

So Close

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Terry: Hi, James! How are you? I hope you are fine! I saw the emails about love and your new wife, and that's really nice. ☺ I am coming to India in January and will stay there about one month, dedicated only to Vedanta. Actually, I arrived at a dead point in the Vedantic path. I'll try to explain.

I think I am living with a very powerful *karma yoga* attitude and it seems like I am flying on the famous "magic carpet." I try to live fully every moment and pursue things with the sense of being in something like a game, accepting losses and winnings as they come. I can clearly see myself from a detached point of view, observing how *vasanas* work on my body-mind. I accept them and give them little importance. I feel unconditional love rising, and live as if there is nothing to lose. It's fun. I take never-ending joy from small things and just the sense of "being" makes me so whole. Okay, that's the *samsaric* situation. ☺

James: That's fantastic. It seems the Vedanta is working for you very nicely. *Karma yoga* is all you really need. It is just the how the self would act and see things if it was in the world with a body and mind.

Terry: But I cannot say if this attitude comes from self-knowledge or is just that I found a fun and detached way to live. Or perhaps a mixture of both. I really cannot say with total confidence, I AM THE SELF.

James: I think it is the result of the fact that you have largely assimilated the essence of self-knowledge. Why does it matter if you cannot say you are the self if life is so good? When you say or think "Terry," what does that word refer to? Does it refer to awareness or to the apparent person, Terry?

Terry: I can "feel" that I am not the body mind. I can "feel" the reality as a dream, a film running. I can "feel" that there is something immutable, infinite and always present that is the essence of life, that is everything and nothing else.

James: These feelings are the truth. That immutable, infinite, always-present thing is you. To finish your spiritual work, you need to identify it as you. Now it is an object known to you, Terry. When it becomes you, and Terry is an object, then you are free of the idea that you are Terry, the experiencer. Freedom from the experience is enlightenment.

Terry: But I would not say, "I am this thing," because I know the self cannot be objectified.

James: You are objectifying it, Terry. That is why you say there is something. If you

say the something is here is something, you are closer to the truth. That something that is there is actually you. You say it is immutable. That is true. There is only one immutable something – awareness – you. Your identity has to shift to that. When it does, the “that” will become you.

Terry: The only thing I can say certainly is I AM, and the only fact that I exist, gives to me (my body-mind) infinite joy. Is this the right knowledge?

James: Yes, indeed. The I AM is the that “that” you refer to above, the immutable something. It is your existence, you. It is not an object.

Terry: Am I putting too much importance on definitions and language details? What am I missing? 😊

James: I think so. It seems to me your self-knowledge is excellent. Except for this confusion about the location of the “I,” you are enlightened. Ask yourself how you know what you know. It is not Terry that knows things. Terry is only a reflection of you. It is you as awareness that knows things. It knows it is immutable. It knows the confusion, etc.

Terry: On the other hand, it often happens to me that going deep in asking, “WHO I AM?,” I begin to see objects from the point of view of the self. But at this moment everything gets senseless and flat. I think this is what is called “the dark night of the soul.”

James: It is a dark night if you interpret it negatively. But there is no reason to interpret it this way. It is just the way things are. Reality is flat. This is what non-duality means. It seems like it is three-dimensional because the senses are objectifying it that way. It is actually totally flat, nothing sticks out. Reality is like a mirror in which objects appear. At no time do the objects jut out from the surface of the mirror. This is how the self sees the world. The ego, Terry, which is the self under the spell of ignorance, doesn’t like the idea that nothing is real. But see the contradiction, Terry. You are playing life as if it is a game, which it is. You will only do that if it has no meaning in itself. Because it is not real, like a movie, you can sport in it – as you described above.

Terry: Every action that the body-mind could do seems to be senseless, and I could even let the body-mind die without eating or doing anything.

James: This understanding is good, Terry. It means that you are free to be what you are. Look for the upside in the emptiness of the world.

Terry: And looking at all the beautiful things of life from this point of view is very sad because they seem to have nothing good inside at the end.

James: But you are leaving out the one good thing, Terry: YOU, the one who sees the flat empty dream of *maya*. When you look at the one who witnessess the dream, the dream becomes full of meaning. It is filled with awareness, you. So don't pay attention to the dream, pay attention to yourself.

Terry: Well... I know I am pretty confused and my English is not the best. I hope that most I've written is clear.

James: It is very clear. You are not very confused. You are very near the end of your spiritual journey. This is a common doubt. Think about what I have just said and it should become clear to you. As I said above, I think you have mostly assimilated the teachings. There is just this one last subtle doubt remaining.

~ Love, James