

Old Age Requires Great Maturity

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Andrew: Hi, Arlindo. Life has been extremely challenging as old age progresses. I am experiencing lots of adversities in my body-mind. It is often very frustrating because I don't have the state of mind required to do my self-inquiry. I am a serious seeker and I want to discriminate my Self from whatsoever happens, but it seems very difficult with the experiences of pain and financial limitations I am experiencing. How can I discriminate and be free before the body dies? Maybe I don't need Vedanta; maybe what I need is a spiritual *sadhana* to help me in this stage of my seeking. Have you any thoughts that could be helpful?

Arlindo: Hello, Andrew, good to hear from you again. I understand your frustration, and as it is always the case, frustration is the result of "not getting what I want." But again, what is it that you want so much? Do you really want self-knowledge or do you want your experience to be something other than what is? Self-knowledge is not going to change your experience of life. If anything it will change your relationship with life's experiences: you will no longer expect things to be different from what is. We are talking of a change in attitude only – and how hard is it to change one's attitude?

We often say that in order for self-inquiry to fructify as self-knowledge the mind needs to be purified to a certain degree. If not, Vedanta will not serve the purpose of revealing the self to the *jiva*, BUT it is a proven fact that Vedanta/*karma-dharma yoga* is the greatest purifier of the mind. So if the mind still needs some work/preparation, so what? What is the big deal about this myth called "enlightenment"? Enlightenment is only a change of attitude towards life!

Moreover, you have come to Vedanta due to your good *karma*. Vedanta is the top of the line, or the end of the "road." Where are you going to go from here? You cannot go back to do what you used to do before Vedanta, because you know better now. On the other hand, you cannot drop the seeking. Once you catch this "seeking virus," you are done. You cannot get rid of it. Pack it in, as James Swartz likes to say.

One day, when you least expect it, the seeking will "drop" you and you will have a good laugh. But for now, why not to enjoy the Vedanta bus trip with us? Ramji is a good driver, and if Vedanta does not take you to your final destination, it will for sure bring you closer to it. You need to determine whether you are qualified for Vedanta or not. Maybe a dualistic *sadhana* could help you to calm down your mind before you do your *sravana*, *manana*, etc.

You already consciously know who you are Andrew – no doubt about that. But self-knowledge is really good when it remains firm and unaffected when circumstances are adverse, otherwise we can't call it freedom. In fact self-knowledge needs to grow into the causal body and neutralize one's likes and dislikes there, at their roots. It is easier to establish this knowledge in the conscious mind for intermittent periods, but not so easy to have it at all times in the causal body.

For that to occur, the certainty of conviction "I am free awareness" needs to be there. All doubts and suspiciousness regarding your true nature needs to be

resolved - and as we know, we need a contemplative mind for that. I understand that a hurting body may represent a disturbance for the mind, but since the condition of your current body is not under your control, but *Isvara's*, it is counterproductive to complain about that.

Remember the famous prayer: "Oh Lord, please give me the strength to change what can be changed, the maturity to accept what cannot be changed and the discriminating ability to know the difference." Yes, it takes great maturity to face and accept old age, sicknesses and death with elegance and gratitude. There is nothing we can do about that, since it is the most fundamental "law" of *mithya*: everything that comes has to go - there is no beginning without an end. Be grateful to the Lord for the life It has so far provided you with, and most importantly, for bringing the scriptures on self-knowledge and ShiningWorld into your life. Keep doing your best possible work.

~ Much love and best of luck