

Add a Little Patience

Ram (James Swartz)

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James: Hi, Susan. I have been very swamped with emails, so two of my disciples have volunteered to help. I personally responded to your email but I also gave it to one, Jacques, to see how he would reply. I couldn't have done better, although we both respond to your doubts in slightly different ways. So here is his response.

Jacques: You seem very devoted to your *sadhana*, which is great. Though it is good to keep at it diligently, there seems to be an important factor that you might be causing a misunderstanding about enlightenment. Knowing who you are is not about experience.

Discrete experiences of the self do occur occasionally, but we have to be able to inquire about the nature of the one who is experiencing in order to "get it." That you like to meditate and get into the silence and peace that it provides is a good practice. But you need to bring this practice further and inquire into who or what is having this experience. It is not a question of denying experience but of seeing to who experience is occurring: ordinary awareness.

When you say, for example, that you are not the body, you could see that actually "the body is (in) me, but I am not the body." So what you really mean is not so much that the body is "not mine," but that it is "not-self," i.e. awareness. The body's apparent existence is happening in you, awareness. On the one hand then, it is important to continue the practice of self-inquiry by the negation "I am not the (gross) body; I am not the mind (subtle body)." On the other hand, it is good to inquire about how you know this – because it is appearing in you, awareness.

Susan: It is so very easy to slip back or to "slip into" this bag of material matter and say "this is me." My mind seems hell-bent on keeping it that way, and not just consciously but unconsciously. Increasingly, I am able to remove my self-perspective away from the body, to turn within and remove my identification with the body-mind, but it is usually when I am quiet, sitting meditating or making a conscious effort to be awareness and not getting caught up in the mind-stuff which reinforces my sense of separation.

Jacques: Maybe part of your angst is that you are trying to get ahead of yourself. Yes, self-inquiry is sometimes difficult. This is only because you have spent all of your past apparent life asserting – through various beliefs and conditioning – that you are the body-mind. Even though you now know better, you have to allow some time before these past identifications dissolve into awareness. But don't be hard on yourself, Susan. Adopt the *karma yoga* attitude, and every morning as you wake up consecrate your practice to life, God, or whatever representation of the larger perspective you prefer. Having done so, you then diligently resume self-inquiry with the knowledge that the results aren't up to you. Knowing this, relax. If you are doing all that possibly can be asked of you through self-inquiry – then hand over the anxiety, tension and stress to *Bhagavan*. He is the instigator of all that is apparently happening, not you, so no need to worry. He will tend to it in his own time. As Swami Chinmayananda has said, "Hasten slowly."

However, some of your difficulty may come from trying to get rid of something that may not be in need of getting rid of. Though it is good to continue turning everything back into the arms of what you truly are, understand that “this bag of material matter” is also part of who you are. In reality there is no inner and outer, since, again, these concepts or notions exist within awareness. Like the spider creates his material web out of its body, the web is the spider – but the spider is not the web. It is free of the web. Although the meat tube and the mind-stuff are not-self, trying to rid yourself of them is not helpful. Recognize them for what they are – part of the web appearing in awareness – and let them be.

Susan: Even though I am intellectually convinced that I am not the body-mind, it seems so hard to stay where “I am.” Hope you know what I am talking about here, it’s a little hard to articulate. I suppose what I am trying to say is that I can increasingly feel a move towards the self, and at times it feels so free and peaceful (albeit brief). What can I do to increase this? Can I use this ability to get beyond the body to my advantage? I do inquire when I am able... but the answer seems obvious.

Jacques: Your comprehension is good, but it needs a bit of fine-tuning. Your use of language reveals that you are still looking at awareness through the lens of experience. It seems so hard to stay in the “I am” because you can’t stay in the “I am.” How can you stay on planet Earth when you have been here all the time? To say that you are trying to stay in awareness means that you are trying to get there. How can you get there if you are already there? You can’t stay in awareness, because no action you can take will get you there. *Jnana yoga* and *karma yoga* help you clear the mind in order for you to see that you are already and have always been awareness. These practices are tools, but no action can lead to understanding, since the latter is in the field of self-knowledge, not in the domain of experience.

In saying that you “feel a move towards the self, and at times it feels so free and peaceful (albeit brief)” you are saying that what you want to understand can’t be experienced – except temporarily. That is only normal because the nature of experience is transient. But even a Nisargadatta or a Ramana (who unfortunately confused a lot of people with this notion of staying in or holding onto the “I am”) said that what comes, goes. What comes and goes is experience. In the same vein, to think that you can increase your feeling of awareness would be only to mislead yourself. A feeling of awareness is an experience and therefore subject to change. That which doesn’t change is the awareness of any experience. But awareness doesn’t feel like anything. Only the feeling of *sattva* – awareness shining through a clear, or pure, mind – may feel good. Again, a *sattvic* mind appears in who or what? So if you feel bliss the next time you meditate, inquire into to whom the bliss occurs.

Susan: Am I just going to have to continually and persistently apply Vedanta to everything that comes up within me, and thus whittle away at this entrenched idea of being limited, etc?

Jacques: Yes, but refer to the first few paragraphs above for the details. As you imply, you already know what to do, minus the preoccupation and anxiety of trying to “get it.” You can’t get it, because you are it. It is not the experience of something obtained, it is the re-cognition of the locus of experience. Read over Chapter II of *How to Attain Enlightenment*, and it will help you get

clear about the nature of enlightenment. Relax, do what needs to be done and leave the results of how things will work out to *Bhagavan*. You are doing great, Susan. Add a little patience and eventually things will be seen for what they always were.

~ Love, Jacques