

Awareness Has Nowhere to Go and Nothing to Gain

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Johan: The Karoo man migrated and now I'm studying full-time right on the edge of the forest in Knysna... beautiful here! I hope you two are well. ☺ It was nice to meet you in Hout Bay last *satsang*.

Sundari: Hello, Johan, nice to hear from you again. Yes, that's a beautiful place, I know it well.

Johan: I've got two questions in me ol' discerning process...

First: Is there a difference between the shamanic connection of the God-mind (seems more feminine and earthy path) and enlightenment (which seems more masculine, transcendental and abstract)?

Sundari: One answer: all of the above are objects known to you, awareness. "God-mind" is *Isvara*, awareness associated with *maya* bringing about the creation. When *maya* is operating, objects appear and so does duality – masculine/feminine is the ultimate duality. Awareness apparently under the spell of ignorance identifies with the objects (the subtle body, or person) and then thinks it is incomplete and awareness is something other than it, something to gain.

Johan: Or is God-mind and enlightenment the same thing?

Sundari: It depends on who you think you are. If you are identified with being a person (which it seems you are) then "God-mind" could be seen as the same or different. You could see "God" as a big parent in the sky, greater than and other than you, someone or something to fear or worship. Or you could see "God" as something you have to aspire to become. Either way, you would be wrong. This is the basis of all religions.

If on the other hand you know the difference between *satya* (what is always present and unchanging, i.e. you, awareness) and *mithya* (what is temporary and always changing, i.e. everything other than you, awareness) then you will know that enlightenment is your nature and not something to gain.

Johan: Is enlightenment and self-realisation one and the same thing?

Sundari: Self-realisation is not the same as *moksa*, or "enlightenment." It is intellectual (abstract, as you call it) and experiential. Unless it is fully understood what it means to be awareness (direct knowledge), self-realisation remains only a cognitive understanding of the self, what is called indirect knowledge. Direct knowledge is gained by going through all the processes of self-

inquiry using a valid means of knowledge such as Vedanta. If the mind is qualified and the desire to be free of limitation is burning, the knowledge works to remove ignorance of your true nature. This is not abstract. It is very real and can only qualify as freedom if self-knowledge translates fully into every aspect of the *jiva's* life. This is why we say freedom is freedom from and for the *jiva* because the *jiva* never leaves the apparent reality. It just no longer takes it to be real, so is not identified with being a *jiva/person*. It knows it is awareness, the knower of all the objects. As awareness you are already free. You just have a knowledge problem.

Moksa, or enlightenment, is simple this: the ability to discriminate you, awareness, from the objects that appear in you 24/7 and never to confuse the two again. It is not experiential, it is simply the hard and fast knowledge that everything you see is made up of you, depends on you to exist and dissolves in you (awareness), but you are always free of the objects.

Johan: Secondly, can you please comment on this extract by James Hillman in his book *A Blue Fire* (Harper & Row, 1989, page 124):

“I have a world view of attachment. We live in a *gemeinschaft*. We are not solitary. If people choose to go that way, the way of detachment, I wish they will go far away to Mt. Athos or Tibet, where they don't have to be involved in the daily soup. Attachment to the world, continuity with the world, is very important. I think that the spiritual disciplines are part of the disaster of the world. They forsake the world to its pollution, its toxicity, to its corruption. And they have a defended philosophy that keeps them there.

“I think it's an absolute horror that someone could be so filled with what the Greeks called *superbia*, to think that his personal, little, tiny transcendence is more important than the world and the beauty of the world: the trees, the animals, the people, the buildings, the culture. What is the psychological pull of this transcendence? What is happening in the psyche that could make a person so incredibly self-centered? So self-centered to say, 'Goodbye brothers, goodbye children, goodbye wife, goodbye flowers, goodbye everything. I'm off to the snowy heights. I want an imageless white liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth.' And what in the world is going on in the psyche that this delusional system can so take hold? I think one has fallen to the archetype of spirit.”

Sundari: A poetic viewpoint and also correct up to a point, depending on who you think you are. As awareness you see no difference between anything, as there is only you, so there is nowhere to go, because there is nowhere you are not. There is nothing to renounce or transcend, because there is nothing but you and you are always present, whole complete and unchanging. The only thing to renounce is the one who thinks they need to renounce or transcend, the renouncer/transcender/doer identified with objects thinking that there is something to gain by taking a “spiritual” path – and something they can “do” to gain it, like joining an *ashram* or sitting on a mountain chanting and doing *yoga*. Even “enlightenment” is an object to gain to this kind of mind. It is futile because you cannot gain something you already have. You can only lose the ignorance that prevents you from knowing who you are.

There are various practices one can engage in to purify the mind, but none of them include violating *dharma*. If you have a family and responsibilities you need to do your duty first. This is why in India the householder stage is encouraged – as a necessary stage of life. If your *karma* allows it and it truly is your *dharma* to renounce the world and live apart from it, one does so only

as a preference, not a need. And one does so not because you see there is something wrong with the world or anything to gain by leaving it. One chooses the solitary life because it suits your nature and your *sadhana*: self-inquiry.

Johan: Thank you. ☺

Sundari: You are welcome.

~ *Om*, Sundari