

The Suffering Stopped

Ram (James Swartz)

2016-04-19

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2664>

Martin: Dear James, I would like to thank you for the great days in Bad Meinberg. Thank you for your dedication and love and for sharing your knowledge about the scriptures with us.

I remember that I wrote you once that Vedanta saved my life, and it is true! ☺

I would like to share with you something that I notice about my understanding and that I have shared with Arlindo also.

I have been studying Vedanta almost every day for the last year-and-a-half, and maybe three or four months ago I realized that I had stopped suffering. Life was great and I was always in bliss, but not an experiential bliss. It was more like a bliss of knowing that nothing can hurt me and the rest of my life will be great. It's not a bliss that I feel, it's a bliss that I am.

There was not a breaking point. It happened really slowly, piece by piece.

It was like I knew that I was formless and eternal. But I didn't have a limitless thought. It was like I knew I was awareness but awareness that belongs to the body, not the limitless awareness.

Maybe something like, "I am *atman*, but I don't know I am *brahman*."

James: It was lovely to see you in Bad Meinberg! I'm so happy to get this email from you. It seems Vedanta has done what it is supposed to do: stop the suffering. It seems you have assimilated the knowledge as well. Your statement that the bliss is not experiential but is the bliss of self-knowledge is a perfect description of *moksa*. I could not have expressed it better myself. Your last statement, that you know you are *atman* but not *brahman* is strange, however, because *atman* and *brahman* are one. *Atman* is limitless; it doesn't belong to the body. You must have realized you are *atman* because you say that you are formless and eternal. Formless and eternal both mean limitless. Formless means spatially unlimited and eternal means not limited by time. Also, there is no such thing as a limitless thought, only the thought "I am limitless." All thoughts are limited. I think you are confused about the teaching of awareness with reference to *jiva* and to *Isvara*. If you want to explain what you think is the difference between *atman* and *brahman*, maybe I can help you get it straight. But this statement has nothing to do with your self-knowledge or your self-experience. People often assimilate the knowledge but it takes them some time to realize it. It is, as you say, a gradual process. I wouldn't believe the thought that you haven't realized *brahman*, Martin. Maybe it is just the doer trying to stay in business and keep you striving for something more. But I think it is just a confusion about the teaching on *jiva* and *Isvara* 1.

Martin: Thank you for your answer to my email. It was wonderful to receive it.

Shankaracharya wrote in *Vivekachudamani*:

“The fool thinks: I am the body. The intelligent man thinks: I am an individual soul united with the body. But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as the only reality, and thinks: I am *Brahman*.”

What’s happening to me is that I had the understanding “I am awareness” but I am considering this awareness as the soul united with the body, which I called *atman*. But of course I know it is not like the soul in the religions. It is formless and eternal awareness. So why can’t I say that this awareness, me, is *brahman*?

Probably because, as you wrote in your email, I, the *jiva*, am waiting for something transcendental that allows me to say: “I am the limitless awareness and my 25-year search is over!” Maybe something like I read in your biography, that three days after Swamiji prepared you, you were in your bedroom, then the last doubt disappeared and you had the best tea of your life. Or as Arlindo, that in the same way had a special moment when he knew the search was over and he saw the world as light and he had an extraordinary bliss for 20 days.

James: In a way I wish I’d never written it that way, although it is not untrue. It has caused doubts in others too. This may sound strange but you can be finished and not know you are finished. Enlightenment is a gradual process, often punctuated with peak experiences. As your understanding becomes more refined and as your lifestyle gets more *sattvic*, the bliss of the self becomes more and more obvious. And during that period it is possible to identify with doubts that were created long ago even though you know that you are awareness. If you know what ignorance is, you won’t take the doubt seriously and think it means that you aren’t limitless awareness. But if your mind is not clear, there is room for you to identify with the doubt.

Martin: In my case I didn’t have a turning point. It was like, “Hey, what happened? I am not searching anymore and my suffering disappeared!” ☺ But of course during this process I had some interesting non-dual experiences. I remember last year, after Bad Meinberg, I went to Vienna. I was seated on a park bench and I noticed that I hadn’t moved myself from Bad Meinberg. What happened was that Bad Meinberg disappeared and Vienna appeared in front of me... nice. ☺

Around six months ago I was in Brazil, in a gym. Suddenly I noticed an “expansion” in my awareness and I was observing everything that was happening in the gym but there was no time. Things were just happening in an eternal moment. Then slowly my awareness came back to normal perception and I felt the sensation of time appearing and everything came back to everyday sensation of linear time. The next day, I came back to the same gym but nothing happened. ☺

But you know, the *jiva* always wants more...

When I noticed that my suffering had stopped I noticed also interesting things, with upsides and downsides:

1. I naturally stopped studying the scriptures. I didn’t want to study (despite the fact that I love it). It was like a vacation time to my intellect after so much time searching and studying. Nowadays, I am feeling the wish to come back to my studies again.

James: Disinterest in the scriptures is another sign of *moksa*.

Martin: 2. My sex *vasana* increased. It was like my mind was so focused on Vedanta that sex was secondary. But when I had this incredible relaxation in my mind about life, my sex *vasana* became stronger.

James: That makes sense.

Martin: 3. I noticed that to keep my attention in the self and discriminate became more difficult, not easier as I expected. Again, it seems that this relaxation made my mind more difficult to control.

James: There is no reason to keep your attention on the self now, because you are the self. If your knowledge is firm, you will see the objects – the “not-self” – as the self. You can just let your mind rest in the bliss.

Martin: 4. My relationship with life became like it was before I had started my searching. I mean, I am not looking for answers anymore. I came back to my childhood in my mind, no more questions about the meaning of life, just living...

James: That's a very important sign of *moksa*. Seeking is unnatural; it is a kind of stress. Living is natural. Inquiry is natural.

Martin: 5. I notice I lost interest in history and religions. Last week, after Bad Meinberg, I went to Warsaw and I visited the Jewish museum. It was so much information but at same time it was just thoughts, ideas and ideals occurring in *mithya*. I left the museum in some minutes. Now I am going to places and museums on my holiday where I can appreciate beauty... art... instead of information.

Also, during our days in Bad Meinberg last week, it became crystal clear to me that nothing can be added to me and nothing can be taken away from me. Everything that happens does not touch me. My mind was very *sattvic* those days that I had the knowledge and also it was my “experience.” Now my mind is full of *rajas* and *tamas*, but I didn't lose the knowledge. All these experiences are happening inside me, but they don't touch me, including the experiences of my mind and body.

James: Cool! Limitless means that what happens doesn't touch you. You are beyond experience.

Martin: Thank you for the tip to study *Isvara* 1 and *jiva*. It will be the subject of my inquiring. The tips I have received from Arlindo are about this subject also.

I will keep my inquiring and it will be lovely be with you again in Brazil. Sorry for this long email.



James: I'm so happy for you, Martin. You're a really good guy, and you have been incredibly faithful with your inquiry. Anyone who inquires with faith and determination will be set free. It will be wonderful to see you in Brazil.

~ Love, James