

Superimposing Satya on Mithya

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Hugh: I wrote a bit of a dialogue today, and I'm wondering if you could have a look at it for me and perhaps give some comments. It kind of sums up where I, as a *jiva*, seem to stand at the moment. I play both the roles of teacher and student. Any suggestions/comments would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your help. I will write it below (sorry if it's too long).

Shams: Hello, Hugh. I hope this helps to answer your doubts. Don't worry about the length of the email. It's more important to expose clearly the doubts.

Hugh: Dialogue: you are the subject. Everything is an object: people, things, thoughts, beliefs, sensations, memories, feelings, your body, your name. Anything, no matter how obvious or subtle, is an object. Everyone wants to feel good about life. For some people, feeling bad is feeling good. Regardless, we all want to feel good, however you may define that "good."

Shams: Yes. Vedanta asks you to define that "good," as one of the first inquiries.

Hugh: A lot of what we do boils down to trying to feel good. Trying to feel good reveals that we don't feel good.

Shams: Most important, it reveals that we came to the conclusion that we are limited and we need experiences to make us feel good. That conclusion is ignorance.

Hugh: Yet it's wrong to say that we don't feel good or that we feel good.

Shams: Yes. The one trying to feel good is an object in you.

Hugh: How can we feel anything if we're the subject? Feelings are objects. The sense of feeling itself is an object. "We" don't feel anything. Apparently, feeling and feelings exist.

Shams: Yes. The truth is that you don't feel anything, because you are free of everything. Still, it seems as if all the experience was actually happening, and we cannot turn our backs on that. There are apparently objects and a subject. So the *jiva* has to take his true identity, as well as to learn how is that related with his everyday life.

Hugh: You say, "Okay, but I still feel bad. What should I do?" Who says that? It's not you. It's your mind. Your mind is an object.

Shams: Yes. You are not your mind. The mind feels good, the mind feels bad, the mind wants this, the mind wants something more. The key is what the mind knows, not what the mind wants or feels. Once knowledge is firm, the mind changes its relationship with everything else. But that relationship is not only a negation of their existence.

Hugh: “Okay. How do I stop my mind from saying that?” Who’s asking? It’s the mind again. You can’t stop your mind because you don’t do anything at all. Doing is an object.

Shams: Good. You are not a doer, you are not a thinker, you are not an enjoyer. You are the witness. That is knowledge. But there is something for the doer and the thinker too. The teachings actually are created to give satisfaction to the mind, the doer and the thinker. And knowledge is what the mind needs.

Hugh: “This isn’t getting me anywhere. I just want to feel better.” The “I” that wants to feel better is not the “I” that is real. “So what?” So the mind can get itself thinking correctly. Enlightenment is for the mind. You are the light. “How can the mind correct itself, and why should it?” It makes no difference to who you are whether the mind is correct or incorrect. It makes a lot of difference to the mind. This dialogue is for your mind, for you as an individual.

Shams: Good.

Hugh: “Okay. I, as an individual, as a mind, want to be happy or happier or enlightened. What can I do?” There are absolutely no problems for you, yet “you” don’t believe it. Start believing it. Start to know it. Start identifying with who you are, not what appears in you.

Shams: Knowledge is what the mind needs, yes, that is what you are talking about, but I suggest you use more often this word and to understand it very well: knowledge. Since you’ve always been free, knowledge is all that you need.

The goal is to feel good, as you said. But if we look closer we will see that the real goal is not feeling this or that but being free of the desire to feel (or avoid). When the senses make contact with an object of desire, even for a moment, desire disappears, and so does the object and the seeker. The search, with all this elements, disappears (obstructions that obscure the mind) and for a second the mind experiences a reflection of you. There is only you, as always, but for this moment, the mind has more clarity and (used to understand everything in terms of experience) registers the experience as a blissful one. That reinforces the universal conclusion that says that experience can end suffering. But we all know that there is no experience capable of ending suffering.

So what’s left? Since the real problem is not experience itself but ignorance, all you need is to know. This is very important to understand: the real goal is to remove ignorance. We can see it in your dialogue. One part knows and the other one doesn’t know. One has ignorance and the other one doesn’t.

The mind that is asking the questions in your dialogue only knows the language of experience. The mind that is answering the questions speaks the language of knowledge (or the language of identity). The inquirer should learn and use this language, that is Vedanta.

I guess that you already know this but it's important to focus the issue on knowledge and only knowledge.

Hugh: A simplified example: you say, "There is something seriously wrong with my job. I'm either too busy or bored to death. I deal with idiots. The job really seems to not be in tune with my nature. I'm not paid well. I feel trapped, like I'm going nowhere. It's a dead-end job. It seems '*adharmic*.'"

Okay, so "you" are suffering regarding employment. You may or may not do things as an individual to change this. You may try to ease the pain through exercises such as "The Work" (by Byron Katie), questioning whether you really are suffering or not.

Shams: Yes. Vedanta doesn't deny the existence of different levels (it just shows their true nature and the relationship between them and you, the self). The level of the *jiva* (the individual) is always taken on account in its right perspective. From the point of view of the *jiva*, there is free will, so it has to choose among different paths in life. There is no choice but acting because the *jiva* definitely (and apparently) exists. Vedanta has a total toolkit for the *jiva* that includes *karma yoga*, *guna* management and devotion, so we encourage the seeker to learn about it and use it. Other techniques could be a good complement but they are not always in line with Truth. I think that Byron Katie's technique "The Work" could be useful at the beginning.

Hugh: You can take an attitude of gratitude and find out that there's a lot more good about your job than you previously had thought. This is the mind calming itself. However, whether it's a calm mind or an uncalm mind, if the mind believes that your identity is the subject of everything, there is no problem.

Every time suffering occurs, the mind needs to realize that it is not what is you, because you do not suffer.

Shams: That is when the mind is inquiring: knowledge is being applied to the mind in order to remove ignorance. When ignorance is gone, knowledge is not needed. There is only you. And suffering doesn't occur anymore because suffering is related to an interpretation about you, that you are limited. Yet you have no limits, and the truth is that you don't suffer, you never suffered. Anyway, physical or mental pain could come (and will come) again to the *jiva* but if ignorance is gone, they won't be equal to suffering. They will be known as your self.

Hugh: "Why don't I, as an individual mind, believe that I'm 'I'? It seems simple, yet I don't believe it. I believe I suffer yet I also understand that I am the subject and the subject doesn't suffer."

Shams: You don't have to write "I" like it's a special thing. Even you, as an

individual mind, are the self. It is impossible to be any other thing. If you were, then automatically you are awareness. There is no other option but to be awareness.

However – ignorance still appears in the self, and the mind keeps saying that it doesn't believe it is the self. What to do? Give knowledge to the mind. The next questions could be: Is the mind completely prepared to inquire into the self? Are the binding *vasanas* exhausted?

Hugh: The human mind stubbornly thinks what it thinks. Therefore it has to constantly remind itself that I is really "I."

Shams: Yes, the ignorance has created all of your thinking patterns through the years. Learning the language of knowledge is like swimming against the current. But thanks to *Isvara*, it can be done.

The best inquiry is separating you from the objects.

Hugh: "Well, I've been reading *How to Attain Enlightenment, Standing as Awareness, Atma Darshan*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and have also watched James Swartz' videos explaining *Vivekachoodamani*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and other things over the past couple of years on a fairly constant basis, yet 'I' as an individual still suffers from the crappy employment situation and other things."

Shams: That is a complete meal for your mind. Following your intense desire for *moksa* (which is a qualification for it), you can go back all the time to those texts and videos until the correct thinking wins the battle. Now please read this with attention because it is very important:

I think you are struggling with the notion that we call superimposing *satya* (the ultimate reality, your identity) onto *mithya* (the dream, also you). You are trying to convince yourself that your apparent problems need not be addressed because you are awareness. Awareness is free, yes, but the *jiva* is only *karma yoga*-free according to the degree it applies the knowledge to its life. It is obvious that the *jiva* is unhappy in his current situation, and in this case, I suppose that no amount of *karma yoga* or inquiry will fix that. So as Krishna advises Arjuna, you need to get up and fight, i.e. to do some actions to change your situation, assuming you want to be free in an apparent sense. Plus, from the standpoint of inquiry, if your job is causing you to go against your *svadharma* (the particular *dharma* of the *jiva*), it will cause undue agitation in the mind. And if your workplace is *rajasic/tamasic* or if your work causes you to break *dharma*, that is also a hindrance to inquiry.

Hugh: Yes, that's true. The individual still suffers. You don't. The mind clings on to the old beliefs, despite a steady bombardment of truth.

Shams: In this case, it seems that the bombardment of truth was partially a success. If you know that you are wrong, are you wrong? So the old beliefs in your mind don't have so much power in you. The mind is a conservative tool, but it's flexible too, and it learns. You're doing it very well, so becoming more confident about your knowledge won't be of harm. Your dialogue is a nice demonstration that

you are a true teacher, although you can speak as the ignorant student too.

You should continue inquiry AND do some work on the world to make that possible, to find a better environment, to follow your *svadharma*. For the *jiva* there is no way out, and most of the time *karma* that must be done cannot be exhausted only by knowledge.

Hugh: (The end for now.) Thanks.

Shams: Please feel free to ask more questions if this isn't clear or if you have new ones.

~ Good luck, Shams