information or hearing similar ideas and concepts from others will not accomplish the objective. We each in our own way must seek out how to best discover and maintain this priceless connection. For myself, I have found that simply being still and “just being” is extraordinarily difficult.

Yet I firmly believe this to be the highest prize. Having achieved an on-going connection or realization of our True Self, we are free to direct our attention wherever we wish. It is from this perspective that any object of attention is seen in its clearest light, in its truest aspects, in the most meaningful connections with other aspects of reality. It is from this perspective that the greatest creativity flows forth. By learning how to maintain this connection, we have truly learned how to learn. •

Notes
2. To rely, as used here, is to invest some concept or idea with the power of the mind so that for us it becomes true or real. Such repetitions then become barriers which interfere with our direct perception of Reality.