

The Assimilation of Self-knowledge is More than an Anti-climactic End

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Hi Ted,

I've had this question formulating in the mind since I'm now listening to James' latest 73-hour Panchadasi series of talks (AMAZING information I must say).

Ted: Yes! Panchadasi is my favorite. Bear in mind, however, that the content is not just information, but is an analysis of you, awareness, and concerns both your immanent and transcendent aspects—that is, your true identity as pure awareness and your apparent identity as *Isvara* (i.e., the material substance of the manifestation as well as the laws that govern the universal order), within which obtains both your macrocosmic appearance as *jagat* (i.e., the total manifest universe) and your microcosmic appearance as *jiva* (i.e., the apparent individual). The scriptures are not philosophical dissertations that support a theory, but rather detailed analyses of the self that reveal its essential nature as limitless conscious existence.

Barrett: Thru listening to James' talks for 2,000 hours during the past two years I've been unknowingly trying to have the Jiva understand what Awareness/the Self is. This hasn't worked.

Ted: The *jiva* can know what awareness/the self is. Knowledge occurs in the intellect, and thus it is only the *jiva*—more specifically, the human being—that can know the self. The limitless self cannot be known as an object, for it is all-pervasive and, thus, has no edges/boundaries or qualities/characteristics by which it can be distinguished from any other object. But it can be known. Think about it. You know you exist, don't you? That which illumines the mind and thereby enables the mind to register the thought of limitlessness within which the mind itself as well as all its content obtains is you. You know you exist. You simply haven't understood your true limitless nature.

Now, due to the trick of *maya* by means of which a portion of awareness gets associated with the projection of a particular body-mind-sense complex and as a consequence of *avidya* (i.e., self-ignorance) identifies with that instrument, the portion of you that is associated with the mind of the apparent individual you seem to be will never know what is beyond the scope or range of that mind. Therefore, you—limitless awareness—in association with the limited instrument of a particular mind and appearing as an individual person will never have access to all the objective phenomena obtaining within the total “field” of your being at any time. Still, the mind can understand that the awareness illumining it is the same awareness that contains the entire universe. By analogy, the mind can know itself to be awareness in the same way that the wave can know itself to be water.

Barrett: I had the thought last week: It seems that the only way to fully 'understand' what I am is to understand what I am not. I am not anything related to 'being human'. Basically, everything that I'm taking myself as, as a human being, is NOT what I am. Experiences, the body/mind complex, even birth/existence/death of the body is not what I am, essentially.

Ted: What you say is true. Though it is more appropriate to say that while all objective phenomena or “anything related to being human” is you, you are not it. That is, given the non-dual nature of reality, there is no other material source for objects other than you. You are the “substanceless substance” that is the substratum of all objects. Since you are limitless, however, no limited object—or, for that matter, even the collective of all objects—can comprehensively define, delineate, or constitute you. Moreover, something cannot have come out of nothing, so you must exist “prior to” all objects, and therefore your own being is essentially free of all objects. While all objects depend upon you for their existence, your existence depends on nothing other than itself.

Barrett: With this reversal of viewing this in mind, it seems very, very simple to grok this. But this leads to the follow-up pondering of "Then what does it 'mean' to be awareness?"

I'm not meaning meaning-meaning, per se, as I know James states that asking 'Why?' is the wrong question, as the Jiva is asking the question.

What I'm meaning is what does it mean to BE Awareness. I know, I know - it's/I am limited, unborn, ever-present, and ordinary. But these are descriptors to me.

Ted: When you recognize that your true nature is limitless, unborn, ever-present, and yet ordinary, these terms will cease to be descriptors. But okay for now.

Barrett: I'm meaning, what does it mean to simply exist as Awareness, once the Jiva is taken out of the equation? What was I five billion years ago? What will I be five billion years from now? Or even, since time doesn't exist in Awareness, what am I in deep dark space right now?

I understand that in macrocosmic Awareness there are no objects and there is no experiencing. Scripture says that there is simply Awareness, existing.

Ted: Yes, but you are in macrocosmic awareness right now. Or, more accurately, you—not the mind, albeit, but you—are macrocosmic awareness right now. Everything, including the sense of limitation you experience right now exists within you. So, actually, there are objects in awareness, and experiencing does take place within awareness. Awareness-as-such is neither the objects (again, no limited object can comprehensively constitute limitless awareness) nor the experiencing entity (again, limitless awareness is not the limited mind), but truly speaking there is nothing other than awareness. So, whatever the apparent person/mind experiences is actually awareness, but not in the sense of the object itself constituting or representing the essential identity the limitless whole.

Barrett: Honestly, if this is my essence, if this is what I am, it doesn't seem very appealing to simply be eternal existence, without objects or experiences.

Right now, an analogy is if a teaching existed that wanted me, the person, to ultimately understand that I am 'space' (I know James has said several times that space is the closest analogy to Awareness, but it's missing consciousness), that isn't much to get excited about or have solace about.

Trust me, I'm not looking for an experience of bliss about this, I'm just wanting to understand why such an effort is underway which seems to 'end' in an understanding of what I am, which in-and-

of-itself seems lackluster and anti-climactic?

What am I missing about this?

Thank you in advance for your input, which I highly value.

Barrett :-)

Ted: Well, on the one hand, you are right—self-realization is a big, fat letdown...or, as you put it, at least rather anti-climactic. You simply realize that you are the conscious existence you've always been.

On the other hand, assimilating the understanding that the conscious existence you've always been—experience to the contrary notwithstanding—is limitless and, thus, all-pervasive and non-objectifiable and that, therefore, your essential nature is entirely unaffected by the presence, absence, or quality of objects affords you complete freedom from the suffering that unavoidably ensues when you think that you are incomplete and need objects—and, more specifically, objects of specific character that correlate to your *guna*-rooted, *vasana*-based, *raga-dvesha*-influenced desires—in order to feel secure and be happy. It isn't that we are trying to nullify experience. There is nothing wrong with experience. We are trying to eliminate suffering. When you know that you are okay no matter what happens, that nothing can enhance or diminish your essential being, then you are free to enjoy objects without the angst that accompanies the vain attempt to wring joy out of them.

So, it's not the "experience" of our nature that we are after, for that which is limitless and, thus, non-objectifiable (i.e., without quality or characteristic) cannot be experienced as such. The unshakeable conviction in the truth of our inviolable goodness/wholeness/completeness, however, eliminates all binding desire and, therefore, allows us to abide in a deep sense of security and wellbeing and even revel from time to time in the experiential bliss that is its emotional reflection.

All the best,

Ted