

Atma Yoga

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Ravindra: *Pranam*, Swamiji. I have been practising *atma yoga* as suggested by you for some time, regularly. By *atma yoga* I mean contemplating within me that I am actionless, objectless consciousness and seeing for myself if it is true or not. And I could understand that the central message of most of the scriptures, masters such as Guru Dattatreya in *Tripura Rahasya*, *Avadhuta Upanishad*, Lord Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Vyas Muni in *Guru Gita*, *Amrita Bindu Upanishad*, *Adhyatma Upanishad*, etc. all speak of contemplating on *atman* as the eternal, objectless subject/consciousness.

Yet I feel like I need some kind of experience/realisation with which there won't be any doubt, confusion, about my real self. Whatever meditation/contemplation I have done has not resulted in such realisation.

Swami: Okay, but there is no guarantee that you will get such an experience. It is completely in the hands of *Isvara*. And there is no reason to assume that you will interpret said experience to reveal that you are ordinary, actionless awareness. Furthermore, experience of one's non-dual nature will not change your thinking patterns. You have the habit of thinking you are Ravindra, whatever that word refers to, and so after the experience has worn off, as they all do, you will go right back to doubting that you are awareness. Millions of people have had such experiences, thousands are having such experiences right now as we speak, but these people are not usually set free of their limited identities by these experiences. So I hope you get such an experiential confirmation but I would not count on it. If *Isvara* thinks you should have one, you will and if not, not.

Ravindra: So here I am again, starting from the level where I am. Please guide me further.

What I can say for sure is that "knowing" is more basic. At present, to me it looks like knower and known are later logical/mental deductions. There are various types of knowing, such as sensory perception, feeling, decision, thoughts, etc. But I cannot say for sure to whom these knowings are happening.

Swami: They are happening to you, awareness. You cannot give it a word because no word describes it except *chit*, consciousness, or awareness. You are conscious, aren't you? If you are then they are known to consciousness. You are on the right track when you inquire into knowing.

Ravindra: Basically, I am unable to find identity for the body-mind complex, or human being. What is the basis for identity?

Swami: There is no basis. You are absolutely correct. Scripture is clear about this. Good inquiry. You have the first half of the enlightenment puzzle sorted. Very good!

Ravindra: The entity that remains unaffected over time and which is partless? How to realise such entity within myself?

Swami: You cannot realize it because it is not an "it." Are you an it? If you are an it you can realize it, but you aren't. You are the one that illumines the it-thought. Ask yourself what you exist as. Not as a body or mind. But as the knower of the body mind. You have not changed, ever. This is your experience. Think about it. Thoughts and feelings, experiences have come and gone but you have not changed. Experience presents itself to you, you witness it and it goes, leaving you as you are. Isn't this true?

Ravindra: Everything that I observe in myself is something that always changes. All knowings within me are always changing.

Swami: The "myself" in this statement is you and it does not change. It is true that everything you can observe changes. Read *Drk-drksa Viveka* by Shankara.

Ravindra: I cannot find any entity that satisfies the premises for the concept/notion of identity, although theoretically I know that the entire phenomenon takes place on the substratum of consciousness.

Swami: Who is the "I" that cannot find? Look at your statement. What you are seeking is speaking in this letter. It is the I.

Ravindra: But then how to realise objectless consciousness?

Swami: I cannot be objectified so it cannot be realized. It cannot be experienced as an object. You have set yourself an impossible task. You are looking at the question in the wrong way.

Ravindra: Also, for whom is this realisation?

Swami: The I, i.e. awareness, under the spell of *avidya/maya*. There is only one I and it is apparently ignorant of itself. Fortunately, it is only apparently ignorant and not actually ignorant, so there is hope. But the solution is not through realization. It is through knowledge. I am giving you that knowledge.

Ravindra: Can phenomenon ever realise noumenon?

Swami: No. Noumenon is conscious. Phenomenon is not conscious. Noumenon knows phenomenon.

Ravindra: Also, there should not be any need of realisation for noumenon, otherwise consciousness also can get into bondage.

Swami: You do not understand *maya*. *Maya* makes awareness seem to forget what it is. It doesn't forget, it just seems to. This is why Vedanta can solve the problem by taking away your ignorance. It is only an ignorance issue, not a realization issue.

Ravindra: Then for whom is this realisation?

Swami: For you, awareness, under the spell of ignorance.

Ravindra: Actually, what is self-realisation?

Swami: The hard and fast knowledge "I am limitless, non-dual, ordinary, actionless awareness."

Ravindra: During contemplation, how should I proceed or transcend "knowing" so as to realize my real self?

Swami: Ask, "Who knows the knowing?" The answer is, "I know the knowing." The I that is asking these questions is awareness.