

The Void and the I Thought

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Hi James,

I have a question. I am reading your script from the website: What is Advaita Vedanta (Experience and knowledge).

You write "To to enter the final stage, which is not a stage, inquiry must continue during the experience of the self. In ordinary perception a thought wave arises in the mind that corresponds to the nature of the perceived object. You see a tree and you know it is a tree because the self, awareness illumines the thought of tree as it arises in the intellect. Similarly, when the ego experiences the reflection of the self in a pure mind a thought corresponding to the nature of the self, called an *akandakara vritti*, an unbroken I thought arises and this thought needs to be owned. When it is taken as ones own, it is this I thought, backed by experience that destroys the notion in the ego/mind that it is limited and separate."

My question is if this is similar to void experience during meditation and how the unbroken I thought is to be owned. From my experience in deep meditation there is only presence of void, nothing to observe, no objects, maybe some thoughts passing by, so I don't understand it how during meditation the shift from experience to knowledge happens.

I thank you for reply,

Hi Vijay,

Good question. When you experience the void in meditation, you need to turn your attention around and observe the one that is observing the void. That is you, the "I." Knowledge of 'That' is the "I Thought." Once you have identified yourself it will take a long time to shift your identity from Vjay to Awareness by keeping the 'I Thought' in mind all the time. Ramana sat in caves for about twenty years clinging to the 'I Thought' until the identity 'shift' was permanent. If the shift is permanent, every time you say or think "I" you know it refers to limitless awareness and not the *jiva*. Self experience or self realization is just the first step. It is the easy part. The second step, establishing the "I" as limitless awareness is the hard part, particularly if your mind is not well qualified. The period after self realization is called *nididhasana*, self actualization. It basically involves bringing your qualifications up to speed: discrimination, dispassion, etc.

You do not need to experience the reflection of the self to identify it. The self is always experienced by everyone as the 'I.' When you say or think "I" it is actually the self thinking or saying 'I.' So the self is present even when the mind is outward turned. It is independent of your state of mind. Even when you are emotional you, the self, are observing the emotions. But it does no good to know this because of the strong belief that you are the reflected self, Vijay, the *Jiva* who identifies with the content of the Subtle Body, not with the witnessing 'I.'

Finally, when you say there are no objects to observe, are you not seeing the void as an object? At that time there is you, the subject awareness, and the void, the object. Distinguishing between the two is liberation.

Vijay:So It is clear now that the problem for meditators is identification with the Void or empty space, mistakenly believe it to be a subject or real I, which is not possible because Void is known to me, right?

James:Yes, the void is just an object.The void is the self without discrete objects.The void is not conscious.It is purely a material reflection of pure consciousness in the mirror of Maya.It is known by you, pure consciousness.When you are experiencing it, you ignore the fact that Vijay, the reflected consciousness is also an object.So you think that Vijay is experiencing the void, whereas you, pure original consciousness is actually witnessing it.

Vijay:The one thing I don't understand: You write in previous email: " you need to turn attention around and observe the one who is observing the Void..."Isn't that turning the watcher into an object and it can't be done, because the real I - the subject - can never become an object?

James:Good thinking, Vijay. Yes it is.But as long as you think you are Vijay you need to contemplate on the one that is observing the void.I could see from the beginning that you were going to have trouble realizing who you are because you have the experiential view of enlightenment.That interview with Alexander Smit gave the impression that enlightenment was experiential. Realization through meditation is very difficult.We call meditation a leading error.It may lead you to *moksa* but meditators are starting the whole process with the wrong idea when they take to meditation, which is excellent for purification if they are doing action in the *karma yoga* spirit.They think they can experience the self, when in fact you are always experiencing the self because you are the self.Meditators want to retain the meditator and add the enlightenment experience.They are doers.Vedanta is not suited to doers because you need to think clearly for Vedanta to work.And you need to be dispassionate, free of the need to experience anything.If, indeed, a meditator becomes self realized, let alone self actualized, it is more or less by accident.Somewhat, they become inquirers in the process of meditation and they get tired of going into and out of meditation and become open to a new approach.Then *Isvara* brings Vedanta to them and they can easily realize who they are then.But, you have to understand that enlightenment is purely a knowledge problem, not an experience problem.

Love,

James