

Firefly or Not-Firefly

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Conrad: Hello, Shams, thank you again. Your answers were of help again to further becoming aware.

One small point: as you wrote, yes, not reconnecting, but understanding is meant here. It really helps to have the right understanding/language.

I recognize that this topic (gradual or not) is not really interesting/important, it is the dualistic plane, where apparent *jiva*, ego, time, intellect and mind are “active”; who/what I really/always am (non-dually) is by definition free/enlightened, beyond every(-)thing.

Shams: Yes.

Conrad: Writing in the last email, better understanding this topic felt necessary to better see “my position on this path” because there was doubt as to where I found myself.

Shams: You can call it the inquiry phase, but that would mean that you’re not doing it completely right. An informed inquiry would show you that “my position on this path” has no sense if you want to apply the means of knowledge. Your position on the path is the no-position, as you are the one where every other position lies. Vedanta offers no concessions, and the ego maybe still thinks that there would be some kind of profit from it. The gain for the *jiva* is knowing that you are free from it. Its position will never change, except for the natural changes every other object suffers in *maya*.

Conrad: As I would describe it now, it feels like an in-between phase (so, seen from my *jiva*, deeper/more real than mental/intellectual self-realization...

Shams: You feel “like an in-between,” but what do you know? What is your reference point? In between what? You won’t go to any place, nothing won’t change, aside from the natural and constant changes of everyday life. Self-knowledge is more than intellectual, in the sense that it is not only theoretically known, but it is known as a clear, hard and undeniable truth, so that could be described as “deeper or more real than mental.” However, you are still concerned about which phase are you living, so clearly there are some ignorance thoughts thriving in the subtle body. The use of self-knowledge is that it changes your relationship to the *jiva* and the world. That is what *jnana* brings, not some kind of state or special experience, as we already know.

Conrad: ...and there is, increasingly, the sensing/knowing of “I am what is,” “I am beyond anything of, including the witnessing of, this *jiva*/life,” combined with still joy/presence/love/freedom, as if the seeking is ended (as it is called often)...

Shams: The key is the “joy/presence/love/freedom” idea. Your mind tends to interpret the *sattva* experience as completeness, as if it was the goal of the seeking of freedom. But an experience will never put end to ignorance. “I am awareness” must be hard and fast knowledge, even when *sattva* is gone. Most *jnanis* are not constantly experiencing a sea of *sattva*, but they experience the three *gunas*, knowing that they are free of them.

Conrad: ...while at other times the identification with *jiva* and world is back again, especially at the moments of feelings of fear (contraction), although also some witnessing/distance remains intact then. In this respect, it is known to me that for the enlightened person (to call it that way) it is not so that at any moment in time he/she is aware of this fact, as *jiva*.

Shams: Yes, a person who knows his or her true identity is not always repeating, “I am the self,” or “feeling” like a witness. Knowledge comes when it’s needed, as we remember our name when asked. For example, that person can experience fear, as everyone else, but also knows that nothing could touch who they are. At the same time, it’s true that the perspective of the self tends to be firmer and constant, which includes being easily aware that ego and the mind are objects too. But that is still knowledge.

Conrad: I would assume now that this is what is called the “firefly” stage. Can you please comment?

Shams: We use that term in order to explain the phenomenon of being intermittently identified with the object (the *jiva*) and the self. That could be your case. However, we only use the term because we want to point to the need of keeping applying knowledge, and that implies analyzing every idea and motivation in the light of Vedanta. For example, I recommend that you look clearly at the ideas reviewed in this *satsang*.

Conrad: Regarding your statements, “Is the self known? Then the self is realized. Is the self apparently not known? Then it’s not realized,” what I can say here/now is: the same doubt here applies, as mentioned above: “it” is known and this is not stable, something like that.

Shams: Good. So make it stable (with God’s help). You can begin by stopping looking for it (the knowledge) like it was an experience. Firefly or not-firefly, you are the self, and you can be known. So focus on knowledge.

Conrad: Also, can you comment on what you would define as “known” here? It feels as if this will be of help, although different possible answers coming forth from my studying and experience can be thought of.

Shams: “Is the self known?” here means “do I understand that I’m awareness?” or “am I completely sure that I’m awareness?” Knowing the self is first-hand knowing of something that

you always are. It's not just grasping some idea, but living the result of having applied the right ideas until confusion about who you are (you thought you were an object!) is destroyed. So what is known is not known as an exercise of intellect, but as the natural outcome of the absence of ignorance that equals knowledge of the self. We don't appreciate that absence of ignorance because it brings us a sense of "joy/presence/love/freedom," but because it frees us from thinking that we need "joy/presence/love/freedom" in order to be complete.