

Who or What Is Relieved?

Ram (James Swartz)

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Dick: Dear James, there is the knowledge that I am self. It is clear that all during life so far there was an identification with various levels of what I thought was me – the *koshas* – from the basic body to even what “I” thought at the time was the most refined version of “me,” the doer, my individuality, or perhaps at a different moment, the most intimate feeling in a relationship, the “I” that wants to be loved, or at a different moment, the “desire” to fit in as a person, that person wanting to fit in. Sometimes these different “I”s can cycle in seconds amongst each other. It’s now all the same really and they are all still there. It is quite funny in the knowledge that now accompanies them – it is in their nature just to want those things like a dog chasing its tail and how they want so much to be specifically different, to justify themselves and discriminate from each other in levels of importance and so on. Nor will they go away, and that’s fine – it can’t be otherwise. In fact it feels now insane that they could go away – although I spent goodness knows how long trying to make them gone in various groups, sessions, beliefs. A long way for nothing or a short way to get to here, I am so grateful now.

I do have one particular question: Why do I feel so relieved? Or what is relieved?

James: The *jiva*, the one that feels relieved, has assimilated self-knowledge. The “Dick” that is writing to me is actually the self. Its ignorance of itself has been removed but there is still a little doubt because Dick refers to the self as “the Self,” which implies that he is something other than the self. When the *jiva* (the self plus the subtle body) becomes objectified through the process of Self-/self-inquiry, all that remains is to own/claim “the Self” as “me.” The “Dick” is still there – how can it be otherwise? – but there is a sense of relief arising in him because it is now clear that he is an object known to you, awareness.

Dick: It’s clear now that once discrimination is made more than just a few times and persisted with, the power of the *koshas* is rendered (very) inert. While I have no doubt if practice is dropped they will have their way (until death if they can!), *dharma* is really now my friend in preventing this. *Dharma* is nice now, not a chore.

This crucial difference which started after reading your most thorough letter (it took a while to digest) is still this apparent confusion about what exactly is now feeling so happy, so relieved, so great. It can’t be the self, it can’t be “me” or am I wrong?

James: It can and it can’t. It can’t in that it is always free, but it can because it is no longer identified with the part of it that wasn’t free. Life is always a big paradox, owing to the fact that the one reality appears as two seemingly different orders, *satya* and *mithya*. So there is no relief for the real self, but there is apparent relief for the apparent self, the *jiva*. This sense of relief will gradually morph into a sense of perfect satisfaction for *jiva*-Dick.

Dick: Like you so diligently point out in the commentaries in *Panchadasi*: “It is not

freedom for the doer, but freedom from the doer!”

James: Well, that needs to be considered in context because it is also freedom for the doer because the doer is actually the self. We point out that *moksa* is freedom from the doer when the doer is caught in the spell of *Maya*. But once the doer has been objectified, it “becomes” the self insofar as it was always the self. So the final stage of inquiry is freedom for the doer; all the constraints are off.

Dick: So who is feeling free if they were free all the time anyway?

This question reminds me of sitting in a train at the station; there is another train on the track next to it, also stopped. That train starts to move, and for a few seconds I think my train is moving. Then, but only after once the other train is really going away, does the mind settle from the dizzy disorientation, “Oh no, I am still! I wasn’t going anywhere!”

James: Yes, indeed. “The one who sees action in inaction and inaction in action is indeed wise.” ~ The *Bhagavad Gita*

Nothing ever happened. I have attached a copy of my latest book, Gaudapada’s commentaries on *Mandukya Upanishad*, that is the seminal text on this teaching (*ajativada*), as you are probably capable of understanding it now.

Dick: It seems far more like the self is just feeling itself as it always was, and in fact the other train is just the doer, the ego, becoming obvious. There is no identification with it anymore. To say “I” feel relieved and free would be the same as saying my train is moving. Maybe this is pedantic, but for sure, the experience of feeling free will inevitably crash in a few seconds or days and cannot be “got back” – because “I” (the self) was never moving, doing or anything else, ever.

James: You got it right, Dick.

Dick: So while “I” feel relieved and free, it’s not actually true – even as I hear the words in my head, it’s suspicious, but honestly it is only the scripture telling me so, not my experience. My experience is feeling like a dizzy guy on a train, knowing it’s one way but not quite trusting his eyes. There is just this very firm thing saying, “Stay put, stay right where you are. It’s fine.” This is the knowledge that you, Ram, as I see it, have brought via the scripture. My experience has not done this it seems – in the same way as “I” am not on the other train moving. Thank you.

James: No, it’s not “just” the scripture, Dick. Think about this: Who is observing the distrustful, dizzy guy? It is you, awareness, the knower, experiencing Dick, the object.

Dick: Thank God for the scripture! For the first time I can thoroughly give my mind up to that, not from some emotional idea, but the knowledge itself – it must be the dictionary definition of “not a mess” if there was one.

Thank you so much again, if you can clarify this it is most appreciated, always. And please do not worry about any delay in response, I am completely happy if it is a week, a month or a year. As long as you are both healthy and things move on, all is well.

~ Much love to you both