

Self-Knowledge Rearranges Perception

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Lynn: Dear James, thank you very much for Vedanta weekend seminar in London (Surrey). Since then my confidence as awareness got stronger, “standing as awareness” became easier and “stays” for longer period of time. A few days ago it became clear to me how ignorance works (how words and thoughts/ideas take me from “here and now” into the “world”) and I have been contemplating “there is no other,” “there is no ‘there,’” “all ‘creation’ is always here and now” and “all is in me.” That contemplation has released some quite strong reactions/emotions that I would like to ask you about.

Perception: everything around becomes flat, small but somehow intimate and close; sometimes it seems like a movie; for example, the walls are not solid but shimmering. I see myself in all people: everybody is a different “aspect of me” (that perspective comes and goes, it is not steady). Together with this perspective, a feeling of smallness, almost like “limited dream” arises, strong feeling/thought of “the end” arises, loneliness arises, a thought like “is that all?,” maybe even fear arises... sometimes my head feels dizzy (I do not know if that has anything to do with this realisation).

I realise that all these feelings and thoughts are objects in me, and with the knowledge I keep purifying my mind. I just want to ask you what you think of that “state” because, to be honest, this is quite a surprise for me (if anything, I expected bliss, limitlessness, fullness to arise...). Somehow it does not feel like limitless awareness at all. And yet, with the perspective switch to “Lynn” there is a feeling of “wanting it back.” I would appreciate a word of comment.

Thank you for everything.

~ Love, Lynn

James: Hi, Lynn. It was very nice to meet you in Surrey and very nice to hear from you. I could tell that the Vedanta would affect you deeply. It is good. I will try to explain what is happening and set your mind at ease.

Contemplation of these teachings can definitely rearrange perception. This is because the knowledge brings about a shift in your orientation and instead of seeing from the perspective of Lynn you see as awareness. There is a difference between the way awareness sees the world and a conditioned mind sees the world. For example, the world seems to be solid and substantial to the mind because the senses objectify it. But to awareness the world is like a movie on a shimmering screen. Awareness sees no difference between itself and the objects appearing in it, but there appears to be a difference to the conditioned mind. This is confusing at first. You are in what I call the “firefly” stage. You “blink on” as awareness and you “blink off” when your perspective shifts back to the mind.

The “feeling of smallness” is one of the perceptions that appears when you first start to experience as awareness. The scriptures say awareness is “the smallest of the small.” It is just a feeling. It will go before long. It means you are very subtle, “subtler than the subtlest,” to quote the

Upanishad.

The feeling of “the end” is the understanding that this perspective is the ultimate point of view, i.e. awareness. There is nothing beyond it. It means that your seeking is basically over, although there are some things to clear up.

The feeling of loneliness is actually a feeling of aloneness, which is the nature of awareness. Awareness is all there is. There is nothing else. The ego is interpreting it as loneliness. It sees it as a kind of separation, a loss. It may take some time to get used to this feeling. Eventually it will go away. You can get depressed if you identify with this feeling.

The feeling “is that all?” is the ego’s sense of disillusionment when it realizes that enlightenment is no big deal. It is quite a shock. You expect bells and whistles and amazing bliss and all you have is just you, naked and uncomplicated.

The fear is the ego not wanting to let go of its familiar orientation. It has become comfortable in ignorance and it is not sure that it wants freedom.

The dizziness is confusion. You are switching back and forth from one state to another, and it is confusing.

The way you are seeing it is correct. All these feelings are just objects and have nothing to do with you.

Limitless awareness does not “feel” like anything. It is not an experience. Experiences, these strange sensations, appear in you, awareness, but do not affect it. The perceiver-feeler entity’s perception is just being purified by the knowledge. Don’t worry about it. Don’t resist it. Everything perceptively will go back to normal before long, but your relationship to perception will be different. There is still a part of you that is identified with the old way of seeing, so there is a kind of tug of war.

Oh, yes, your observation about how words take you from awareness to the world is very astute. It is true. Ignorance is just the wrong words and knowledge is the right words. The right words set awareness free from apparent ignorance. The wrong words confuse it. Well, it is not the words themselves, but their meaning.

I hope this is helpful.

~ Much love, Ram