

A Steady Current of Bliss

Ram (James Swartz)

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Doug: Dear James, I wish all is well, as usual! How can it be otherwise from the point of view of the self?

As aspirant in the Vedanta university, with you as my teacher, you wrote that I could come up with questions. After finishing your book, which I totally appreciate, no questions arose: clear as can be!

However, recently when starting all over, to achieve “steady wisdom,” three questions came up.

1. When all is understood well by me, then the self cannot be seen nor experienced? And the self has no instrument for experience?

James: No. The self is always experienced as the sense of “I.” It can never be experienced as an object. Everything that you experience always is the self. Your world of experience is just your self, consciousness, taking the shape of thoughts. These thoughts are the world. There is no objective world. *Maya* makes you identify with the body, and so it looks like the world is “out there,” an objective reality. But you only experience sensations, which create thoughts, which are filtered through your *vasanas*, which is your life. The instrument for experience, the subtle body, remains as long as the physical body is alive. Then it merges back into the causal body.

Doug: 2. The subtle body is an instrument for experience, but it can only experience a reflection of the self, like moonlight is a reflection of sunlight?

James: Yes. The subtle body reflects awareness, and in that reflection your world appears. If you don't know you are the self you will think you are Doug, the subtle body. The reflection – Doug – seems to be conscious, but he isn't. This is the big mistake *jivas* make. They think they are the reflection, not the original consciousness. So they have problems because they identify with the reflection, which is contaminated by likes and dislikes, fears and desires. The original consciousness – you – are completely pure, unaffected by Doug.

Doug: 3. On page 27 of your last book, I read: “If you accept that there is only one self and it is already enlightened and effortless and eternally enjoying itself, then understanding, not ego death is enlightenment.” First, I tell you it is no problem for me to accept this. But I might be missing some point here, but to me it makes sense to approach joy as an experience. If this is true, how come the self, which has no instrument for experience, is enjoying itself?

James: Good thinking, Doug. Inquiry is working. Joy is an experience and it is not an experience. Discrete experiences of joy are the self, which is pure bliss/joy

(*anandam*), but the self is not a discrete experience. The self is joy itself. It is always present. Because the original source of joy is always present, it creates a constant subtle experience of joy in the subtle body as it reflects there. You might call it the joy of being alive. If the subtle body is purified of *rajas* and *tamas*, the subtle body – Doug – will experience a state of constant bliss/joy. So *moksa*, in the end, when the mind is pure, is experiential FOR THE *JIVA*. It manifests as *tripti*, a sense of perfect satisfaction.

It is always experiential for the self because *anandam* is the nature of the self. But this doesn't mean anything to the *jiva*, because it only understands experience as an object. The original consciousness – you – is self-experiencing. This means that it does not need a subtle body to experience.

~ Much love, James