

Self-Knowledge Not Subject to Memory

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Michael: Hi, Sundari. Thank you very much for this. It is extremely helpful and has clarified a number of vital points, and will take my *sadhana* in new directions.

Sundari: Great!

Michael: Understanding this knowingness business is the most technically difficult challenge I have faced so far. I have been reflecting on this matter a lot. I think I am making progress but I have a way to go.

Sundari: You are right, of course, for self-knowledge to obtain, the mind has to be extremely subtle and refined. This is why we emphasize the qualifications so much.

Michael: I did some brainstorming yesterday and got some ideas down on paper, which was helpful. In part I was addressing the reasons why humans falsely believe they are sentient in their own right.

Sundari: It is the power of *maya* to delude, that's all. *Maya* is just ignorance that produces the belief that you are not the self and the world is real, the hypnosis of duality.

Michael: And I realised just how fantastic the capabilities of the human mind really are, and how easy it is to believe that the being that possesses and operates them would have to be conscious in its own right. While all of our fantastic mental powers play a role in this illusion...

Sundari: I think you mean *seemingly* operates the capabilities, don't you? These "fantastic" mental powers do not belong to the *jiva* but to awareness. The ability to think clearly is *sattva*, the nature of the mind. Intelligence does not belong to the mind, it comes from *Isvara*. *Rajas* and *tamas* are what obscure it.

Michael: I realised that memory plays an especially crucial role because it serves as the substratum of all the other subtle body functions, which cannot really operate without it.

Sundari: What do you mean by "memory" in this statement? It is not memory that serves as the substratum for all subtle bodily functions, it is awareness in the form of *Isvara* - the *gunas*. The body belongs to *Isvara* and is operated by the *gunas*; memory has nothing to do with it. Do you have to remember to breathe, digest or circulate your blood?

Michael: Memory also seems to provide us with the ability to know, because you cannot be said to know something if you cannot remember what you know.

Sundari: It is not memory that provides the ability to know; memory is just recollected knowledge. Experience happens followed by knowledge and then memory (retention) happens, or not. However, it is awareness in the form of *sattva* that provides us with the ability to know. What we know depends on the purity of the mind, which is conditioned by the *gunas*. Ignorance (*rajas* and *tamas*) is removed from the mind by self-knowledge. Self-knowledge (*sattva*) is not a function of memory because it is who we are. You cannot forget self-knowledge once you know the self is you (like you can't forget your name, for instance, unless you have amnesia). If the self is an object of memory (indirect knowledge) you can forget who you are because object-knowledge is subject to memory. Memory is a tool for evaluating experience but it is not capable of producing self-knowledge.

The causal body can be seen as macrocosmic memory in that the *vasanas* look like memory because they generate experience. The *vasanas* are different from memory though, because the causal body is active memory whereas the subtle body or microcosmic memory is passive – its function is to store and recollect information. Experience is no good without memory. If you can't remember what you experience, you cannot evaluate experience. Animals, for instance, don't have a memory function because they have no intellect. They are just programmes run by *Isvara*, the *gunas*. Animals can seem to have memory but it is the *vasanas* that are operating, not memory, because they do not evaluate what happens to them and in their environment, whereas humans who have intellects do.

Michael: I will keep working away on all these issues before asking any more questions.

Sundari: Yes, that would be good. I need to take some time off replying to e-satsangs because they consume all my time. I would like to get my book finished before the end of the year. If something pressing does come up though, feel free to write. One of us will reply to you.

Michael: I am very glad I asked for your help though. In fact, I was a little sheepish in asking – not because I was afraid to reveal my ignorance (I have absolutely zero problem on that score) – but because I know this issue is addressed in the teaching materials in many ways. But I still could not put it all together on this topic.

However, I have now realised the immense benefit of writing down my own question and having it directly answered by my teacher in a way that is specific to me and my question. Thanks again.

~ My love and best to you both, Michael

Sundari: You are so welcome and I am very pleased that you did ask your questions and that my reply was helpful.

