



SUZANNE FOXTON

NDM: Suzanne, can you please tell me about your awakening, when this happened, how this happened exactly, why you believe this happened. What was going on in your life at the time?

Suzanne Foxton: Let me start by saying that the overwhelming quality of "my awakening" was the realisation that there is no such thing. That "I" couldn't "awaken" because there was no me to awaken, and what I had taken myself for was a whimsical fabrication, albeit a fascinating one. Within that paradox lies enlightenment, or whatever we're calling it today.

Apparently, I had been going through some very thorough, very effective therapy. The thrust of the therapy was dealing with past trauma. The memories of the trauma - three separate issues - hit me hard, arising as vivid flashbacks; I could smell my attacker and was seemingly in the room where the attack occurred; the regret and remorse over an incident where I was the perpetrator overwhelmed me; the loneliness of my childhood engulfed me. Bit by bit, I faced these traumas, unraveled the story of my life, and saw my past for exactly what it was, not for the stories I had told myself about it. In other words, I was going through in a Western fashion

the kind of deep self-inquiry that many Eastern paths advocate. My ego and its conceits were stripped away, one by one.

In the midst of this, I was washing some dishes. I took a knife from the sink. The knife became an amazing wonder; it was exactly right; it was the most knifish knife that ever knifed; it was life, knifing. A kind of vision engulfed me, or replaced me; my mind needed to supply visuals, so I seemed to see a sort of cosmic winking in and out, creation on a grand and colourful scale, swirling being sucked into some kind of black hole and renewing, over and over again. I knelt on the kitchen floor. "Whoa!" I said, like Bill and Ted on their excellent adventure. I then wandered around the kitchen, saying to the ether, "It's so obvious. It's so obvious!"

NDM: What was obvious?

Suzanne Foxton: Well, that everything was everything, but it actually didn't exist; that everything was illusory, existing in no time and no space, and yet fruitily, fleshily, impossibly real and existent. That what I had been looking for was this, all around me, all me. There was no difference between me and everyone and everything. It was all, most obviously, the same thing, and the only thing that actually existed was a sort of absolute knowing. My persona, the game of life, everything I had considered so important, just dropped away; certainly, the importance dropped away, and I saw I was free, to an extent that cannot be communicated. Everything, no matter how "bad", was the icing on the cake of awareness; the gift of duality.

Re-entering the drama of life on these new terms, for my ego, was to be rebuffed by anyone I tried to explain it to. No one wants to hear about how everything is utterly meaningless, except in its intrinsic worth by virtue of mere existence. I began writing the blog to give vent to my urge to describe what had happened...including trying to communicate that it never happened at all.

NDM: Why do you think that this knife looked different from all the other times you had seen this knife?

Suzanne Foxtan: It didn't. There was nothing different about the knife. Perhaps there was something different about how I was apparently seeing it. It seemed to be a knife with no filters, no projection, no interference. Just, very simply, exactly what it was.

NDM: How long did this knife experience last for?

Suzanne Foxtan: It wasn't strictly "an experience", there seems to be no one "here" to receive "an experience". It lasts forever. It happens now.

NDM: When you saw that "It's so obvious, that everything was everything, but it actually didn't exist; that everything was illusory, existing in no time and no space, and yet fruitily, fleshily, impossibly real and existent." What do you mean exactly by "everything was everything" and that it did not exist.

NDM: Do you mean this on the relative level, or on the absolute level or some other way?

Suzanne Foxtan: It's difficult to describe, so poetic language seems to come up to try to do it. I suppose I mean that I saw that everything is appearance, and that nothing in "real life" exists other than in our apparent ability to see energy arranged in a certain way. "Everything was everything" I guess means that everything is just exactly as it is, without having to think about it, make judgments about it, or figure it out. The poetic expression of

it conveys the quality of reality more accurately than the mind's specific, analytical need for description. The less concepts, the "better".

NDM: When you say "Re-entering the drama of life on these new terms, for my ego, was to be rebuffed by anyone I tried to explain it to." What do you mean by ego exactly?

Suzanne Foxton: I suppose my poor ol' overworked, overvalued mind would describe ego as the personality; the construct of the individual, which seemingly negotiates and navigates its way through the story of life. There is nothing whatsoever, by the way, "wrong" with the ego. And it seems the ego is here, but not taken as the be-all and end-all anymore; and the story of life, not taken so seriously.

NDM: When you say that "there is nothing whatsoever, by the way, wrong with this ego", Do you mean your own ego in particular, or was that a broad generalization, including everyone else's egos as well. If so, what about the unhealthy ego of someone who is injuring others, or itself. Contemplating suicide. Or as in the extreme case of a murderer, a thief, a liar and so on?

Suzanne Foxton: There is nothing wrong with anyone's ego, or ego as a useful labelling concept. There is nothing wrong with anything; everything is. Unhealthy egos, or those labelled as such, certainly seem to exist. Homicidal tendencies and acts exist, as well as suicidal ones; also more irrational sociopathology, and, of course, people who are big fat meanies. I suppose these are balanced by creative joy and loving nurturing kindness, altruism, philanthropy, and other good stuff like that; the stuff that doesn't make it into the news as much.

NDM: Is someone with a (ego) "story" like this also not to be taken seriously?

Suzanne Foxtan: If a suicidal ego wasn't taking the life story so seriously, perhaps suicide wouldn't even come into the question?

NDM: Do you mean this strictly from the absolute non dual level, or the relative dualistic level? Do you see a difference, a distinction of these levels or do you not recognize or acknowledge these levels?

Suzanne Foxtan: I'm not sure what you mean. In the unfolding story, remembered now, I was suicidal for years; 12 or so attempts, two of them nearly successful. Relatively, if I hadn't been taking my story to be all that I am, it is unlikely I would have been suicidal. Absolutely, there is no one suffering, but suffering certainly happens, and is as much an important part of life as anything else.

NDM: Where does morality, (right and wrong) play into this equation?

Suzanne Foxtan: There is no right or wrong. There is what is. Including many differing ideas about what is right and what is wrong. However, compassion often seems preferable; yet if every apparent individual were consistently compassionate without exception...gag, barf! How dull would THAT be? AND there'd probably be a loved-up population explosion.

We live in Utopia. We are Utopia. We are the perfect, dualistic playground with every possibility shining, weaving, tearing, growing, destroying, creating NOW.

NDM: If someone was not aware of these neo advaita teachings and were to read this, living in Iraq or Afghanistan for example, who had just had their

family and children murdered, home destroyed and so on. Based on your experience with communicating this message. How do you believe this would be interpreted?

Suzanne Foxton: Wow, it wildly varies. I've had contact with people who have had problems on the level of Job, much as you describe. Lots of anger, often; outrage; but also acceptance. It's amazing, what is bearable. It's incredible, what kind of apparent healing can occur. And through anecdotal evidence, those who respond to devastation with compassion are the ones who feel the most peace; if peace is, indeed, the goal. All things unfold, the horrific and the beautiful. It can be judged...or not.

NDM: Can you please tell me what happened to this ego as a result of this realisation/awakening?

Suzanne Foxton: Nothing happened to the ego. The ego still arises in awareness, if that's the preferred way of putting it on a Thursday morning. I suppose the ego is, paradoxically, looked upon with more affection and tolerance (compassion, perhaps) by itself than before.

I guess the point is that there seems to be at least a lot less of some sort of receiver of knowing, or doing, or being, or seeing feeling touching hearing smelling. Knowing known by itself. A gift, from the gift to the gift. Just the knowing. Just the gift. No knower. No giver.

NDM: So if nothing happened to the ego. If it is still there, then which self are you? Are you saying there are two selves, or you are still this ego, or something other than it?

Suzanne Foxtan: I'm saying that there is only one thing. The mind will try to split it, understand it, categorise it into this compartment and that pigeon hole...what I am, what is, can be labelled "awareness", and ego, toast in the morning, kids needing a ride to the cricket match, the wall, the body, the mind, the feelings, all seemingly arise in this awareness. It's all one thing, seamless, whole, perfect.

NDM; So if there is no knower or giver, just the knowing, the gift, how is the knowing possible? Who or what is this knowing known to?

Suzanne Foxtan: How the knowing is possible is something the mind is preoccupied with. It wants to figure it out. Knowing is, unto itself. The knowing is known by knowing; the giving is given to the gift. There is only One.

NDM: Did you ever study meditation, or any traditional forms of spirituality before your awakening or read any books about this subject of non-duality or consciousness?

Suzanne Foxtan: It's not my awakening...but I understand we have to use limited concepts and language.

No, I didn't study and formal meditation. Just the kind of "notice your breath" stuff that gets into mainstream Western mental health circles. Jesus, I can't meditate to save my life. Sit down in an uncomfortable position and try not to think. 'Oh no! I'm thinking about not thinking. Ah - there's a gap. Oh shit, I thought about the gap! Now I'm thinking about thinking about the gap. AND I have to pee. Oh, f*** it.' That's about how a meditation session goes for me. I don't even attempt it. It's unnecessary,

and I'm not talking to any other apparent egos "out there". If you want to meditate, meditate. If it's good and blissful and still and calming and seems beneficial, go for it. But I suppose for "me" that all apparent states seem meditative. There is stillness present in the loudest cacophony. There is bliss within turmoil Every state is meditation; every act, a prayer; something like that.

Also, I read no books about nonduality "before"...my therapist, however, follows a spiritual teacher and he introduced the concept to me. He called it "metaphysical nonduality". At the time I thought, 'OK....that's weird, but I'm definitely making progress here so I'll just let the weirdness slide.' "After" whatever it is with the apparent knife "happened", I saw Tony Parsons and thankfully got some words that seemed to fit the seeming phenomenon of 'clear seeing'.

For a while, I thought I was going crazy - or, more accurately, even crazier. I occasionally felt like I was seeing from just next to the right of my head and a little higher than my eyes; that I was coming out of my body through the top of my head; and that I had no edges. My mind didn't know how to handle that stuff. My therapist would just say, 'Oh, don't worry about it.' I thought, easy for you to say Mate, I'm coming out of the top of my head here! However, although there's no process in time, not really, all that seems to have settled down. The identification I got with the description of "awakening" (or whatever) from Tony was just enough to reassure my fevered brain.

NDM: What words did Tony Parsons use that seemed to fit the phenomenon of 'clear seeing'?

Suzanne Foxton: It was simply the phrase "this is it".

NDM: Can you please tell me which one do you see as being you? Which one is your identity? Oneness or these inclinations, predispositions, habit formations, urges to write blogs and so on? What is the exact relationship between the these elements?

Suzanne Foxton: I see everything as being me. My identity is unleashed. The habits,urges, inclinations etc. are just what seems to come up. The exact relationship between these elements - oneness and the ego-bundle - is that they are the same thing, in apparently different, fascinating, guises.

NDM: After your awakening, how much time did you spend contemplating, or investigating through self enquiry, these inclinations, predispositions, habit formations, urges, your shadow self, The subconscious mind up to this point in time?

Suzanne Foxton: None. I just let 'em rip. Taking note of them with amusement seems to happen a lot.

NDM: Was this metaphysical non-duality therapist knowledgeable in traditional Vedanta, was he Self realized or was this some form of "neo advaita" therapist?

Suzanne Foxton: Neither I think. He's friends with this French guru-dude named Alain Forget, who has a kind of non-traditional formula called the 4-D's: distanciation, dis-identification, and I forget the other two.

NDM: When you said you were coming out of the top of your head. When this occurred what did this metaphysical non duality therapist say this was? What do you think this was?

Suzanne Foxton: My former therapist is an expert in trauma and addiction; the non duality stuff is just his hobby, for want of a better way to put it. I'm not sure what he thought it was; he just told me not to worry about it. Probably that I was having a therapeutic psychotic break! He likes my blog though.

NDM: When you describe your brain as being fevered. How would you describe the energy of your brain today? Is it usually active or dull, or very clear?

Suzanne Foxton: The "fevered brain" was just a pretty turn of phrase. Brain not really fevered; it seems calm, clear, active but nicely paced, don't sleep too much (not from any worries, but because I seem enthusiastic to start the day). This is most of the time, except when my husband leaves the cap off the toothpaste for the 4,235th time in a row!

NDM: What were your spiritual beliefs before this awakening took place?

Suzanne Foxton: My spiritual beliefs were very vague, somewhat agnostic, and more or less along the lines of the Wiccan philosophy of "Do what you will and harm no one".

NDM: Has this changed at all since your awakening or do you still practice this?

Suzanne Foxton: Pretty much. I've never been a Wiccan, by the way, but I've always liked that phrase. Also, I was raised in the United Methodist church, which is as laid-back as Christianity gets. UM minister: 'So you sinned? Well...that's not good, but oh well, just try not to do it again.' The UM philosophy is not so far off "and harm none, do what you will".

NDM: Have you heard of the Sanskrit terms samskaras and vasanas that are created through karma? Past actions that leave deep psychic imprints?

Suzanne Foxton: I have read these things, yes. The story can be just as interesting, complicated and involved as you like!

NDM: When you say " I'm still a procrastinator and a bit of a perfectionist, but these don't seem to be character traits that are judged to be "bad" anymore. When these tendencies arise, do you still act out on them like before. If so, why do you think you are doing this?

Suzanne Foxton: I suppose the actions are similar, but the feelings and thoughts are quite different; more relaxed feelings, and more magnanimous thoughts.

NDM: Do you have a choice, or is this something beyond your control?

Suzanne Foxton: Apparently there is an unfolding story where I have a choice to change certain behaviours, much as the characters in a film often seem to make choices. Truly, it is choiceless.

NDM: When these emotions arise, do they have an impact on your decision making or your actions, choice of words, behavior and so on?

Suzanne Foxton: Perhaps, but not to the same extent...apparently. More importantly, I don't poke it with a stick all the time. Whatever happens, happens.

NDM: When you said that "I was free, to an extent that cannot be communicated." What were you free of exactly and why do you say this cannot be communicated?

Suzanne Foxton: Well, I can't communicate it no matter how many times and in how many different ways you ask; it can't be communicated because it's not an idea, or a feeling or a concept, it's...well, everything borne of nothing. And THAT just sounds silly! And what was I free from, exactly? Free from all the boxed-in ideas I had about what my life was. Free from having to make things "better". Free from the treadmill of goal, action, goal achieved, contentment still elusive. Free from everything I ever thought was important; free from the story of my life being the be-all and end-all. Free from the tyranny of the body and the mind and the emotions. Free from everything, because I was never anything that could be enslaved. I was never anything at all. Limitless.

NDM: When you say "I began writing the blog to give vent to my urge to describe what had happened' Where did this urge come from. Who's urge was it and who was venting it?

Suzanne Foxton: I do know where the urge comes from; it's just there. I don't particularly care where it comes from, either. There it is. It's my urge, and I'm venting it, in the drama of life that seems to unfold but is taken with a wryly raised eyebrow "these days".

NDM: When you say "No one wants to hear about how everything is utterly meaningless, except in its intrinsic worth by virtue of mere existence" Is this your personal opinion, view, belief, conclusion you arrived at and if so can you please tell me what is the basis for this view?

Suzanne Foxton: Well...that was a broad and sweeping generalisation. Perhaps there are a heck of a lot of people who want to hear that everything is utterly meaningless, except in its intrinsic worth by virtue of mere existence. How do I know? I could be totally wrong. However, based on the anecdotal evidence of how friends and family react when I present this concept, which is nearly 100% negatively, and buoyed by further accounts from a disciple or two at a Tony Parsons meeting, one of whom was deserted by her best friend of 20 years when presented with a similar concept...it would seem that blanket meaninglessness is not a popular idea.

NDM: You mentioned in your conscious TV interview that you went to see Tony Parsons after your awakening. Was he helpful to you in understanding this and if so, can you please explain how?

Suzanne Foxton: I believe I answered this in a previous question, more or less. His words seemed to fit; I finally had some words to describe what "had happened". It was, apparently, comforting to my mind, which still thinks it needs to figure everything out...or at least have some vague handle on what's going on.

NDM: Has your character, temperament, personality, habits, proclivities, inclinations changed since your awakening?

Suzanne Foxton: It's not my awakening...you can have it! Free for all. But I suppose I've apparently become less "lost"; there is very little suffering, although there is pain; all those "negative" states and emotions seem to be relished (if not enjoyed) rather than resisted. It's all life, after all. I'm still a procrastinator and a bit of a perfectionist, but these don't seem to be character traits that are judged to be "bad" anymore. The procrastination leads to adrenaline-fired creativity, on a tight deadline; the perfectionism seems to foster more carefully honed work, which, at the moment, is writing and work in Photoshop, and the very interesting job of tending to my family.

It all seems much the same, but without bouts of depression or running away from what used to seem unbearable. And it is all fantastically, phantasmagorically fascinating, right down to the pile of dog poo I tell the kids to step around. However, it was much the same "before"...if my head ever managed to shut up for a minute. Now, if my head is noisy, I ignore it. It can do what it likes.

NDM: What would you say is the difference with an awakening glimpse and liberation?

Suzanne Foxton: I do know. It seemed to whack me over the head, over the everything in fact, and if it was a glimpse I'm still glimpsing, and in fact, it's all been one big glimpse...even "before".

NDM: What would you say is enlightenment?

Suzanne Foxton: I'd say there's no such thing. It implies something that can be obtained by some non-existent person in some non-existent future. Oneness isn't getting any "one-er". Being isn't going to be any more existent than it is. This is enlightenment, with interesting and perhaps misguided commentary laid on top. Life is enlightenment. Everything is enlightenment, even the misguided commentary. What people are perhaps looking for is their life, "reality", whatever, exactly as it is...they just can't believe it. There doesn't need to be some knifish knife or years meditating or the careful stripping away of the ego. This is it.

NDM: According to the Buddhist tradition, there are Seven Factors of Enlightenment/nirvana. There are also 5 hindrances to enlightenment/nirvana /perfect wisdom.

The seven factors are:

- 1. Mindfulness (sati) This is being mindful of every word, thought and action one takes.***
- 2. Keen investigation of the dhamma (dhammavicaya) This is similar to atma vichara, self enquiry practiced in Vedanta. It is ongoing investigation of the Self , or awakened nature, Buddha nature and other.***

3. Rapture or happiness (*piti*)

4. Calmness (*passaddhi*)

5. Concentration (*samadhi*) One pointed concentration in what ever you are doing.

6. Equanimity (*upekkha*)

What are your thoughts on this?

Suzanne Foxton: My thoughts are OMG, what a lot of work! Many of these qualities and actions, interestingly, seem to be unravelling "backwards" (after my thingy - call it awakening if you want!

NDM: These are the five hindrances to enlightenment according to the Buddhist tradition.

kamacchanda — sensual desires

vyapada — ill-will

thinamiddha — obduracy of mind and mental factors

uddhaccakukkucca — restlessness and worry

vicikiccha — doubt

What are your thoughts on these?

Suzanne Foxton: Again, unraveling backwards, these "blocks" may well arise from "time" to "time"...but they are not taken seriously. Nor do they arise with any force. Any "defects of character" that seem to come up for the character, Suzanne, apparently making her way through Samsara, are regarded (by who? I do know) with affection, tolerance, amusement, compassion. The same with the same traits arising in the behaviour of apparent "others". It seems that rather than clinging to the world, the world

is loved by the world; the world is love, manifest, and because it is expressed in duality, both sides of each coin are love, and loved.

NDM: When you say already "here", do you mean like to "be in the now" as in the teachings of Eckhart Tolle. What do you mean by "here" exactly ?

Suzanne Foxton: I mean that there is only now. You don't have to make some effort to "be in the now". You are in the now, whether you want to be or not. You are the now, whether you know it or not. This is it, whatever thoughts are arising. It is always now o'clock. This is wholeness, now. There is nothing that needs to be done, but most people don't believe that and would rather play. So play! That's fine too. It's all the same thing.

NDM: If I came to you and asked for your help, after having tried everything else, psychotherapy, yoga, meditation and all the rest. What would you say to me?

Suzanne Foxton: I'd say, give up! You're already here.

NDM: What if I'm here like Angulimala, a vicious serial killer? A serial killer in the now? Every time I cut off someone's finger and wear it around my neck my watch says "now o clock." How is giving up, I'm already here going to get rid of my ignorance? www.dhammadownload.com/index.php?title=Angulimala

Suzanne Foxton: Well, I see what you're getting at. If a serial killer came to me for help, I'd probably say "you're already here" as I surreptitiously dialed emergency services. If the serial killer had tried psychotherapy, yoga, meditation, etc., I'd say he'd be likely to confound the cast of Criminal Minds. If it's illusory, it's illusory, all of it, including vicious serial killers

named Angulimala. Oneness is oneness, including murder. It's the mind's confoundedness with these conundrums of morality that keep the mind locked in a cycle, unopened; yet an unopened mind is Oneness, too. All is one, and all is a perfect expression, even the horrible bits, and compassion arises for it all; it is all compassion. Now if my head was locked in a vice by Mr. Serial Killer, whether boundless compassion would arise is up for debate. But it's possible, though in pain, there would be no suffering. As I said, devastation can be met with compassion as well as the more common negative judgement, resistance and revulsion.

NDM: This is what I meant earlier by the relative and absolute levels of reality. Here is an article by a direct student of Nisargadatta Maharaj on this.

www.enlightened-spirituality.org/neo-advaita.html

What are your thoughts on this?

Suzanne Foxton: Absolute reality, Brahman, as opposed to illusory day-to-day reality, Maya, seems as logical a way to conceptualise Oneness as any. The mind loves the categorisation of it, the sense of it, the comforting explanation of how illusory reality arises in awareness. If it's Oneness, it's oneness, beyond judgement, beyond right and wrong, beyond all concept. There is simply this, now, what arises, and the stillness it arises in. Being tricked or fooled by Maya is the devil in another guise; duality needs the bad to balance the good. What is, is. Maya is loved; maya is love, manifest.

NDM. What about dharma, the natural harmonious laws of the universe Anything that deviates form this law is considered adharm, meaning immoral, unnatural, wrong, wicked or plain evil.

Suzanne Foxton: Sure, there's dharma, and there's adharm. How else would it be?

NDM: What are your thoughts on karma?

Suzanne Foxton: There's many many ways the mind goes about splitting reality, retelling it, perpetuating the ego ad infinitum. It's what the ego/mind does. It doesn't want to perish. So there's karma, and a hundred thousand lifetimes to balance karma. What a great deal!

NDM: Do you consider yourself a teacher of non duality, do you do satsangs or hold meetings on this subject to help others in some way?

Suzanne Foxton: No, I definitely don't consider myself a teacher, I don't hold satsangs, although I get lots of queries about this. I did a thing at Never Not Here in Chicago last January, at Richard Miller's request, and it was quite the merry ride keeping the thing going for THREE AND A HALF HOURS. I also did an interview with Urban Guru Cafe and www.conscious.tv/nonduality.html they contacted me after seeing my blog, and I'm happy to do these things if asked. If it seems to help some nonexistent soul, why not?

NDM: As far as teachers go. Have you read any of the classics by Nisargadatta or Sri

Ramana by the way?

Suzanne Foxton: I'm afraid I just read a few blogs on the subject here and there.

NDM: Do you have any interest in learning about the ancient wisdom traditions of non duality. Vedanta, Buddhism, Sufism, Taoism, Judeo Christian mysticism, Gnosticism, indigenous or Native American non duality traditions and so on or do you see this more or less as dogma, religious indoctrination, meaningless, nonsensical stories?

Suzanne Foxtan: I'm interested, but have little (nonexistent) time! I know a fair amount about Hinduism and Sufism, as I studied them at university. And all stories are meaningless and nonsensical...that's why I love 'em.

NDM: Can you please tell me about your book "The Ultimate Twist". What is this book about exactly?

Suzanne Foxtan: The Ultimate Twist is about a love triangle that isn't really a triangle at all; a mental breakdown that turns out to be "a good thing"; love in healing, and healing that turns out not to be necessary. It's also about life-changing revelations on a trip to Pakistan, that turn out to not change that character at all; and stony skepticism about spirituality, and a refusal to change, in the character who ends up changing a great deal..."a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"

NDM: When will this book be published?

Suzanne Foxtan: The book is coming out early 2011. Published by Julian Noyce of Nonduality Press.

Visit Suzanne Foxtan's blog

Nothing Exists, Despite Appearances