

How to Begin Self-Inquiry

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Frank: Thank you for this most useful information, Sundari! Seeing as my self-knowledge is still indirect, I will begin with *sravana*. What are the scripture titles? I have read the *Bhagavad Gita* a couple of times – is this one of them?

Sundari: *Sravana* is a Sanskrit word that means listening to or hearing the scriptures, which is a vital step in your self-inquiry. There is a progression to the teachings, which are taught with a very distinct methodology for a good reason. Ignorance is tenacious and hardwired. It is vitally important that you sign on to the logic and submit the mind carefully and methodically to the teachings, without interpreting them. You need to be properly taught or you will interpret the teachings in accordance with your own conditioning.

The best would be to sign on to the 12-month teaching course we offer on the website (it's free) which covers James' book *The Essence of Enlightenment*. Each chapter is a lesson, and we provide the right questions and answers. Go through it slowly and do not skip or go ahead until you have resolved all doubts as they arise, in the light of the knowledge.

If you don't want to do the course, you can buy either of James' books, *How to Attain Enlightenment* or *The Essence of Enlightenment*, in our ShiningWorld shop or at Amazon. We have thousands of pages of e-satsangs written by all the teachers on the website, a great resource. It has a search function to aid the search for answers. We also encourage you to watch as many teaching videos as possible. There is a lot available for free on YouTube as well as in the ShiningWorld shop on our website.

As I said in the list of requirements I sent you for self-inquiry, *shraddha*, faith in the scripture is essential. You need to have faith in the teachings or they will not work for you. They do not require blind faith, but faith pending the outcome of your investigation. And what all the scriptures are pointing to is the unexamined logic of your own experience: that you are always only ever experiencing awareness, that you are the whole and complete, non-dual, actionless, ordinary, ever-present, unlimited self.

If you prefer your own opinions and beliefs you can take them back, but for self-inquiry to work, you need to put them on the shelf. After all, if they had worked so well for you, you would not be inquiring. If *moksa* is what you are after and you have the requisite burning desire for liberation from suffering, Vedanta is the knowledge that ends the quest for knowledge. But you need to do the work. Self-knowledge can only obtain in a mind that is purified, prepared and totally dedicated to self-inquiry. We can help you by unfolding the teachings correctly, but we cannot do self-inquiry for you.

Frank: Can you please clarify my understanding here? Awareness seems to be centralized within the body-mind complex.

Sundari: “Seems to be” is the operative phrase – if you take yourself to be the *jiva*. The body-mind complex is reflected awareness; it is inert. It is only conscious because the light of awareness (you) shine on it, make it appear sentient and thus able to experience. The body-mind complex (or subtle body), the subtle and gross objects it has contact with and all experience, are objects known to you, awareness. All objects arise in you and depend on you to exist but you depend on nothing to exist. You are *satya* – always present and unchanging (that which is real) and the world of objects is *mithya*, only apparently real – not always present and always changing.

Frank: This is due to binding *vasanas* which continually condition the *jiva* appearing within awareness.

Sundari: Yes. Binding *vasanas* are also called *avidya*, personal ignorance of your true nature as awareness, and are caused by *maya*, the hypnosis of duality. They condition the *jiva* and hide the truth of reality as a non-duality from you.

Frank: Binding *vasanas* can become non-binding with the *yogas* you mentioned in the previous email, and through self-knowledge.

Sundari: Yes. All the *yogas* work together and are designed to remove ignorance. Only self-knowledge has the power to permanently remove ignorance, render binding *vasanas* non-binding and negate the doer. There is no action that the limited *jiva* can take to achieve a limitless result, so it is pointless to chase experience of any kind – even so-called “spiritual” experiences. *Moksa* is not an event. It is who you are and you only “gain” it by seeing that you are it. But you need to understand what that means. While self-inquiry is also an action, the result of it is self-knowledge, which is limitless.

~ Love, Sundari