

The Non-Experiencing Witness

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Katja: Hello, Dear Ramji!

I wanted to write to you again already, since the last email was a bit hysterical and now that I have been doing well more than half an hour daily of scripture reading.

One thing that wasn't very obvious in my last email is that I am grateful most of the time. I have few good friends, there's no war, and what's super is Vedanta and you teaching it. I haven't been this balanced in my life!

I also can say that the knowledge has taken place, but it is not 100% firm. I can't exactly say when it did occur. How to describe it? A permanent, very down-to-earth shift has happened in knowing that Katja is not me and I just am.

But at times I feel schizophrenic. Sometimes fear takes over and it is hard to see it as just a bloody thought and let it be. I still get identified with anger too. I'm in the firefly stage, blinking on and off as awareness. I worry and get confused.

Ramji: If you know you are confused and worried, are you confused and worried? These are just objects appearing in you.

Katja: And then I go back to thoughts as, "There is tiredness, there is worry, there is anger," and expansion happens and things are more calm. Then some other damn *vasana* comes up. But it has nothing to do with me as awareness, and that is why I have sympathy for my ego and the slings and arrows that it sometimes it has to suffer owing to this particular role that it plays. It is just part of having an apparent presence in a flawed and apparent reality. But you said that once one understands, *sattva* increases?

Ram: It will if the knowledge is firm, but if you are still sometimes identified with the ego, you need to help it by doing more *sattvic* things, purify your lifestyle, etc.

Katja: I've been doing notes again: "There is the changing and the unchanging self and *paramatma*." I've completely missed out on the *paramatma*. Isn't the unchanging self and the *paramatma* the same thing? And are *paramatma* and *Uttama Purusha* the same thing?

Ram: They are all words for you, awareness, the unchanging self. Forget them. They are fancy words. *Paramatma* just means that consciousness is limitless. *Uttama Purusha* is a personification of consciousness. It means "the supreme person." The self is not a person, but *uttama* is used to distinguish it from the *jiva*, which is a person. Just stick with awareness, or consciousness, and the objects appearing it, i.e. you.

Katja: I can say I am witnessing objects, and are these just objects?

Ram: Yes, they are just ideas in you, consciousness. Understand them as I have explained them.

Katja: And the cherry on the top of all your statements: “The self knows itself without the body and the mind.” Yes, but then speaking of it is... Vedanta?

Ram: Yes. Vedanta uses words to remove ignorance about the self.

Katja: I guess here is the point when enlightenment sickness lurks. Using words to talk about the wordless and ego taking over if the knowledge is not 100%.

Ram: We don't talk about it. We use a methodology to remove ignorance of it. Talking about it may be marginally helpful, but talking about it always presents it as an object, something to be gained. Helping you to understand the unexamined logic of your own experience, Vedanta takes away your false notions about the nature of reality.

Katja: I understand your statement that the ego is just the self under the spell of ignorance.

Ram: This is important to understand. It debunks the two-selves myth.

Katja: In fact I can't say I am witnessing – who is? It happens. Does it mean that when I write to you about it, I return to identifying with Katja?

Ram: If you know what you wrote in this sentence, you are witnessing. You are always witnessing, knowing the thoughts and feelings appearing in you. If witnessing “happens,” it means you are identified with the subtle body. When *sattva* is present you witness and seem to be aware, and when *rajas* and *tamas* are present you don't, because your mind is too distracted or dull. You are not the subtlebody. You are awareness. Awareness is *sakshi*, the non-experiencing witness. You are getting close, but you are still a bit confused.

Katja: I am also gonna buy the ticket to Holland retreat – it's all fixed? You'll be there?

Ram: I'll be there, Lord willing.

Katja: I didn't know there were so many women angry because you married! Ah, they were looking for happiness in the wrong place.

Ram: That is the truth.