

Enlightenment Is Freedom from Experience

Ram (James Swartz)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/338>

Martin: Hi, James. I read from your book that “substance” cannot be experientially distinguished from form (“Name and Form” in “Knowledge Yoga”). This immediately helped calm me down. The “substance”/awareness is certainly me and this implies that I am not separate from whatever I see and that I have no independent existence.

The interesting thing is that suffering and the sense of “separation” continues, but as thoughts and feelings are also awareness, then I am not separate from the sense of separation.

James: Is it a “sense” of suffering or real suffering? I think the problem is that you do not know what it means to be awareness. It means nothing is missing, that you don’t need anything to complete yourself.

Martin: When I think, “I am suffering,” the suffering disappears. Is this because of seeing the suffering as myself?

James: When you become conscious of something, you objectify it. What is objective is not you. So you fall back into your real nature as awareness when you objectify something.

Martin: As far as I can tell I know what I am (everything as it is appearing, but nothing in particular, keeping in mind that awareness cannot be distinguished from its content). Is this correct?

James: No. Awareness should be distinguished from the objects (thoughts and feelings, etc.) arising in it. You have to discriminate until there is no confusion between you and your thoughts and feelings. Then you will realize that the thoughts and feelings are you – but you are not the thoughts and feelings. The self and the mind are both awareness, but they are not the same. The self doesn’t move and the mind seems to move.

Martin: And if it is correct, then how to gain confidence in it?

James: You need confidence in your wholeness and completeness quite apart from the things arising in you.

Martin: And what to do with this knowledge?

James: Nothing. It destroys suffering automatically. The knowledge of your

wholeness does the work when it is assimilated. You don't do anything.

Martin: I also seem to be obsessed with purifying the mind, but rotating in this obsession like in a big tumble dryer isn't going to fix anything. Rather the opposite. The fact, however, is that dualistic thought patterns should be "de-clawed." What should be done about that?

James: Contemplate the idea that you are whole and complete. See if it is true.

Martin: One thing is a problem when reading your book and the *satsangs* at your site: I don't know which practices apply to me. Should I prepare the mind for inquiry or inquire, meditate or contemplate, go into the world or seclude myself, reduce or increase activity in life, etc?

James: All the *yogas* apply, but start with the basic *yoga*, *karma yoga*. Stay where you are, simplify your life and apply the understanding of *karma yoga* to everyday situations.

Martin: I have been inquiring for about five months, mostly intellectually. Thinking about non-duality and awareness, turning the ideas around in the mind and generating "my own" proofs is a lot of fun. I was able to intellectually dismiss the perceived world years ago, but I dismissed it as "just a philosophical curiosity" 😊 (i.e. the world can't be known to exist, but we must act assuming that it does).

I haven't really tried to meditate much. I guess it's because of this that the inquiry has had practical effects only recently. (Also, as you say that enlightenment is knowledge rather than experience, I stopped trying to generate epiphanies when I read your site. In retrospect I think that was a big mistake.)

James: Meditation won't work unless you have the *karma yoga* attitude. As far as generating experiences, ask yourself why what you are experiencing right now is not suitable. I cannot see how knowing what you know now, you would be able to interpret the experiences you generate in such a way that they set you free – from experience. Freedom, enlightenment, is freedom from experience. It is not a special experience.

Martin: I also hear a high-pitched whine nearly all the time (I guess it's the *nada brahma* you described in "Awareness and the Cosmic Sound." It isn't ear infection. I had my ears checked just in case. 😊 Interestingly, it's only really blocked out by running water (I am able to hear it when I walk by a busy street, but never when I turn on the tap. In that case I hear musical hallucinations instead random notes, similar to my cellphone ringtone).

James: I hear one too. It is my ego complaining about my miserable life. 😊