

Deepening Knowledge

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2011-12-24

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/269>

Seeker: There's a great quote by a Zen master, Shunryu Suzuki. He said, "You are all perfect – and you could use a little improvement." I think that could really apply to what we're talking about here. We are enlightened whether we realize it or not. It is the knowledge that we are the awareness of each moment and experience (like you were saying). The part I choose to focus on in my writings to you tends to be on the improvement part of the quote. Even the simple knowledge that I'm aware of who I am as the self won't transcend my dual reality completely into non-dual reality. And that's what I'm talking about. I can say I'm enlightened, and whatever type of "enlightening" experience I can have, such as the one last night, won't ever change that knowledge. That's all well and good. The depth, however, of that knowledge is what I'm interested in. Everything points to this. Last year around this time I was sensing moments where the mind was saying, "I'm so happy," even though I know who we are is a lot deeper than any thought or feeling. Beginning to rest in being was becoming a regularity. My ambition was lessening a bit, yet creativity was blossoming. Now, a year later, the depth of that knowledge of who I am has increased. It is the same knowledge, but it's deeper. Just as sticking one's foot into a river, the water rushing by is the same water and yet it's different. This leads me to a question about you. Would you say that you've gotten or felt a deeper sense of self over the years or has this experience-based knowledge hit you like a bolt of lightning and then had a sort of finality to it. I hope I'm making myself clear. I guess what I'm talking about is spaciousness. Do you feel as though the sense of vastness or spaciousness remained the same or has it expanded?

James: No, I have not gotten a deeper sense of self. I am the self, so there is no deep or shallow. I am the spaciousness that accommodates everything. But looking at it from the point of view of the apparent self the answer is that I have had total confidence in my identity for forty years. I never once thought I was James since then. The sense of finality was not like a bolt of lightning, however. Up to that point there was a gradual increase in confidence as I assimilated the teachings at the feet of my teacher and the few binding *vasanas* I had burned out. I think what you mean by "deepening" is confidence. Vedanta defines liberation as hard and fast self-knowledge. When the deepening ends and the knowledge alone remains, that is the end of it.

~ James