

The Body Is in You

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Alexander: This brain's memory has seen better days, and it ends up forgetting certain teachings. That's why I suggested Advaita Vedanta flash cards.

Sundari: Self-knowledge is not memory-based. It is the knowledge that is always good because it is the truth of who you are. Do you need a flash card to remember your name when you wake up in the morning? No, you don't. This is because your name is based on knowledge, not memory. Any knowledge is object-based, not subject-based. It is not knowledge unless it is true to the object. If it is "my" knowledge, then it is my interpretation of an object, which is not necessarily knowledge. Ignorance (or my point of view) is causing me to see or experience whatever it is as though it is actually there. People believe that ignorance is knowledge because they believe that knowledge is subject-based, i.e. they believe that what they experience is knowledge. It may be knowledge, but it may not be.

Self-knowledge depends on the nature of the self, not on knowledge gained through personal experience or memory. On the basis of self-knowledge the individual can retain or reject the knowledge gained through his or her personal experience.

Once self-knowledge is firm and non-dual vision is permanent, it cannot be reversed or forgotten. Until such time as the knowledge is firm, affirmations work and are to be encouraged if they are true and you understand what they mean. This is why Vedanta offers many *prakriyas* for this purpose. The most powerful is taking a stand in awareness as awareness and negating the opposite thought when it arises in the mind. When self-knowledge is firm, no affirmation is necessary; although devotional practices such as praying, chanting or singing the name of self are engaged in with great joy knowing that you are reveling in the truth of who you are.

Alexander: I do know non-duality intuitively from forty years of meditation and also reading of non-duality in a Buddhist context. Building a teaching superstructure beneath the realization is more difficult at sixty than at thirty, especially when Buddhism has to be cleared away. Advaita Vedanta is much superior to Buddhism, especially as to the existence of self. There is neither Self nor self in Buddhism.

Sundari: Yes, that is this is all true. The older one gets, the more entrenched the *vasanas* are and the harder it is to render them non-binding. To teach Vedanta requires very different qualifications than most other teachings and, sadly, not many so-called teachers of Vedanta are qualified to teach. A qualified teacher of Vedanta must have a solid understanding of the teachings in order to wield the knowledge effectively and preferably needs to be self-actualized. A Vedanta teacher is a friend and equal to those who come to hear the teachings because they see only the self. A qualified teacher teaches the self, not the ego. The self is the only *guru* and a teacher is simply a voice for the transference of self-knowledge. The teaching tradition of Vedanta is called *samkhya bhava*, friendship.

Buddhism is so open to interpretation it is almost impossible to say what it really

teaches. It is a “chip off the tooth of the *Vedas*” but it causes huge confusion for the majority of seekers. Vedanta suffers no such lack of clarity, is not open to interpretation, and although it can and has been corrupted by some, the pure tradition runs deep and is still as strong as it ever was. It will remain so for the few who are blessed enough to find it.

Alexander: When one has this realization of self, what happens when this body dies?

Sundari: First of all, self-realisation is only the beginning; it is not *moksa*. Self-realisation is indirect knowledge; it is an experience and, like all experiences, it ends unless the doer has been negated and the binding *vasanas* rendered non-binding. Direct knowledge means that self-knowledge is firm and seeking is over; the seeker knows it is the sought and understand what it means to say “I am whole and complete, ever-present, unchanging, non-dual awareness.” Therefore self-knowledge translates into the life of the *jiva*. This is what we mean by self-actualised.

Secondly, if you understood what it means to say “I am whole and complete, ever-present, non-dual awareness” – you would not be asking this question.

The question “...what happens when this body dies?” is asked by the *jiva* who knows about awareness; it does not yet know it is awareness. If it did, it would know that the body is not real, “real” being defined by “that which is always present and never changes.” The body is made up of the five elements and belongs to *Isvara*. When awareness no longer shines on the body and it dies, it returns to *Isvara*. The body like all objects, is inert, a counter across which experience is transacted while awareness shines on it. The body is reflected awareness and so has a dependent existence on awareness but awareness is always free of the body.

Alexander: Has one been “blown out” (*nir-vana* literally means “not-flame”) or does one still exist in another form?

Sundari: Same answer as above, Alexander. Who is asking this question? Who has been “blown out” – and what do you mean by that anyway? Non-duality states that there is only awareness – that which is real – meaning ever present and unchanging. The apparent reality (all objects) arises out of awareness but it is not real, meaning it is not always present and always changing, although we say it has an apparent existence because it can be experienced.

When *maya* manifests, awareness in the role of Creator (*Isvara*) operating *maya* (beginningless ignorance) brings the apparent creation into manifestation. Awareness under the apparent spell of ignorance then identifies with the subtle body and thinks that awareness is an object to be gained. This is why Vedanta says that *moksa* is discriminating awareness, you, from the objects that arise in you. When you can do this as naturally as breathing, self-knowledge has removed the ignorance of your true nature and you then know that you are *moksa*.

The body, like any other object gross or subtle, is an object known to you. You – awareness – cannot be “blown out” of it because you were never “in” it. The body is in you, awareness.

I suggest you watch James teach both *Vivekachudamani* and *Panchadasi*. You need clarity on the identity between *Isvara/jiva/jagat*. I have attached an article James wrote on this very important teaching.

Alexander: Your husband Ramji is a marvelous teacher with a firm handle on Advaita Vedanta. I consider Advaita Vedanta as taught by him to be the pot o' gold at the end of the metaphysical rainbow. 😊

Thank you for your time, Sundari.

Sundari: You are right on the money there! He is the real thing and anyone who crosses his path is indeed blessed with *punya karma*.

Om and *prem* to you as well. You are very welcome.

~ *Namaste*, Sundari