

The Marks of Enlightenment by Paul Constant

What is Enlightenment? The search for this exalted state has been the "holy grail" of humanity. Whether it's been called Enlightenment, Awakening, Realization, Nirvana, Transcendence, Transformation, Cosmic Consciousness, or Heaven Within and Paradise on Earth, it has been a goal of most of humanity for millennia. So what are the marks of Enlightenment?



When a person realizes True Nature and lives from a newfound identity, he or she may undergo a drastic change in their inner world and have a strong urge to express the marks.

For example, is thought eradication one of the marks of enlightenment? Someone may be less inclined to give much attention to negative ruminations and tired old thought patterns about "me"—thoughts that effectively consume a lot of our energy yet have little value. The quieting down of such thoughts may—but not always—be the natural trajectory of a subtractive spiritual path, of the retreat from untruth. Perhaps the neuroscientists would say the neurons that were energized by our old beliefs and self-referential thoughts begin to "unwire" after a deep realization because we give them less attention.

However, without personal context, it is a disservice to spiritual seekers to overemphasize the marks of enlightenment. I see a huge mistake in the delivery of many self-ascribed teachers: they become too wrapped up in the *byproducts* of realization, especially if they are selling a particular brand of enlightenment. And they often make unequivocal statements about the *outcome* of enlightenment, such as having no self-referential thoughts, experiencing intense energy in the body, living in bliss, having no attachments, etc. As soon as a teacher describes how enlightenment should manifest in a person, they place relative limits on something that cannot have limits or conditions. And even worse, they fuel the beliefs of seekers concerning the "state" of enlightenment.

Richard Rose often simply said "We become..." Although these words may be confusing to the seeker, they are far better than risking the danger of creating more beliefs about enlightenment.

Almost no one wants to hear that enlightened life can be quite ordinary. During decades of seeking, I wanted the moment of enlightenment and life afterwards to be awe-inspiring, otherworldly, and grand—and I suspect most seekers are looking for something grand too. Most of us desire endless pleasure, perennially gushing love, an end to all tragedy in life, the elimination of all fear, *ad infinitum*. Of course! We are programmed that way!

Death and rebirth. An unconditional impersonal Love. An intimacy with everything. These words come close to the mark. Maybe. We can only directly experience it for ourselves, and all attempts to describe it fall far short. Perhaps the sole value of describing the marks of enlightenment, even if uniquely expressed through each Finder, is that such descriptions serve to fuel our curiosity to find out for ourselves....