

Dear Ramji,

Talking of which, and now being serious, in the interview you sent me recently, you mentioned that in certain cases like extreme fear.....then we know the self. (I can't remember your exact words). I have been thinking about this because of course, like all of us, I have known this state several times. (I was going to put that I have experienced this, but then thought better for fear of a lecture from you on knowledge and experience.

Ram: I make such a fuss about it because people almost exclusively focus on what happens and not what the happening means in terms of *moksa*. It's not that I'm just a cranky old guru with only one teaching like Ramesh...You are not the doer.

In fact life is one. There is no actual distinction between experience and knowledge. They go together. Experience is the container and knowledge the contents, the essence. When you experience a tree you know the tree. In the case of the transcendence that comes from fear, you are suddenly released from the perspective of the experiencing entity and you 'go back' to your natural 'state,' the self's point of view. And the knowledge that goes with this should be 'I am the seer, the witness, etc."

The witnessing is going on in 'normal' states too, it is just not as obvious. So when you know you are the witness, you are aware of everything as an object irrespective of your 'state,' meaning what 'you' are experiencing. You are also aware that the experiencing entity is an object. Ignorance is believing that you are the experiencing entity and not the light in which the experiencing entity experiences.

Marlena: It is the complete detachment and witnessing of a drama which seems to be happening but I am not the person in the drama - I am just watching it. I've had this when people close to me are dying/have died, or in an emergency and in certain bad situations when I was married.

I completely detach and am just watching what is happening, even though I am also able to still take part on some level. But the person I am watching is like an empty shell. I was thinking about this and trying to shift/connect with it and it didn't work...although I know academically that I am still witnessing everything - another reason why nothing really is too important to worry about. But how does this relate to non-duality?

Ram: Why 'academically?' Just have a look and see if everything isn't any object. Non-duality is the understanding that the witnessed objects are the self but the self is not the witnessed objects. The witnessed objects depend on the self, they are made of your thoughts...which are made of consciousness...which is you. But you, the self, awareness, do not depend on them for your existence. You are always free of them. This is why self knowledge is *moksa*. It is just the recognition of the way things are.

Marlena: And how does it relate to peace - apart from the realization that nothing is real?

Ram: Peace ensues when you see that you are free of all objects. It is a positive realization, not a negative realization. 'Nothing is real' is not the same as "Everything is me but I am free of everything." Yes, lack of peace is also the result of the belief that subject somehow depends on the objects but without the realization of the fullness of the self, the understanding that the objects are not real only produces *viragya*, dispassion.

Marlena: And how does it relate to limitlessness?

Ram: You are awareness and awareness has no limits. This means that it is always present and does not change. Is this true? See if it is true. Think about your experience. You are not limited by the objects appearing in you. You are not limited by what happens in you. If you were you would not be the same from one day to the next. But you are always the same very day: ordinary awareness. Nothing sticks to you. Nothing touches you. Yes, the body and mind change but not really and even then, so what? You witness the changes.

Marlena: I also know that my only reality (and I have talked about this to you before) is what I am thinking at the current time and therefore I have a lot of control over what I want to focus on - and can cut out much negative stuff if I don't want to put my attention there. But this recollection of the witnessing state during times of extreme crisis is very interesting because it is so memorable.

Ram: How do you know what you are thinking at any moment? You know it because you witness it. It is exactly the same 'you' that witnesses the emptiness of objects, your 'empty people,' that witnesses the present thought. No difference. You seem to be still in the thrall of the view that *moksa* is some kind of experience. It is just the recognition that you are awareness. Transcendence, epiphanies, make the separation of the subject and the object more obvious, that is all. But this separation is already and always accomplished. You do not have to wait for transcendence to happen. Even when it appears as an experiential happening, it has not changed your fundamental understanding of yourself. You are always 'beyond' your thoughts and your experiences. See if it isn't true. And don't say, you understand it academically. Knowledge is not academic. Knowledge is based on experience. Have a look at your experience.

Much love,

The Ramji