

CLARA LLUM INTERVIEWED BY ARIEL BRAVY - JULY 14, 2009 (primary transcription / edition)

To read the finished version, polished by Ariel, go here: <http://bit.ly/i8kJT>

Clara Llum is a spiritual teacher who found herself going through a process of spontaneous enquiry very early in her life, revealing the Self as the Unlimited One back in the 1970's. Since then she has explored most eastern traditions, become familiar with many approaches to awakening to Truth, and begun delivering Satsang in 1986.

Ariel: *The stereotypical image of an "enlightened person" often includes a person sitting still, being quiet and unmoved. And yet that doesn't seem to be the whole picture. It seems that not only is there a sense of stillness, there is also a flow of Life and Love that wants to flow through us.*

WHAT ENLIGHTENMENT IS NOT

What are some of the deepest misunderstandings or ideas about "what enlightenment is like" that you've had to let go of thus far on your path?

Clara: OK, before the reply, let me say 2 things. One is thanks for joining this initiative to have this pair of mutual interviews. The other thing is just to send an aspiration to the universe that this meeting may be for the benefit of many beings.

Said this, the question...

Ariel: :)

Clara: Yes, there are many misunderstandings about enlightenment.

The first one is that it is an event or experience, [idea] which derives from the premise that "I am not complete and I need something I don't have".

The second is more subtle, is equating enlightenment with deep insight, which is a byproduct but not it.

So, in order to remove those misunderstandings, sometimes I said in the past: 'enlightenment' is not enlightenment, non-enlightenment is enlightenment.¹ But this is also too paradoxical for most people.

Ariel: *haha, yes*

Clara: Enlightenment is a word that does not work much. I would say is more like "enlighten-*ing*" in the sense that is about what is already happen-*ing*, in the present. Enlighten-*ment* emphasizes it is a thing, a some-thing, an item, an enlightenment is far from being any *thing*, is more an ongoing recognition that is happenING.

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT

Ariel: *So what IS enlightenment?*

Clara: Good question! :-)

There are several "stations" of *enlightening* (or enlightenment), but all of them are organically one and stem from the basic understanding of our true being-ness.

The self-present awareness of being, which is nonconceptual, and the understading that we are that - that's the foundation and the first instance of awaken-ing or enlighten-ing, which then, by itself, just blossoms.

Blossoms further and further into grander *stations* of allness.

So, enlightenment is recognizing [directly] our ground of being and knowing that we are that. Both conditions are necessary.

WORDS OF WISDOM CAN HELP TO REALIZE

Ariel: *How is this different from the belief that "I am self-present awareness of being. I am All That Is. I am everything and nothing." or whatever other concept can be chosen?*

Clara: Someone can repeat these words without having recognized his or her actual intrinsic awareness.

1. meaning: the experience is not it, the non-experience is.

Ariel: *Can repeating the words lead to the realization?*

Clara: If there is faith to them, yes, they can direct awareness towards itself and so recognize what the words meant. [But] rather than repeating the words I would talk of meditating on them, taking them to one's heart. - That was the method by which Nisargadatta realized.

Ariel: *How does one take words to their own heart?*

Clara: Faith. That cannot be forced, it [faith] is there because the special connection with the teacher, or [otherwise] the occasion is not there.

Ariel: *What do you mean "or the occasion is not there"?*

Clara: I mean, if the connection with a particular teacher does not exist so inspiration and faith happens, then one needs to encounter another chance.

Ariel: *Ah, I see.*

THE ROLE OF PEAK EXPERIENCES

You mentioned earlier that enlightenment is not an event or an experience. To what value are various spiritual experiences, aha moments, realizations, satoris, glimpses into your true nature, and so on?

Clara: These experiences are opportunities to gain understanding. They are introductions to our true nature, but then one needs to recognize it regardless of circumstances -because it's ever present- and then make "his home" there (in their true ever present nature of being). Then true enlightenment just starts.

In Zen for instance, it is distinguished between those experiences or insights and true [or complete] realization.

Realization is permanence in one's Self, not a brief visit or brief aha.

And the Self is always here-now, available. Only needs to be realized, recognized, beyond or prior to ideas or concepts, as it is.

Ariel: *Is the experience of a brief visit the same as full realization, but just for a shorter period of time?*

Clara: It may be [essentially²], but most of times people just overlook the constant [underlying] element, the ever present beingness, and [instead] get focused on the ornaments of the peak experience as samadhi, satori, bliss, peace, etc., which are not it. So the recognition is missed.

And they still call it awakening or enlightenment, mistaking the envelope for the letter.

And as I said, the funniest part is that the letter was always here in our heart: they just had to read it, see it, recognize it, for what simply is.

Instead many focus on the package of the particular experience.

Ariel: *Yeah. It seems like you can have the most wonderful spiritual experiences, yet even they come and go. We remain here regardless.*

Clara: Yes, *who* has the experience is what needs to be recognized and then true enlightenment starts to unfold.

But no samadhi is necessary for that recognition. We can investigate the *who* of this ordinary moment.

So, it's not about lights, powers, peace, bliss, not even [about] amazing insights. It's about the ground of being that makes all that possible. And about establishing oneself on that ground which is us.

THE NATURAL STATE

Ariel: *Why is it that we so often overlook being and focus on the flashy stuff?*

2. like the taste of one drop of sea water is the same than the taste of the whole sea.

Clara: People don't know better, [they] have not been pointed out their true nature. And also because the true nature is so plain that people can't believe it is the seed of the infinite universes.

Ariel: *Yeah, that's a big one. It doesn't seem like awareness or being really do anything special. They just sit here. They just are.*

Clara: Yes, but it [true nature, awareness, beingness] happens to be the shapeless, formless, boundless container of all that arises, appears, flows and dissolves.

In Tibetan Dzogchen this "natural mind" is said to have three aspects: emptiness (impoluted) , clarity (cognitive) and all-productive (creative).

Ariel: *It's interesting that emptiness is also creative.*

Clara: It is because it's empty, precisely, otherwise all is finished, static.

It's because all is illusory that all [this infinite number of] realities keep flowing.

MIND AND REALITY ARE ONE

Ariel: *I remember you mentioning on Twitter that if you're seeing reality, it's because thought is arising or something to that effect.*

Clara: I don't remember what I said... maybe "if you deal with reality, you deal with your mind".

Ariel: *Ah yes, I think that was it.*

Clara: Yes, this all is just thoughts.

All around, just thoughts, imagination, feverish dreaming. And I said, "if you deal with your mind, you deal with reality", meaning that your mind is the key: your awareness of being. Here we could use uppercase, Mind and Reality, same.

First the world around invites you to examine your mind, then examining your mind you find the power that creates all.

Ariel: *Is this power the law of attraction?*

Clara: No need to attract anything, thinking is seeing.

When you dream and think of a car, do you attract the car, or it's just there?

There are no laws of any kind in a dream. Thought is sovereign, and the substance of all that is.

There's no matter separated from thought, not two substances, so [there isn't] a force of attraction required to mediate.

It's all the realm of Maya, I-Maya-nation, imagination, only this.

Ariel: *haha, I-Maya-nation, i like that :)*

Clara: :-)

The I is the key.

Ariel: *How so.*

Clara: The I, your Self, is the only reality, the power itself. Only that by not recognizing it, by mistaking our Self for a limited entity, we delegate the power on Maya, the fabric of imagination, run by our fears, hopes, ideals, concepts, and so on.

We become the unconscious victims of our own imagination running wild and bewildered by believing the world is real.

And we suffer as if we were that individual. So the I has to realize it-Self. Regain our freedom.

CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES

Ariel: *With respect to realizing the Self, is there value to choosing better feeling thoughts instead of letting our imagination run wild?*

Clara: These practices are just preliminary. You can get a peace and auspicious circumstances that then propitiate the real work, which is approaching our own awareness of being, meditating and establishing on it. The conventional paths of spiritual traditions and religions help to pacify the mind so it's conducive to self-investigation.

Ariel: *Yes, that makes sense :)*

Clara: These yogas lead to Jnana-yoga: self-investigation, Self-abidance.

Jnana yoga as a synonym of Vedanta or other nondual teachings and approaches.

Ariel: *Pacifying the mind can certainly help. Is it necessary to full out stop the mind?*

Clara: No, that's artificial.

Thoughts flow and [that] it's part of the creative aspect of our mind. But pacifying is essential, it's called *sattva*, the quality of purity, according to Hindu psychology. Only a peaceful mind can look clearly and investigate reality. And systems like Ayurveda promote that gain of clarity and peacefulness.

THE POSITION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MIND

Ariel: *What relationship do you have with your mind?*

Clara: She's my friend and very obliging.

Ariel: *Yeah, i know what you mean :)*

What does she do for you?

Clara: In other words, is a mind that lost her pride or ego long ago, 6:36 PM and now is just my friend.

Ariel: *What do you have your mind do for you?*

Clara: One of the functions is that she's like a printer. She knows that it is not her duty to find out truth, but to put it into words when she listens it from *buddhi*, my intelligence, which is nonconceptual. That's how I said she is a loyal servant, with no pride or initiative.

Some teachers call this *the death of the mind*, which is a valid metaphor: there's no ego running it.

Ariel: *Yes, exactly. There's a difference between the ego and the mind.*

Clara: The function of the intellect or verbal mind is to serve buddhi, [the] innate intelligence of being.

But first buddhi needs to be awakened, which is [the] natural outcome of resting on one's awareness of being.

So, another definition of enlightenment is this: when buddhi is awakened on a continuous basis, beyond exceptional aha instances. This continuous availability of buddhi is just the sign that the Self is abided also continuously, which is a true stage of enlightenment.

Ariel: *Is it common for people to have exceptional aha instances before full enlightenment?*

Clara: Again, enlightenment is ongoing, an organic process, not peak experiences here and there.

Ariel: *Yes, definitely.*

Clara: Yes, aha moments happen to many people, which shows that of course they have innate intelligence!! just awaiting to be awakened and activated [on a more permanent basis], which will happen when they really abide in nonconceptual self-awareness.

So, paradoxically, intelligence becomes available at all moments precisely when [the] intellect or thinking mind surrenders to the not-knowingness of just being, which is again what we called [the quality of] peacefulness or *sattva*.

Ariel: *Not-knowing of being is a different energy than doubting, yes?*

Clara: But most people have a very proud thinking mind which precisely prevents [them] to realize their simple Self or beingness and therefore [to] awake their intuitive direct intelligence, buddhi.

Ariel: *That's so true...*

Clara: *Not-knowing* means the surrendered position of the thinking mind that is a condition of Self-abidance or resting on self-awareness.

Doubting is [an] activity of the intellect, and ultimately can only be [re]solved by resting on beingness and allowing intelligence to take over. Doubting is not ultimately pacified by getting intellectual answers from outside, this is only provisional.

Ariel: *haha, yeahhhh :)*

Clara: The main obstacle for most people is too much attachment to their thinking minds, not realizing its helplessness

or [its] incapacity to find out or realize truth.

Only the Self's intrinsic intelligence realizes truth, [realizes] it-Self.

Ariel: *Yes yes.*

Clara: And that intelligence (buddhi) is free from concepts, is the light of the spirit or Self.

THE KEY INSTRUCTION

Ariel: *So for someone who wants to wake up, if you were to offer them the single most important golden nugget of advice, what would you suggest?*

Clara: Be aware that you are. Be aware that you are aware, right now.

At any given moment, rest in that simplicity of being yourself, free from labels or concepts of "myself".

The very beingness, the very awareness is the constant "you", the true you, faceless, formless, empty, cognizant, all containing, all inclusive.

Be aware of being... Aware of being aware.

Meditate, stay with this awareness that you are and that is you.

Worship it, dive in it, make of it your home, and all will unfold.

Self-present awareness - awareness that is present in itself.

Watch your watchfulness, be conscious of being conscious right now...

Aware-ing is happening. See it, know it, be with it, that's all.

The mirror looks in the mirror, infinite space and light.

All enlightenment comes naturally from this.

All wisdom. all peace, all realization.

Ariel: :) *That is wonderful.*

Clara: :-) Thanks

Ariel: *Thank you so much Clara.*

Clara: Thanks to you Ariel.

Ariel: *You have such a beautiful way of sharing and I really enjoyed this conversation with you.*

Clara: I enjoyed your invitation to express very much too. I know is for the good of many beings that may see a door to Reality.

Everyone is invited to listen to more Satsangs online, free, tinyurl.com/satsang or visit clarallum.com

Ariel: *If you're on Twitter, you can follow Clara at @lux1008*

Gracias, Clara :)

Clara: Yes, little tweets here and there.

Much love to you Ariel and to your audience.

Ariel: *Namaste <3*

Clara: Namaste!