

# Awareness Does Not Need to Witness or Experience

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**Tomas:** My name is Tomas. I have a question that is nagging at me regarding awareness. I am listening to James speak and I need to understand this to move forward.

If I am understanding James correctly, awareness does not ever change by being aware of the experiences of the body, it is just aware of the experiences.

**Sundari:** Hello, Tomas. Yes, you are correct.

**Tomas:** If that is correct, then why would awareness want to become aware of experiences if the experiences do nothing for it? I hope I am explaining my dilemma correctly. Thank you in advance for your help.

**Sundari:** You are confusing awareness with the *jiva* – the experiencing entity. You are talking about awareness as if it is a person. It is not. It is the knower of the person called Tomas. Awareness has no wants and does not experience anything, because there is only awareness. By its presence alone can experience take place, therefore it appears as if awareness experiences. But only the subtle body, or *jiva*, experiences. Non-duality means just that – nothing other than awareness. From that point of view, what is there to experience? Only me, awareness.

Duality is a superimposition onto non-duality because of the deluding power of *Maya*. From womb to tomb, life is one long series of experiences. It is natural to become attached to experience and define ourselves by our experiences. Speaking as a *jiva*, who would I be without them? The idea that we do not need experience to be happy never occurs to us. When I am identified with being a *jiva*, and therefore to my experiences as a *jiva*, I am never secure, because I am not in control of the objects. Experience happens to me. Although it is a natural and inevitable experience, death terrifies me, as it seemingly spells the end of experience.

Experience obviously takes place in time. It is clear that experienced objects change, but what about the experiencer – me? I change too. Can I honestly say that I have not changed since the day I was born? Absolutely everything about me changes: my body, my feelings, my thoughts and ideas. I am never the same from one day to the next, from one moment to the next. Time is having its way with me and there is nothing I can do about it. If experience did not modify me, what would be the point of experience? And because experience is dualistic it is sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Positive is fine, but negative is not fine, so I am open to suggestions that might free me of the negative and generate the positive. In fact a significant fraction of my energy goes into calculating which course of action will make me feel good and which will make me feel bad.

The point of self-inquiry is to discriminate between what is real (*satya*) – always present and never changing – and what is only apparently real (*mithya*) – what is

always changing and not always present. The ability to discriminate between *satya* and *mithya* frees me from bondage to objects and identification with experience. I identify instead with the knower of all experience, the self, awareness, my true identity, ME. When I do, change does not bother me at all, because I know I am ever-present and changeless. And experience does not bother me either, because I know it is not real, just a moving show on the screen of my awareness.

It is a radical shift in perception that alters everything – while seemingly altering nothing. It depends on how you look at it: *jiva* or awareness?

Think of it this way:

I am limitless being.

I am not Tomas, but Tomas is me and flows from me.

I am the source of everything, including all experience.

Tomas is not the source of anything.

Tomas is a concept.

**Tomas:** One last question. You stated: awareness has no wants and does not experience anything, because there is only awareness. Why did awareness create bodies that experience?

**Sundari:** Same answer – or alternatively, there is no answer to the why that makes sense seen from a dualistic perspective. It depends on who is asking. Once again, are you asking as the non-dual self or as a person? Clearly, it is the latter.

Awareness did not create anything, because it is not a person. It is the knower of the apparent person. It is the causeless and indirect cause of objects. No object could exist without it. The question should be: What is the nature of existence? What does it mean to say something is real or apparently real? Do you know the difference? I think not. “Real” is defined by “that which is always present and never changes.” “Apparently real” is defined as “that which is not always present and always changing.”

*Maya*, duality, or beginningless ignorance, is an eternal power that exists in awareness. If awareness did not have the power to (apparently) limit itself, it could not be called limitless. When *Maya* appears, the creation apparently appears. Awareness then appears as a subtle body (*jiva*), which under the spell of ignorance identifies with objects and thinks that awareness is something other than it, which is the cause of all suffering.

Let me know exactly what your *sadhana* consists of. Have you read our instructions on the Contact page of our website, with our recommendations for self-inquiry and for writing to us? It could be you have not followed the methodology of the teachings correctly, and if this is the case, questions like this one will continue to trip you up.

~ Om, Sundari