

# The Trickiest Concept

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**Monique:** Dear James, thank you so much for your generosity in having our Skype chat last Thursday. It was a real pleasure to speak with you and I came away with my ideas clarified. I made some notes of what I understood from our discussion below. I'm immensely grateful for your helping to remove some of my confusion and I felt the bliss burning away in my heart as we spoke. I'll look forward to seeing/speaking with you again in the future, if the occasion arises!

~ Much love, Monique

## Work/income/karma yoga

The feeling of anxiety, lack and inadequacy that motivates my desire to make more money: (1) like all feelings, is not real; (2) can never be satisfied by money (why do rich people want even more money?); (3) masks the deepest desire of the *jiva*, underlying all seeking for objects: the desire for freedom, in other words, the desire for one's own Self. But since we already are the Self (or the Self is what we are), there is no point in "seeking" it, only in removing the ignorance that prevents us from being absolutely sure of our true identity as the Self.

What I need to keep clear is the fundamental "idea" of myself (my Self), if I accept the logic of the teachings.

Don't trust fear, anxiety, doubt, desire - they are all just feelings. That doesn't mean that one should ignore them when they arise, but rather recognise them for what they are: objects occurring in me, and therefore not real. Same goes for the desire to "do good." Live *dharmically* and even your presence makes a contribution.

## Relating to karma yoga:

Unload the fear and anxiety (e.g. about money for apparent security) BEFORE you do an action.

Undertake (*dharmic*) actions happily, with your best efforts, and remain dispassionate about the results. Remember to be grateful for all the blessings already in your life and for life itself.

If you can't accept the above (yet), continue to seek security in objects/money until life shows you yet again that such a search is futile.

## Who knows one is the Self?

As I understand the response: the Self knows it is the Self when it (1) becomes aware of itself as the blissful sense of existence. Because it is limitless, the Self can apparently forget its true identity and also "remember" it. Like a photo implies the camera that took it (you infer that a camera took the picture), feelings imply consciousness. So don't get so taken with the photo/feelings that you forget what

they arise from/what makes their existence possible. To continue the analogy, after the photo is taken, where is the scene that was captured on film? It no longer exists. It has already changed in some way, no matter how infinitesimally, and is therefore not real in the sense of unchanging.

(I am feeling a little remaining confusion here, although I think I follow the logic – isn't the Self the one who knows both remembering and forgetting? So how can it also be the one that forgets and remembers? Unless it is in the sense of everything being the Self/consciousness, so the forgetting/remembering part also arises in the Self. I think this needs some more time to work in my thinking.)

**James:** Aha! Good thinking. Now for the trickiest idea – *Isvara*. The Self is not a person endowed with memory, so it can't remember or forget. But when it seemingly forgets, owing to the presence of *Maya*, it thinks it is a limited individual, which is actually impossible, because it is not endowed with memory. There is no time for it, so the memory question is moot. The *jiva* also doesn't actually forget either, because it doesn't think "I will forget" before it forgets. So who or what forgets? *Isvara*, the Self plus *Maya*, causes thoughts to appear and disappear in consciousness. *Isvara* is not the same as the Self, but it isn't different either. It is an impersonal, mechanical factor that regulates the information available to *jiva* according to the *jiva's karma*. The *jiva* remembers or forgets what *Isvara* deems necessary, according to its idea of the relative importance of *jiva's* actions with reference to the grand scheme of things, which it creates and controls. You are obviously beyond *Isvara* because you are aware that you know and don't know something, whereas *Isvara* is an inert but seemingly superconscious factor that has no need of memory, for the same reason the Self has no need for memory: it is not endowed with free will, like an animal or a plant, because it is not subject to *Maya*, or *avidya*, personal ignorance. It is not subject to *Maya*, because it is *Maya*. And it is not subject to ignorance, because it isn't a person.

If you still have trouble with this concept, let me know.

~ Love, James