

The Great Silence Is Known by You

Ram (James Swartz)

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Quincy: Dear James, we met during tea time when you recently gave a talk at the School of Practical Philosophy in Cape Town.

I asked you something about the feeling of “I” and how it relates to what is observed in the world since my deepening experience was that the feeling of “I” somehow was the world. After a bit of discussion, you stressed that I was making the mistake of looking for enlightenment experientially and that I should read your book *How to Attain Enlightenment*, which I have now done carefully (and intend to go through again in a month or two after letting it settle for a while).

This is where I think I am/what I understand:

I know that I am asleep. What knows I am asleep is more awake.

James: Yes. What knows is you, awareness.

Quincy: Enlightenment is not an experience since all experiences come and go, even “high” ones. I was indeed looking for enlightenment by further and further refinement. According to you and others who seem to talk from authentic experience, enlightenment is rather a deep kind of ever-present knowledge of being “whole and complete, actionless awareness.”

James: Yes. That is correct. Experiences don’t last. Experience lasts but it is awareness already so you can’t get it or experience it as an object.

Quincy: None of my thoughts are absolutely true. This is known directly in meditation.

James: They are not true when you are out of meditation either, Quincy. “True” means “permanent.” True means “stands alone.” Thoughts don’t stand alone. They depend on each other and they depend on *Isvara*, on *karma*, etc.

Quincy: The world is *brahman*, but *brahman* is not the world. Or, using Maharshi’s statement, “The world is illusory. *Brahman* alone is real. The world is *Brahman*.” The truth of these is sensed and the profoundness of these statements is still sinking in during reflection.

James: It came from Shankara: *brahma satyam jagan mithya*. Limitless awareness – you – are the truth. The world – the objects known to you – is apparently real.

Quincy: Enlightenment as an “event” has not yet “happened for me” although

there has been considerable “preparation”: stripping, dropping away and opening (words are tricky here). The seeker is still there although there is the sense that all that is needed is here right now, in this moment, which means that the seeker is superfluous and probably obstructs.

James: No, it does not obstruct. Seeking obstructs. The seeker is *mithya*, apparently real. It stays after *moksa*, first as a finder and then as a functional ego useful for negotiating in the apparent reality. *Moksa* is just knowledge, knowing that the apparent seeker/finder entity does not in any way compromise the existence of awareness – you. It is because you are awareness that you know that Quincy is seeking, that he has not found. It means that you are already *moksa*, i.e. free. Free of what? Free of Quincy. He is an object known to you. He is you, but you are not him. *Moksa* is not something that happens. It is the hard and fast understanding that you are free. Quincy will never be free. He is just a construct, a thought, dependent in every way on *Isvara*.

Quincy: The kind of understanding needed is not of the mental kind (since my thoughts are not really true).

James: Wrong. It is definitely the mental kind. It is the mind that thinks it is not free. It needs to be disabused of this notion. It seems you believe that something experiential has to happen beyond the mind to set you free. You, awareness, are already free. But owing to *avidya* you believe that you aren't. You believe it as the mind. So the mind needs knowledge not you, the self. You are what knows that Quincy doesn't have *moksa*.

Quincy: So the non-real doer “I” continues to meditate, just being aware of the great silence in which all things happen, accepting everything as it is.

James: See yourself as the knower of the great silence, and you are free. Just as Quincy is known to you, so the great silence is known to you.

Quincy: There is reflection on statements of “truth” (like “I am pure, actionless awareness, whole and complete”), there is deep questioning (like “Who is the one questioning?”) and there is a kind of patient waiting for the moment of grace in which true understanding may happen, though it is known to a level that the meditator, the one reflecting, the one questioning and the one waiting have no essential basis in reality.

James: See your thinking. You are waiting for something to happen. You will wait a long time, I am afraid. Why not accept yourself as the knower right now and assert your identity – “I am freedom. I am free.” This is true understanding. As long as you want something other than you to confirm your freedom you will not be free. You are free now. Understanding is understanding. “I am free” is true understanding. Nothing is required but to own your nature.

Quincy: And above all, all is well no matter whether there is enlightenment or not.

Yet something wants to awaken. I write to you since there is the sense that that is what should happen following our little conversation and perhaps you have a pointer or two to share.

James: You are what is aware of that something that wants to awaken. You are right to leave it to *Isvara*. This is something that is not up to you, either as Quincy or as awareness.

Quincy: I think you will understand. We battle to see our own structures and some “outside” help can be invaluable.

James: I hope this helps in the battle, Quincy. It is a lot to take on board but please think about it. You are very close to what you seek. If you give up the idea that something has to happen, you will be there.

~ Love James