

The Finger Pointing at the Moon

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Santos: Can you help explain something, please?

(Since so far all you send has been amazingly helpful, and forgive all the use of “I” in the following text. For the purpose of this inquiry it doesn’t matter too much whether “I” refers to *jiva* or to the Self.)

There is an “object” within the field of my mental vision. I close my eyes and it is there between my eyes, kind of in the middle of the forehead, sometimes large and sometimes no more than a pinprick. If I focus upon it, it can also be present with my eyes open although much harder to “see.”

It has been with me for as long as I can remember and it is always present although not always noticeable if my focus is on other objects. I cannot really describe it other than to say it is like a shape made of light.

At times when I focus awareness upon it, it “grows,” then will seemingly break up and dissolve but never vanish completely (forgive the words, none of them are quite right but they are the best that can be spoken, LOL).

It is not a sense perception or a feeling or a thought (not even like the mental pictures that can appear in awareness) yet it is still something in awareness as I know it.

It isn’t an artifact from LSD or drug abuse, as the memory of its presence stems from an earlier time than the drugs.

It is at the same time more “real” than any other object in awareness and also “not real.” The closest I can get to describing it is that the light patterns that appear during the hypnagogic state just prior to falling asleep (but even that isn’t right, as it is always the same “shape” even though I cannot find words to describe that shape).

From studying Vedanta, it may be that it is a reflection of Self in the intellect.

I was wondering if that would be the case or if James or yourself had experienced or heard of anything similar. If all the above seems to be no more than the ramblings of a *jiva* in the grip of insanity then please just ignore and have a giggle (I like giving myself a good laugh). I am sure *Ishvara* will reveal all if such is its grace.

PS: I promise to stop spamming emails and get on with inquiry soon.

Sundari: Your take on the light-object is pretty accurate. You certainly are not crazy – although trying to talk about this to most people would be proof that you are! You should read James’ autobiography, *Mystic by Default*. In it he describes many of his spiritual experiences (drug-induced and not), but many he left out because most people would simply not believe him. He got so fed up with his spiritual experiences that he ditched the whole spiritual-seeking thing and decided to go back into the world. But *Ishvara* had other ideas for him and showed up (literally) at his door and took him to his *guru*, Chinmayananda. The rest as they say, is history.

As for me, I am a garden-variety type of “mystic.” I never did drugs and never chased spiritual experiences – and never really had any that registered highly on the spiritual seismic scale. I know, I had a misspent youth too – I was a knowledge-seeker from very young, that’s what turned me on. In fact I gave the spiritual bandwagon as much of a wide berth as I did my own Catholic indoctrination, a good thing too. I had a well-functioning bullshit meter – and boy, you need it in the “spiritual world” Ha, more BS there than anywhere else. I was always told to think less and feel more – ha ha! Thank God I never believed that, the worst possible advice yet bandied about by so many idiots. My family (I am the tenth of a family of 11 – imagine) think I am married to a cult leader – LOL! No joke.

The light you see is a symbol of the self, a reflection in the mirror of awareness, what Vedanta calls *pratibimba chaitanya*.

While this kind of experience is an indication that your mind is very *sattvic*, it has no bearing on *moksa*. Buying into its importance or making a big deal of it poses just as much of an impediment to *moksa* as does any other binding object. Like I said before, being the self is the most ordinary thing around because it is all there is. It’s no big deal, even though it is the most stupendous thing possible for the *jiva* to live free of bondage to objects and doership.

The essence of everything is the same because nothing exists apart from awareness (the self), even though as awareness you have no parts. It’s like the wave and the ocean – if you eliminate the wave and the ocean, you still have water. Nothing validates, diminishes or eliminates you.

As *jivas* our only means of knowledge to know anything is perception and inference through the sense instruments, which work only to know objects. Our instruments of knowledge do not work to know the self, because the self is not an object of knowledge. It is who we are. We need a valid means of knowledge like Vedanta to remove ignorance of our true nature through the analysis of our own experience, which is what self-inquiry is all about, and to reveal that the self is our nature and always has been.

However, the self itself is always experienced **without** a means of knowledge, i.e. without a process, a thought, an epiphany or a spiritual experience such as the one you describe (albeit a rather constant experience by the sound of things) because awareness is that without which no experience is possible. You are only ever experiencing yourself, spiritual experiences notwithstanding.

Although awareness does not directly experience, by its presence alone does experience of anything take place. *Moksa* is a question of who you identify with: the body-mind, or experiencer, the reflection in the mirror or reflected awareness/reflected self, of the **knower** of both, pure awareness?

All experiences are *mithya* – only apparently real. They all take place in and end in time. All experiences are like delaying time capsules; they are meant to show you that you are the knower of the experience and not the experiencer. Experience and knowledge are one, but they are not the same. Experience depends on you, awareness, but you depend on nothing.

So while it is pretty cool that you have this strange light as an almost constant reminder of who you are, so what? Don’t identify with it. It is a finger pointing at the moon, it is not the moon.

Getting on with the “work” of self-inquiry is what is important, so get on with it, Santos!

Take care and include yourself among those you love.

~ Sundari