

Do You Think Your Feelings Are Real?

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2017-09-14

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3349>

Kumar: Hello, James.

I do have a follow-up question to the *satsang* posted online, *Don't Believe Your Feelings!*

If one cannot trust their feelings, why would you want to trust a thought that you are limitless awareness? If you look deeply within you, the base feeling of dissatisfaction, "*dhukka*," is fundamentally a feeling of separateness from the world around you, and not just a thought. This feeling of separation, as a child, comes long before a cognitive process develops in the person. Yes, there is only awareness, but a thought is just as much a construct in awareness as is feeling. Both are associated with the *jiva*, and not with awareness.

James: Hi, Kumar.

The feeling associated with non-dual knowledge is self-confident bliss. The feelings associated with duality, i.e. "I am separate, incomplete and inadequate," are painful. I don't think you understand the importance of the *sruti*, Kumar. *Shraddha*, faith in the *sruti* pending the result of the application of its teachings that the self is *anandam* (bliss, love, satisfaction), to the mind is perhaps the most important qualification for *moksa*. There is nothing wrong with feelings per se, but the point of that *satsang* was to recommend inquiry into one's feelings and emotions before one develops the belief that they are real. Feelings are indicators of your self-knowledge. So if a negative feeling arises in you, you should not assume that there is something wrong with you, the self. You should look at the feeling in light of the teaching that the self is *anandam*, bliss, and dismiss it as a statement about who you are. If you say you are angry or depressed, for instance, you are ignorant of your nature. You have superimposed the feeling of anger on the self, which is free of all feelings. If you have a positive feeling you should investigate the source, and you will find that it belongs to *sattva*, which is a pure reflection of the bliss of the self. A self-actualized person experiences a natural steady current of bliss in which feelings, mostly positive and occasionally negative, appear like insubstantial momentary images and are known to be completely unreal. Negative feelings are proxies for self-ignorance. If you think you know who you are and you experience negative feelings, you need to do *nididhyasana*. It is for the removal of negative thoughts and feelings after self-knowledge.

It is self-ignorance in the form of *rajas* and *tamas* – duality – that precedes the cognitive process. So when a child starts to become aware of its thoughts and feelings, it will predictably experience a lot of negative emotions unless it came in with a predominance of *sattva*, in which case it will have a basically sunny outlook. I have just finished my latest book *The Yoga of the Three Energies*, which will be in the shop later today or perhaps tomorrow. It deals with this topic. Maybe you don't understand the sixth and seventh steps of enlightenment (see *Inquiry into Existence*). *Nididhyasana* takes you through stage six to stage seven, *tripti*, perfect satisfaction.

~ Love, James