

Mindfulness? Presence? Consciousness Is Ever-Present

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Arlindo: My dear friend, take it easy and don't beat yourself up because we are all delusional until we come to Vedanta. Moreover, you know "delusion" while most people live their lives operated by ignorance (the delusional apprehension of the nature of reality) not even suspecting that. Life is but *vasanas* in operation. The work of the inquirer lies in reprogramming one's own set of *vasanas* – letting the scriptures transform one's ignorance-based *vasanas* into self-knowledge *vasanas*. Please, don't be depressed and rejoice in your knowledge – and welcome to the world of reality.

Mindfulness? Presence?

Realizing the Self as your own self does not depend on your ability or lack of ability to stay present to your day-to-day "worldly experience," because that is simply impossible; you are always present – both as awareness as well as the *jiva* in relation to its objects of experience. But self-realization totally depends on the quality of the mind.

When mind is agitated and stressed (*rajasic*), its experience will be very uncomfortable. It will reflect consciousness but reflection will be shattered, like a mirror broken into innumerable pieces – it will not be able to understand what is going on, much less to contemplate or meditate on the scriptures.

When mind is dumb or lethargic it will not be able to either, because the *tamasic* nature of such state of mind does not properly reflect consciousness, but rather absorbs most of it – just like a mirror covered with a thick layer of dust.

However, when mind is *sattvic* it enjoys the qualities of clarity, knowledge, wisdom, etc. And a *sattvic* mind will experience a sense of "presence." But holding on to a sense of presence – like Nisargadatta, Eckhart Tolle and most recently some meditation techniques (mindfulness, here-now, among others) suggest – will not stabilize the mind, because ultimately, only the understanding of the function of these three energies stabilizes the mind.

The temporary sense of presence and freedom experienced by the meditator is a symptom – an "effect" of their effort/practice (cause). When practice is suspended, the mind modifies again according to its *samskaras*, or psychological imprints.

There is also another difficulty – it lies in the fact that you do not appreciate your common ordinary day-to-day experiences of life – you somehow expect things to be different than what they are. And that is due to the fact that, on some level, you still think that the self is an object that you wish to experience and enjoy.

It is common to make that mistake and get confused and attached to pleasurable subtle objects of experience, such as a "silent mind" and to end up missing the most obvious fact: every apparent experience is an experience of the self. It is you, always experiencing yourself.

Hence I will tell you some shocking news: *no effort is needed to be present!* Consciousness is ever-conscious, ever-existing, and ever-present. *Jiva's* subtle body is a reflector. It reflects consciousness to illumine and contact the world of objects. So the *jivas* are always doing the job they were designed to do: to reflect and shed the light of consciousness on objects; and fundamentally, objects are thoughts.

But what happens with the human *jivas* is that they not ONLY "illumine" their environment, but they interpret it as well. This interpretation (*jiva's* subjective creation) is going to be a superimposition based on one's knowledge or ignorance.

Everybody, willingly or not, is always reflecting consciousness (always present). The way people will interpret reality is going to make the difference. When they misapprehend the true nature of reality they get anxiety – they desire and fear objects, and so on. When they correctly apprehend the non-dual nature of reality, they relax and enjoy their lives with no anxiety. They experience peace of mind, love, contentment and a sense of freedom and limitlessness.

The meditation on "staying present" (mindfulness) also serves a certain purpose in the spiritual marketplace. People sooner or later will understand the futility of trying to control their attention by an experiential/action mean (the *gunas* cannot be forcibly controlled by *jivas*) and they will eventually develop a value for knowledge.

Yes, you are right when you say that self-knowledge is something "no one can 'give' you." No *guru* will transmit self-knowledge to the student. *Gurus* may transmit energy, and energy may produce all kinds of phenomenal experiences. Self-knowledge has to be earned by the student through their own effort to understand and know.

Sometimes the student may be so ripe that he may understand who he is in his immediate first contact with the teacher/teaching. It is very rare, and in that case it may appear as if the *guru* has given self-realization to the student, but that is not the case.