

## Drugs and spiritual experience

I have never seen any evidence that drugs open the mind up to a different reality. It is not that I have surveyed the literature on the subject, I have seen enough myself to disregard the whole thing. Mixing in the hippy scene way back I was persuaded to look after groups of guys on acid. And in a whole room of hallucinating hippies there was never a moment when two had the same vision. What was lucid one moment was confusing or even crazy the next. There was never any way to reach the same experiences off the drug although many tried, switching often to meditation only to find themselves sadly blocked from any deep practice as their minds were out of control. Many suffered with long-term mental problems as the result of bad trips or overdoses.

To me it is just a shame that such drugs ever came into existence – the fact that drug experiences can end up confused with spiritual experiences is simply very sad. I am convinced that the parallels drawn simply do not exist – it is just using the same language for experiences of a completely different kind; in a manner similar to the confusion of terms sometimes used to describe both spiritual experiences and psychiatric problems. Most importantly spiritual experience does not alter ordinary reality, it adds to it and offers a radical new perspective on it. All the wonder and ecstasy can be there but the mind remains grounded in reality. Drugs alter reality, sometimes in pleasant ways, sometimes not, but the result is some kind of confusion or dissociation from the world or the body.

On one hand drugs can lead to people screwing up their minds instead of clearing them. On the other it can make people frightened of meditation thinking it could end up like an acid trip. I can see nothing positive about the whole thing anywhere, quite the opposite. My advice is to take very seriously the fifth moral precept of Buddhism and strictly 'refrain from drink and drugs' if you are looking for genuine spiritual experience, otherwise you could ruin your chances of the real thing for an extremely long time by buying into a fake.

I offer this for your reflection.

Ajahn Kalyāno

<http://www.openthesky.co.uk>