

# The Self without Self-Knowledge

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Helen:** Dear James, thanks for your email. I value the guidance.

This email that I sent earlier I think was lost, so here it is again. Specifically, I wanted to answer the question you asked me to think about and get your feedback on two ideas, please.

The knowledge is working, self is a focus almost all the time and deepening, even during the day while I work. I realise that I don't have any choice other than allow this, my mind is like a flower opening.

James' quote: "The knowing is in the subtle body. You, the self, are the one who knows the knowing. Think about the word 'inner' with reference to what is this knowing 'in.'" Please get back to me with the answer.

The self has no "inner," in fact I have had the full realisation that my body is in me (especially when I teach).

**James:** A bit of a red flag here, Helen. When you say "especially when I teach" the trick is to see that it is "in you" when you are not teaching, otherwise the knowledge is just experiential, meaning it depends on an activity. "In" just means that the body is an object to you, awareness. It is something to be known, irrespective what you are doing, how things look, feel or seem.

**Helen:** I just knew it to be true. Intuition has served me well to find a reflected self, and I'm glad to have had that. My subtle body has held a beautiful reflection for me, often clear enough to see. I now must break the habit of "seeking" the "inner reflection," and as you so beautifully put it, and "take a stand in awareness," moving from seeking to seeing to being.

**James:** Yes. Liberation is not experiential. The self is not an object of perception. But, as you say, perception is good because it got you here.

**Helen:** I guess I never had the confidence to claim it, until now. I have a voice in my head right now that is flabbergasted, tearful with happiness that this may actually be real. And immediately I look for the awareness noticing that Helen is flabbergasted, and I am that awareness; then the mind is still and the emotion passes.

**James:** Self-esteem means that you esteem yourself as awareness. It is a shift from one identity to another. When you inquire into the word "Helen" you can't find anything substantial behind it, apart from awareness. If when you think Helen you know that it refers to awareness, no problem.

**Helen:** When self-realisation happens, why does it not come with complete self-knowledge? Why does the full Vedanta not naturally come with the self?

**James:** Complete self-knowledge includes the “not-self,” the apparent reality. When you have an experience of the reflection of the self in the subtle body, the mind is focused solely on the self, not on the body, mind, world, etc. But the body/mind/world is also the self. It is not non-existent. So the focuser, the ego, does not understand the relationship between the apparent self – the body/mind/world – and the pure self when it realizes the self. It tends to dismiss the apparent reality. This is the situation with most modern teachers. Their vision is one-way, not all-encompassing. It is only the first stage. The self encompasses the apparent reality. The vision of non-duality is panoramic, not focused on the self. It includes the one who has realized the self within it. You cannot live free here unless you understand the relationship between the apparent and the real. As long as you think you have realized the self, you have not realized who you are, because you are everything that is and the witness of everything that is.

**Helen:** An answer forms in my mind; let me test it with you: “Vedanta is in *dharma*, it is a gift to find the self. The self is outside of Vedanta, self has no need for it. Vedanta is not for the self, it is for the mind seeking the self. Hence finding the self is not finding Vedanta. Vedanta is a way, a gift to remove ignorance.” Yes/no?

**James:** Yes. “Vedanta is in *dharma*” is not correct. Vedanta is only a *pramana*, a means of self-knowledge, that includes the knowledge of *dharma* and *adharma*, the real and the apparent.

I think you mean that Vedanta is in the *dharma* field, the apparent reality. In the *dharma* field both *dharma* and *adharma* exist.

**Helen:** I’ll try another question: Why would the self seek to make contact with me?

**James:** Because you have invoked it through your seeking. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. Remember, you are the self. You cannot tolerate bondage, because your nature is freedom, so everything you have done is an attempt to contact it.

**Helen:** If when I was sad and lonely as a kid, why did a voice and presence become known and speak in my mind with comfort and wisdom? The nature of the self seems not to be of the seeking or reaching type.

**James:** True, it is not a seeker. But it becomes a seeker when ignorance is functioning. If you look at it from the point of view of Helen, whoever that is (or was), it was because she had done some kind of *yoga* in a previous birth or births.

James’ quote: “The self was not seeking, it was already there. Past actions cleared the mind enough to hold a window open; when the window was open and you turned inwards, the light illuminated the mind with the self. The light was experienced by the body and the mind – as

peace, as wisdom, as a friend. The body and mind were young, so in ignorance they took the presence/light for an object. When Helen's body died, the mind felt the subtle body, but then took it to be an object."

**Helen:** Does the self have a voice?

**James:** It "speaks" as silence and it speaks words through every mouth. If it can't speak, it will not be the self, because the self is limitless. How could it not have the power to speak? In reality, only the self speaks. But when it is apparently ignorant of who or what it is, it speaks ignorance. Vedanta is the self speaking loud and clear.

**Helen:** The self has no voice, voice is in duality, voice is in *dharma*. A clear mind can formulate the words from the reflection as long as you see you are not the voice or the words. Then the words form in the reflection of the clear mind.

**James:** Yes, but to make sure the words are true, the one who sees should check to see that they do not contradict scripture. The operative word in this statement is the word "you." Who is the you?

**Helen:** James, it must feel good to watch someone find the treasure of all lifetimes. Thank you for being the teacher I never expected to find and am so grateful I have.

**James:** It is a great pleasure to see the self wake up to itself, Helen. Appreciation is always appreciated.

**Helen:** Recently I notice I am attached to *sattva* – specifically, the "inner voice" that has been my companion, love and guide throughout life. I became very sad this week with a thought that claiming the self-identity which is voiceless is the loss of the reflected self. What helps is the understanding that all is the self, there is no loss, only gain. Yes?

**James:** Well, loss is one way to look at it, albeit not a particularly satisfying one. It is best to interpret what is happening as freedom. It is time to stand alone, to be the "voice." You do not need a companion. You do not need support. Alone means "all one."

At the same time, you do not actually lose anything. The self is not voiceless, Helen. It speaks everywhere in everything. When your understanding is complete, every word you speak will be truth.

**Helen:** It's an old fear maybe. When I was 18 I knew my soul and had the sudden fear of my soul's merger with what felt like a oneness/source. I was curious about the fear and felt like it was old. I hope Vedanta will knit the knowledge together to resolve this for me. There is also a lessening of desires for worldly things (though I've not been a "stuff" person ever), it's more the

game of life that is losing its lustre. Simplicity and balance are a new practical focus, as well as self-knowledge.

**James:** Seeing the inherent emptiness of life is a sign that self-knowledge is taking root in you. It is a good sign. When you are certain that you cannot be emptied, the joy you previously took from life will be known to have been coming from you all along. The only thing lost though inquiry is ignorance. If you have taken ignorance to be the truth, then enlightenment can be painful. In fact as the ignorance goes, bliss grows.

~ Love, James