

Taking a Stand as Awareness: (Just) a Practice

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Hugh: I see that I just had experiences, that experiences come and go. I just had some sort of thought and feeling that was comfortable regarding me not being the perceiver. Yet, of course, I perceived that experience, so I was the perceiver.

Yes, I think there is some sort of expectation of a signal. One signal my mind seems to be looking for is the thought that “I’ve finally got it!” I think that James, you and others must have had some sort of final realization like this at some point. If you didn’t know that you “get it” then you wouldn’t be confident teaching self-knowledge.

Shams: You realize that you got it when you no longer care about it. As long as you think “I got it” you still believe that you are a doer. So you don’t think that you got *moksa*, you KNOW that you are it. On the other hand, yes, realization is an event in time, but the reaction of the *jiva* is more like “So after all this time, it was only this. Duh.” Eternal liberation from suffering is nothing special. It’s just the end of ignorance.

Hugh: I guess it doesn’t really matter to me as an individual whether someone is enlightened or not, other than that it might help me pick my friends and acquaintances better. James has said that it can benefit someone to be around self-realized people.

Shams: In that chapter James says that the best company is yourself. As I explained before, you cannot know by immediate knowledge if someone knows the self. Also, it’s not like you’re gonna find enlightened people everywhere. It’s most likely that you won’t find anyone. However, that’s not a problem. *Arati janasamsadi* is one of the twenty *dharmic* values established on the *Gita* and it means “absence of the desire of company.” Nevertheless, if you want to choose a friend, the best idea is to look for the *gunas*. If you associate with *rajasic* or *tamasic* people your mind will automatically get *rajasic* and *tamasic*, but if you are around *sattvic* souls the mind will keep its *sattva*.

Hugh: I don’t understand how to take my identity as awareness completely. In my first response from you and in this one you have mentioned that I have a problem with “superimposition of the self.” Can you point me to some scripture or something to contemplate regarding this issue? I (as an individual mind) don’t really get what I’m doing wrong here.

Shams: There is this “practice” that we recommend called “taking a stand as awareness.” You are doing it right even when you fake it because it also can be done when you are not completely clear about how this is true. However, that practice is not your final target; what you are really looking for is direct knowledge, and the intellectual action of thinking of awareness as yourself is just a step towards it. When I talked about taking completely your identity as awareness, I meant

this direct knowledge.

I mentioned the “superimposition” issue just to address the possible confusion between levels, i.e. giving the subtle body the characteristics of the self, and vice versa. If you understand that the witness is always free and the only reality and, at the same time, understand that the bodies still exist in their own levels (which includes getting benefits from knowing that pleasure is not in the object and the obligation to act according with *dharma*), there is no confusion. Every text on Vedanta with an informed explanation can be a good means to clarify this. I don't think you have a special doubt about this.

Hugh: My understanding is that God is the doer. God = the total. God depends on me, awareness, to do. I, as an individual mind, am just one part of the total. I, as an individual, don't really understand the whole thing. I, as awareness, am unconcerned.

Shams: Right, *Isvara* is the doer.

I think that your understanding is very good and your inquiry is advancing. But remember that ignorance is hardwired, so it won't go away that easily. You have to keep looking at your thoughts in order to remove every little speck of ignorance. I think I didn't ask you what is your practice, but I assume that you are doing some kind of *sadhana*. Meditation especially would be a good practice for the mind, plus the big actions to change your life situation.

When you finish *How to Attain Enlightenment* I recommend you to read the e-*satsangs*. You can use Google to look for specific topics. Just write “site:shiningworld.com” and then the words related with the topic. Everything is there. And of course you can always ask here.