

The Difference Between *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and Deep Sleep

Ram (James Swartz)

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Manigandan: James, would you please clarify for me what the differences are between *nirvikalpa samadhi* and deep sleep? If I understand it correctly, the mind is absent in both cases. If that is true, the person in *nirvikalpa samadhi* is not aware that he is in *samadhi*, just like when we are in deep sleep we are not aware of that state. Is my understanding correct?

~ Thanks, Manigandan

James: Hi, Manigandan. In terms of *moksa* there is no difference, since the intellect needs to be available for self-knowledge to take place. But there is a difference. In deep sleep there is an experiencer. It is called *prajna*, the deep sleeper. It is not the waking state entity, but it is a transformation of the waker into a "*suksma vritti*," a subtle thought, that makes the experience of limitless/bliss without thoughts possible. In *nirvikalpa samadhi* there is no *vritti*, no *vikalpa*, so there is not even the experience of limitlessness. As far as the waker is concerned, the knowledge of the *samadhi* is only inferential, since the waker is a grosser transformation of *prajna*, the sleeper. In *nirvikalpa* there is no knowledge. The self "experiences" itself without the aid of an experiencing entity, which is to say that it is an experienceless experience, i.e. no experience at all.

~ James