

The Immediacy of Knowledge

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Tony: Hi, James. Hoping all is well for both you and Sundari.

James: It is great. We are totally happy.

Tony: I've been reading a lot of Dayananda recently and came upon a paragraph that could be added to the knowledge/experience presentation. Or maybe you have already mentioned it somewhere that I am unaware of.

“Vedanta is the immediacy of knowledge. When that immediacy is presented as experience, confusion follows. This confusion has arisen, at least in part because there is a word in Sanskrit, ‘*anubhava*,’ which has been translated in English simply as ‘experience.’ Such a translation causes the expectation of a ‘happening,’ not a ‘seeing.’ I would rather translate ‘*anubhava*’ as immediate knowledge. *Gurupadesam anusrtya bhavati iti anubhavah*. That which is in keeping with the teaching is called *anubhava*. For the qualified student, that which comes after the teaching is knowledge in keeping with the teaching. But instead, *anubhava* is translated everywhere as ‘experience,’ which does not bring the correct understanding that what is indicated is immediate knowledge.”

~ *Dialogues with Swami Dayananda*, p. 32

James: Yes, the translation of *anubhava* is the culprit. It frames knowledge as experience. The problem is that on the *paramarthika* level knowledge and experience are non-separate. But the teachings of Vedanta are meant to discriminate the self and the not-self, so you need to understand the distinction between them from the perspective of the not-self, i.e. the apparent reality. If you translate *anubhava* as experience only you give the impression that enlightenment is a particular kind of experience – which it isn't. Experience is the self but the self is not experience. You are always it and you are always experiencing it. Not realizing this fact, you want to experience it. If you read a commentary on a Vedanta text by someone with a *yoga* background, the word will take on experiential ramifications. *Anubhava* is defined as “that which is in keeping with the teaching.” The teaching of Vedanta is that *moksa* is *jnanam*, knowledge. So *anubhava* means “knowledge of what is immediate.” What is immediate is you. There is nothing between you and yourself, i.e. there is no media. When you take yourself to be the experiencing entity, you believe you need media to get you to the self. The media is a special experience, an epiphany.

There are non-dual experiences in which the subject and the object are known to be one. However, they never last. They are valuable nonetheless if you take them as *anubhava*, vehicles delivering immediate knowledge. The knowledge is *moksa*. It is always true irrespective of the nature of one's experience. When you define *moksa* experientially you have the problem of the impermanence of discrete experiences. You can never make a discrete experience last. The self is like weather. There is always weather. But it is not like a sunny day, because there are always cloudy days. If a person says he or she began experiencing the self at a certain moment and that the experience never ended, he or she is ignorant because the self was there before the experience of the self ensued. This is why 99% of

enlightenment is only indirect knowledge, little better than faith. Enlightenment is self-knowledge, not self-experience. Self-knowledge is never absent, but self-experience is.