

Assimilated Self-Knowledge

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(James: Note: The Sanskrit word *ahamkara* is a technical term that refers variously to the person one believes oneself to be. Sometimes it is called the ego, the doer, the body-mind-sense complex.)

Frank: Dear James, after our last communication your help was tremendous these last couple of months, thank you. A lot of inquiry has been going on, which has raised two areas I would appreciate your counsel on. They are not really questions but I just need to check how it works

1. I start to see the *ahamkara* as a separate object – its actions almost from birth: careering through relationships, jobs, education – especially the hidden motives of what can be obtained or done and why.

Now, with your guidance, lightly focused persistence and the wonderful precision of the teaching, the whole *ahamkara* thing appears insubstantial, like sand falling through my fingers. It is not really the *jiva*, at least it seems now cruel or stupid to ignore the *jiva*, so poor as it feels, should then die or disappear in order that “I” be free!

The crucial difference is that the *ahamkara* is not me – this “I”-sense I see especially that sense of the drives of doing over the years. The masquerading “I” seems illogical. What are all these actions for? Most poignantly, who are they for? And even if I could get these extra or more feelings of being good, “developing” to some unknown, never-defined result – where would these then go? These results, specifically? Where would they be hoarded so that this *ahamkara* thing could revel in them? Or worse, if it really believed it would change, disappear or feel whole (often contradictory, at least all three!)?

The results had nowhere to go, like being underwater, surrounded by it and pushing water in front of me with hands outstretched expecting it to move away. I feel the current but nothing else, nothing changes for the entity who thinks it is “doing the pushing.”

Where now with it? It is just there, hanging in space, each action that it still takes no longer powered. It does not matter anymore.

2. Service. For many many years, certainly as soon as I got involved in any kind of (now I see, dubious) group for spiritual things, the idea of service was pounded into us.

I left many many years ago but see now that prior even to getting into it there was a deep belief by the *ahamkara* that just pursuing worldly selfish values of the world was bad – more honestly, the “I”-sense, that thing I thought I was, must be bad. Worse, I just couldn’t hack it and was terrified. So I joined such a group to both fix the guilt and hide, do millions of actions, still feeling guilty and terribly even more guilty when I get frustrated after years and leave (proving how dreadful “I” must be).

Okay, a waste of time – other than the knowledge it helps confirm now. The before and after of such spiritual treading of water is concocted by the *ahamkara*, to fix needs it has.

Surely service is not some big identity thing anyone elects with fanfare to do, giving up money and sex and everything else, to atone for who knows what or why, which seems also to now just pass like sand through the fingers.

How can I not be doing service if alive? It is no big thing. I see everyone is; they just may not know it yet. The freedom I am blessed with comes from knowing this.

James: Each of these statements are indicative of the assimilation of the teaching:

(1) **The *ahamkara* is a separate object.** It means the teaching has reversed *Maya*'s reversal. Previously the Self was an object and the *ahamkara* was the subject, and now the Self is the subject and the *ahamkara* is an object.

(2) **The *ahamkara* is insubstantial.** It is just a concept, an object that on inquiry dissolves into you, awareness. Awareness is the substance from which *Maya* apparently fashions everything.

(3) **The *ahamkara* is not me.** A little twist here. The *ahamkara* “seemingly exists,” meaning it doesn't actually exist. It is insubstantial. But if it does, it can only be you. But since it is an object, you can't be it. *Maya* is the key. You can't say it doesn't exist, because it won't appear as an object if it doesn't exist. But it isn't real, meaning it comes and goes.

(4) **The *ahamkara* doesn't matter anymore.** It doesn't matter, because it isn't substantial. You, the witness, awareness, matter because without you nothing exists. You shine and everything reflects your glory. A Self-actualized person is called a *viragi*, a dispassionate person. He or she sees what is without judgment.

(5) **Service is the natural state of the *ahamkara* of a Self-actualized person.** It is not a special type of action intended to redeem a selfish person. It is the Self serving the Self in ways large and small.

Give yourself a nice pat on the back for sticking with Vedanta. You deserve it.

Frank: These statements are incredibly helpful. Got the day off work with a bad cold and have the luxury now of just sitting and contemplating quietly, every word, the way it is put together like music. Thank you.