

***Jnani* Is a Role Awareness Plays**

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Sasha: Dear James, I had already started reading your book before you responded but it appears that it is adding to my illusion, that is, to entertain all of these ideas and conceptualize what I already know to be inconceivable. I just want a direction, the problem is that I have already tasted the honey and any more descriptions seem to be a superimposition onto that which I know I am; do you understand my point? I want to know why I am back in time, or time is back in me.

James: You are back in time because what you experienced was only an experience and experiences take place in time. Anything that begins will end. But the one to whom the “taste of honey” presented itself is not “back in time.” It – you – were never in time in the first place. Enlightenment is not some kind of special experience. It is self-knowledge. It is knowledge of the real you, not Sasha, the apparent you.

Sasha: Knowledge is not objective; it is identity-knowledge that has vanished. What happened? Was that not knowledge?

James: You are right that knowledge is knowledge of your true identity as awareness. Knowledge did take place during your “taste of honey” but it was not firm. When the experience ended, the dormant *vasanas* sprouted and your attention went from the self to the mind. You identified with your mind and “lost” the experience. If you had retained the knowledge of who you are, you would not have written me this letter. Because they are ephemeral, epiphanies are only as good as the knowledge they bring.

Sasha: My hint is that what I read in your book is objective knowledge.

James: You need self-knowledge to cancel self-ignorance. Vedanta gets you to look at reality in such a way that the self is revealed. It destroys the ignorance that stands in the way of self-realization. I think you were reading the book with certain expectations. If you had carefully signed on to the logic at every stage you would have been convinced that self-knowledge is the only solution. I suggest that you read the first three chapters carefully again.

Sasha: How can that help a mind that doesn't even exist? I can't read this in a book, that is why I contacted you.

James: Your mind certainly does exist. Who is asking this question if it is not the mind? You definitely have a mind and it does not know who it is. Enlightenment is for the mind. It resolves the doubts the mind has about its nature. It has beliefs and opinions which you take as knowledge and these beliefs and opinions keep you from appreciating yourself as a free being.

Vedanta shows you how to examine your mind and educate it properly about the nature of experience and the experiencer. Then the mind no longer stands in the way of your happiness.

From what I can gather, you think that enlightenment is some kind of experience. Had you read the first two chapters carefully, you would think differently.

If your mind does not exist, then where did your attention go when it left the self? If went to the mind. The mind is not real, but it certainly does exist. This “the mind doesn’t exist” is a very silly teaching. As long as you believe it, there is no hope. The mind does not stand in the way of enlightenment. Only ignorance – taking the mind to be the self – stands in the way of freedom. It is the mind that is ignorant. Liberation is for the mind. You are already free.

Sasha: I know that these things can only be individually addressed, and in my current circumstances what I long for is the timeless presence I know I am. Do I just conform to the fact that Grace will arise when it does? Is that even possible?

James: Grace is earned, Sasha. You can wait as long as you want, but the likelihood of self-knowledge dawning in your mind is about the same as winning the lottery. You have to create the conditions that allow grace to operate. This means that you need to give up the experiential notion and dedicate yourself to self-inquiry. Self-inquiry, if done properly, leads to self-knowledge which sets you free. You need self-knowledge because you are already free. But, owing to ignorance, you do not know it. Please read Chapter II very carefully. Give up all the notions you have about what you want and just read it dispassionately. When you understand the argument put forth in that chapter, you will be capable of self-inquiry. With the idea you have now, you will only end up frustrated.

Sasha: I am sorry, but I do not know what to expect of a teacher, I have never talked to anyone. Perhaps this was a silly idea. Forgive me if I am being too inquisitive and too impatient. Let me know what you think. I do not want to waste your precious time.

James: I am glad you wrote, Sasha. You need a teacher. It is the only way. If you were capable of removing self-ignorance by yourself, you would have done so by now, considering how badly you want to be free. I will try to help you, if you want. But you need to read the first three chapters in my book again. Take your time. Then write to me again and tell me what you think. How you understand these ideas will tell me if I can help you.

~ Love, James

Sasha: Hello, James. Thank you for your response. Thank you very much for your intention to help me.

I was contemplating the amount of books that have been written on meditation and Vedanta, and I have concluded that after dedicating so many years to reading them, they only end up in an increase of thoughts rather than a decrease. What I am looking for is the Grace that flows from a *jnani*.

I would hope if you question a *jnani* he will answer based on his experience of the self. He will not need to quote Vedantic texts. His experience of the self should be sufficient to answer all spiritual problems.

Of course you will wonder if I am qualified, but you won't be able to tell me by asking me to stick to the reasoning of what you wrote. I know I am qualified and I do not hold an "experiential" view of enlightenment as you assumed I do. I know that the encounter of knowledge and experience harmonizes perfectly INTO and AS that which I am and all is... I am looking to untie some residual knots that prevent me from accessing that which I KNOW to be reality, for the dissolution of that which wants access. Are you a *jnani*?

~ Love, Sasha

James: Hi, Sasha. I don't know why you think that the words of a *jnani* are any different from scripture. Vedanta is just the words of *janis*. They are called *rishis* or *mahatmas* or *janis*. In any case, I can understand your problem with scripture because if you do not know who you are, you will not be able to understand the true meaning of the words. You will interpret them according to your beliefs and opinions and they will not be helpful. Many people are in this predicament and they conclude that the scripture is useless.

But you are right in that you need to hear the scripture from the mouth of a living *mahatma*. But even then, just because a person is a *jnani* does not mean that he or she is a skillful communicator or that he or she is qualified to teach you. Sometimes the words of *janis* are just plain nonsense. You can listen to *janis* all you want, but if their words do not correspond to scripture they are not *janis*. There is this fantasy in the spiritual world that enlightenment somehow qualifies a person to enlighten someone else. It is not true. You can get just as confused from the words of enlightened people as you can from wordly people.

You ask if I am a *jnani*. Many people say that I am. I do not say that I am. I do not say that I am not. Only a *jnani* knows a *jnani*. So if you want to ask me a question and you find that the answer is helpful, then I am a *jnani* for that question. "*Jnani*" is not a status. A *jnani* is only a *jnani* if there is some kind of doubt. Otherwise he or she is just awareness. *Jnani* is just a role awareness plays when it is asked a question. If there is no question, there is no *jnani*. If my answer is not helpful, you can ask someone else. So if you want to tell me what residual knots are holding you back, I will see if I can help you.

~ Love, James