

Abidance versus Discrimination

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Ellen: Hi, Ted, thanks for your response. So is it correct to say that awareness is always resting as awareness of itself naturally because that is its nature and that from the perspective of awareness there is nothing to do because I, awareness, am always resting as awareness of myself and could never not be, despite any apparent appearances?

Ted: Yes.

Ellen: I think what I want to ask is, is it correct according to Vedanta to just acknowledge is-ness (not its apparent content or any particular experience)?

Ted: No. Vedanta does not deny the existence of the apparent reality and the apparent individual person's experience. It is obvious that the apparent reality (i.e. the entire array of objective phenomena, both subtle and gross) exists, for we experience it and only something existent can be experienced. It simply says that the apparent reality is not real in the sense that it is temporary (e.g. even the entire manifest universe will ultimately resolve back into pure awareness at the time of the cosmic dissolution), mutable (i.e. is in a constant state of flux and transformation) and has no independent or self-nature (i.e. its existence is entirely dependent on awareness, for unless it is "known" in the light of awareness it cannot be said to exist).

For knowledge to be complete, one has to know both the self and the "not self," the real and the apparent.

Ellen: I think I understand that this is not a doing, or an action.

Ted: Correct. Self-knowledge is not an action. It results from a mental action, self-inquiry, but the knowledge itself is simply knowledge. The virtue of knowledge is that it is permanent whereas experiences are temporary. Thus once one has assimilated self-knowledge, it no longer matters what experience is presenting itself within the subtle body. The self via the intellect of the apparent individual knows that no matter what the quality of any given experience might be, the essential content is nothing other than itself, awareness. Hence it is no longer subject to the suffering caused by identification with the psychological and sensorial modifications experienced through its association with the mind-body-sense complex.

Ellen: The reason I am asking is because as an apparent doer I am basically "doing" two things when not engrossed in thinking or activities such as work: either practicing discrimination, as I'm understanding it, through determining what is not myself or just kind of acknowledging is-ness as I described above.

Ted: Both are fine activities in which to engage. Both are aspects of *nididhyasana*, or meditation, which is the third aspect of self-inquiry that essentially entails cultivating the non-dual vision of Vedanta through the continuous application of the teachings to every circumstance, encounter, interaction and experience of one's daily life.

Ellen: So I guess what I want to know is if I'm on the right track when apparently just acknowledging is-ness, or existence, or if I should instead focus on discrimination.

Ted: Do both. As I have previously mentioned, there are two perspectives from which to view experience. When you are associated with the perspective of the apparent individual person you seem to be (i.e. the doer), then practice discrimination. When you observe experience from the perspective of your true nature as limitless, attributeless, actionless awareness, you won't have to do anything. You will effortlessly abide in the conscious acknowledgment of the "is-ness" that you are.

Ellen: After work and especially before falling asleep I end up kind of just "focusing on the sense of existing." Is it better instead of doing this to practice recognizing the apparent difference between self and not-self or is this correct as well (sorry that my thinking is messy and going in circles)?

Ted: Neither is better. As long as you take yourself to be an apparent person, practice discrimination. One day "the penny will drop" and you will no longer identify with the doer. Then the practice of discrimination will drop off, for the knowledge cultivated through discrimination will be unassailable and you will stand with unshakable conviction in your true nature as awareness.

Ellen: I (the apparent doer) am drawn to this (recognizing is-ness, or existence) and think I just want to make sure it's in alignment with the teachings.

Ted: It is good to identify with the reflection of awareness (i.e. recognize your essential "is-ness," or existence) as it appears in a *sattvic* (i.e. pure, quiet, clear, introverted) mind. It is important to acknowledge, however, that you, Ellen, are not the "is-ness," so to speak. That is, the doer does not become "enlightened," or self-realized. What is ultimately revealed through the repeated identification with "is-ness," or pure awareness, is that one is not the apparent individual person one has erroneously taken oneself to be but is rather the pure awareness in which this apparent entity obtains as essentially nothing more than a holographic projection.

As long as you feel drawn to the recognition of "is-ness," "is-ness" remains an object to you. Vedanta refers to this as indirect knowledge. It is enjoyable but is not the endgame. Direct knowledge is the endgame. Direct knowledge is the understanding that I am "is-ness," I am existence, I am whole, complete, limitless, actionless, ordinary, unborn, all-pervasive, ever-present, non-dual awareness.

Ellen: I also feel a kind of anxiety about trying to “do it right” even though I think I’ve understood that there is actually no doer (that the doer along with anything else conceivable or perceivable are just objects within me, effortless awareness).

Ted: That’s because despite your intellectual understanding of the fact that there is no doer, you haven’t yet fully assimilated the truth that you are the awareness in which the apparent individual doer who is trying to “do it right” is appearing. But don’t stress out about this or beat yourself up over it. The conditioning that causes you, awareness, to identify with the apparent individual person you seem to be is deeply ingrained and has been reinforced over countless lifetimes. It will take time to de-condition and recondition the mind to think in accord with the truth. This is the purpose of self-inquiry. Keep practicing discrimination and one day the knowledge will stay. ☺

Ellen: I think the bottom line question is, as I’m apparently sitting here right now desiring *moksa*, is it better to discriminate between self and not-self or is it okay to also just know that I exist (that I am existence regardless of any apparent appearances)?

I hope my question isn’t too all over the place.

~ Sincerely, Ellen

Ted: Do both.

~ Godspeed, Ted