

Asking the Right Questions

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Conrad: For the sake of simplicity, the dualistic mode of writing is used. ☺

My question is about expressions like “since I knew who I was.”

Primarily, to me, exactly the same is meant here as “since I know my true nature,” referring to the non-dual description of identity: “I am simple, whole, ordinary, effortless, unchanged, Awareness,” just put in dualistic language.

Shams: Your interpretation is correct.

Conrad: Secondly/also, I notice a doubt as the result of the word “who,” whether as well or specifically, a knowing is indicated of something like the full potentiality of this apparent individual life comparable to self-actualization and/or something which is sometimes referred to as the individual soul.

Could you please comment?

Shams: I think that you are absolutely ready to get this by yourself. That’s not because I don’t want to give a direct answer to you, but because I think that it will be more useful for you to put your Vedanta to work. At the light of your comprehension of Vedanta, you could come to a valid conclusion.

Is there any other “who” apart from the self?

As for the apparent individual, will the knowledge transform it into a better version of the individual?

Is the liberation (that is knowledge) related to human potential?

Try asking this questions to yourself and, if you are not sure about them, feel free to ask here again. I would also suggest to you to inquire into the root of your doubt. Maybe you want to know what kind of change the individual will experience as the result of *moksa*. If that is the case, I should remind you that the individual will be the same.

Conrad: Also, here arises a second question to me, which seems to be related to the doubt/ignorance above: Could you comment on the term “higher self”? To me, now, the term has no clear meaning (anymore), nor a functional or true significance. As a lot of people do use it, I would be glad to have a better understanding here.

Shams: I think that you actually get it. It has no true meaning, because it's not true. That's ignorance, so we don't need to understand ignorance.

There is only one self. Try asking these questions:

Is there any other self than the self?

Maybe we would like to interpret it from the dualistic level, but even there: How many selves are there?

What are the characteristics of this higher self? Because it's different from other (lower) selves, it has to have attributes in order to be distinguishable from the other ones.

So, can we talk about a self with attributes?

As attributes are objects, a self with attributes is, then, another object appearing in awareness: What is the use of identifying a determinate set of objects with a self?

Conrad: For the rest, I can say that the further study of Advaita Vedanta, self-inquiry, and moments of silence and beauty "do their work," experiences, at moments, or short periods, of freedom from and disidentification with being "just" this *jiva*, a kind of real/vivid understanding/knowing of (to put it into words) truly being "the light on," "the space in which."

Shams: Maybe I'm wrong, but I perceive some level of confusion here.

We were talking about this on our last emails, so now it's more subtle, but it seems to me that you are still writing about experience, about how it feels.

"Periods of freedom"?

"Vivid understanding"?

"Disidentification"?

Those periods of *sattva* are not real freedom. On the contrary, they are boundaries.

Your attachment to those ideas and experiences is the result of ideas that have to be subject to intense inquiry.

So I wouldn't stop here, I wouldn't feel at home with these nice feelings.

You know that you have *moksa* when you stop thinking about knowledge as something to be felt. Knowledge is just recognising something as it is, in this case, you. It's just the absence of ignorance about who you are, because you are obvious.

But that doesn't include any special event, not even "a vivid understanding" that's clearly just another object in you, unless it eradicates the belief that you are limited by experience.

Vivid or not vivid, you are the self. Feel it or not feel that you are awareness. The *jiva* will always feel as a *jiva*. The self will always be free from experience.

The “light” and “space” are metaphors for us to understand, but only knowledge is important. When we are applying Vedanta to a *sattvic* mind we will frequently feel like that, but that doesn't matter.

Again, maybe that is not your case, but it won't hurt us to remember:

If you are waiting for the understanding to be “vivid,” you should be suspicious. Although, at the same time, it's a great thing that the knowledge feels “vivid,” we should always separate it from experience, as knowledge itself is free from periods of time and any experience.

You don't have to make any effort and you don't need to wait for any moment. You are completely free from time and space.

I know that you know it, but there's an important meaning to the fact that you don't feel like light or like spaciousness. You don't feel good or free.

You just are, but that is not a feeling.

That is just being. That is just awareness.

All those objects that appear in you are not you. They don't have a separate self; they apparently exist, but that is just because they dwell in you.

What is for the mind? The mind just has to understand that you are not it.

Any person (as every other being) will always have his or her awareness as the self.

Understanding it doesn't feel like anything. You won't lose your identification with the person. The doer will keep appearing and you won't be completely free from the sense of doership. The only difference is that it will be evident that you are free from action, but the person won't change his or her habits (not immediately).

My suggestion is for the mind to stop looking for how it feels to know or to make the “knowing moment” last longer. It's better to look directly at the knowledge: you are the self.

When you experience beauty and silence, you are the self.

When you experience dullness and sadness, you are the self.

When you experience passion and anger, you are the self.

When there is no experience, you are the self.

You are the self.

Every experience means just you, but you don't need experience.

So don't feel it. Know it. Wising up is giving up because you won't find anything there.

Just look for the meaning: I am the self, and every experience is just an object.

I hope this helps, even if it's not exactly your case and you are not seeing knowledge as experience. As it's a very subtle topic, you can elaborate on it if some doubt persists.

