

The Most Obvious Thing

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Follow this train of thought with a totally open mind. At the end you'll know what the intention is but for now it's better not to know. Understand that what I'm saying is totally obvious. I'm not tricking you and I'm not showing you something you don't already know. So if you think, "Yeah, so what?..." while you read this, that's perfect. There's nothing elusive here.

What is the most familiar experience to you?

Doesn't it seem like that should be easy to answer? I know it's a very general question but still, doesn't it seem like you should easily know what your most familiar experience is? Think about it for a second before reading on. The answer is soooo obvious that most people won't get it.

When you experience something all of the time and it never ever changes it's hard to catch, like gravity. Gravity is pushing strongly on your body all of the time. It's always there but you never notice it, because it's always there.

What's interesting about the most familiar experience to you is that it too is a constant like gravity but you can know it. Although it never ever changes you can be aware of it. So what is it?

The most familiar experience to you is that you exist. Every single thing you experience/know happens within the context that you exist. Super-obvious, right? But it doesn't come to mind because it's in the background and it's something we don't think much about, because – it's always there. While you're thinking about this fact right now, that you exist, you instantly feel or sense or experience or know your existence in some way, don't you?

How do you know you exist? Well, you just know it, that's all. It's not because you see, or hear, or feel, or think or anything else. It's just the most basic knowing that every person has, that they exist. Knowing that you exist is the most obvious, basic, fundamental, ongoing thing you experience/know, and you know you exist simply because you know it.

Nothing new here, I'm just pointing out what you already know, all of the time.

Existence can also be called awareness. Those two words mean exactly the same thing. The most familiar experience to you is that you are aware. Existence, awareness, has to be there or you don't experience/know anything. Or you could say that existence, or awareness, has to be there or you aren't there. This is completely obvious to anyone who takes the time to think about it.

I want to show you how completely normal and obvious awareness is to you. Have I succeeded? Are you bored yet, thinking, "Yes, of course I know what awareness is, how could I not, can we please move on?" If not, re-read the above until you just can't stand it anymore.

As far as I can see, there are two cruxes to realizing the self, assuming you are James' student. One is *vasanas*, and the solution to those is self-inquiry. Apply the knowledge of truth to the ignorance of the mind, over and over and over, and you will eventually knock 'em out enough to

get the goods. It's like a chalkboard. When you take the eraser (self-inquiry) to the board you're cleaning the old stuff (*vasanas*) up. Take a few swipes with the eraser and you'll see an immediate difference, which is a wonderful thing with Vedanta. However, some of that chalk has been on there for a long time and needs many swipes and a bit of elbow grease. If you doubt that the eraser will work it won't work, because you're not using it. But use it consistently and absolutely; for sure, it will eventually work. That's self-inquiry.

The second crux is the false idea that when you realize the self you will discover something new. That's wrong, you won't. You don't discover anything new, and it's a problem because if you're constantly looking for something new then you're looking in all the wrong places, essentially feeding the ignorance. In fact when you realize the self what happens is that you see that the most obvious and familiar experience to you – your existence/awareness – is what you've been looking for. That's why James says it's not a big deal nor is it an experience.

Our thoughts, feelings and body are obvious to us. We all have them and we all know that they are separate things. Our existence/awareness is obvious to us too, super-obvious, but nobody ever told us that existence/awareness is another separate thing. So we assumed that our obvious sense of existence/awareness comes from the body. It doesn't. It's a separate thing. There's your body, your thoughts, your feelings, your ego and your awareness/existence. They are all separate things.

Your basic awareness, which is the same thing as your basic existence, is actually a separate thing from your body, mind, feelings, ego and intellect. Not only is it separate from those different aspects of "you," it is actually what witnesses them, and – it is what you actually are.

Thinking about this won't necessarily enlighten you though it certainly could. But it may be helpful for the second crux, because when you're doing your self-inquiry and you apply the knowledge "I am awareness" don't let your mind get all magical about "what is this mysterious awareness?" Even if you don't fully grasp it be confident that the awareness you are thinking about is nothing more than that which is the most familiar experience to you – your existence.

It really is that simple.

~ Christian Leeby