

Hello Ram,

As I mentioned before, coming across your website and the subsequent exchange via emails with you has been an eye opener and has really clarified my way of thinking to a large degree. It has been a long journey since my teenage college days when I came across Vivekananda's teachings, also had copies of Upanishads at the time, listened to Swami Chinmayananda for over a week in Pune and if I recall correctly also read about Ramana Maharshi and the Self Inquiry approach.

I was not deeply religious in the traditional way, it was more of an innate feeling that there was more to the world than meets the eye, and then the scientific training fuelled the desire to learn the Truth, rather than get involved in rituals, pilgrimages, mantras etc.

So now that your explanations have put things in better perspective, I suppose the way forward (i.e to remove ignorance) is via continued study, meditation and contemplation on Mithya for what it is, transient and dependent on the Non-Dual Reality. I am definitely not looking for any experience of enlightenment, or self realisation or siddhis but just to bring the mind to establish in the SELF.

Any guidance would be greatly appreciated.

OM NAMO SHIVAY

Sanjay

Note: mithya is a Sanskrit term that means 'apparent.' Satya is a Sanskrit term that indicates reality, pure Awareness, one's self. Mithya is caused by identifying with the mind's projections. It causes one to take what is merely apparent as real.

Hi Sanjay,

Your statement "I am definitely not looking for any experience of enlightenment, self realization or siddhis but just to bring the mind to establish in the SELF" indicates to me that you have properly understood what is required as far as spiritual practice goes. It is very rare to realize that no experience will set one free. Why? Because you are already free and because experiences, spiritual and otherwise, don't last. Shankara lists the conditions for liberation in Vivekachoodamani...discrimination, dispassion, stillness of mind and burning desire for liberation plus faith, determination and devotion. Your statement fits under the category of discrimination but it should be included separately in the list because the quest for the 'enlightenment experience' is perhaps the most common obstacle to a seeker's progress.

Once you are clear about who you are...pure Awareness...the only thing left to do...if you feel that something needs to be done...is to 'practice knowledge' as Shankara says. The practice of knowledge, which can also be called Self inquiry, is fundamentally the contemplation on the difference between satya, you, and mithya, you in form, you in time. It is (1) an open questioning attitude concerning the way you think about yourself and life and (2) the application of the understanding that you are whole and complete, that everything is perfect as it is. Application to what? To the mind. The mind has a difficult time understanding and accepting its ignorance. By ignorance I mean the inability to distinguish what is apparent from what is real. If the mind causes you to chase ephemeral things then it needs to be re-educated to the fact that you, satya, are perfect and that mithya, the apparent body/mind/world 'not-self' is also perfect...in its imperfections.

The mind has a built-in dissatisfaction, a tendency to want things to be more/better/different. And while this is not necessarily a 'bad' tendency...in so far as the part of you that is in Maya, the apparent reality, must necessarily act and to act effectively one should not just accept what appears at face value...to 'maintain' one's freedom in Maya one needs to know this tendency for what it is and not let oneself identify with it.

Continuous alertness is required until the tendency to identify is burned to ashes. Continuous alertness is not a neurotic ego-driven goal oriented preoccupation with one's spiritual 'progress' but a sattvic lifestyle and a relaxed introspective attitude. There are no 'do's and don'ts,' no 'shoulds and shouldn'ts' as far as the practice of knowledge is concerned. We are not trying to change the ego, to make it better or more spiritual. One simply observes one's mind and compares its views and attitudes with the truth of one's self and concludes that that the imperfect apparent 'you' is fine as it is, warts and all.

What is apparent will never become real. Mithya is one order of reality and satya is another. There is no 'becoming' on the spiritual path. The belief that one will become something that one isn't presently is completely misguided.

Through the observation of the mind and by comparing it with the Self one's identification with the mind lessens and the innate freedom that is one's nature slowly comes into the life of the mind. A mind freed of its identification with apparent things is no longer driven and reactive but becomes open and accepting. Viveka, discrimination between satya and mithya...what is permanent and what is impermanent...is freedom. There are various degrees of moksa as far as the individual is concerned but as one gains confidence through the practice of knowledge/discrimination the individuality...which is apparent only... is gradually effaced until one day only the Self remains. To say that 'only the Self remains' means that the mind knows that it is not separate from the Self. Obviously the Self, being eternal, does not come or go. What 'remains' is the mind's firm knowledge that it is not separate from the Self even though it seems to be. In this sense it 'becomes' what is always was. From this point on the Self as mind uses discrimination, not to realize itself, but purely as a practical tool to negotiate its way through Maya, the apparent reality, until the body drops.

I hope this is useful.

Love,

Ram

