

shiningworld

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Newsletter September 2014

Greetings Shining World!

The past month was consumed by preparations for Trout Lake, which was a great success and very well attended. As you can see by the photo below, the venue was bathed in a golden light, which seemed to pulsate with Ramji's wonderful teaching of Panchadasi, perhaps Vedanta's most advanced text. Although the material taught in Vedanta is always the same, most attendees felt that this was Ramji's most potent teaching so far. It had the feeling of an important spiritual event. Many had major (and hopefully permanent) 'shifts' and 'clicks'. A short excerpt of this exceptional teaching is presented below the picture.



Trout Lake

The Essence of the recent teaching at Trout Lake established the identity between the conscious subject and material objects. Here's how.

Reality is non-dual awareness appearing as a conscious subject and as inert subtle and gross objects. Objects are a combination of existence plus name and form. The existence (*sat*) of an object is just awareness (*chit*). The name and form is added by *Maya/Isvara*.

Establishing the non-duality of the material world and you, the subject, is achieved by understanding that existence and awareness are one. It is reasonably easy to see that the awareness (*chit*) in me and the awareness in other living beings is one, but it is more difficult to understand my *identity with gross and subtle material objects* since they are not conscious.

Maya, the Role Reverser



How can this identity be understood? By appreciating the fact that the existence of an object belongs to awareness and not to the objects themselves. Maya reverses the relationship between awareness and existence so that it seems as if the existence of an object belongs to the object, not to awareness.

For example, without any thought we say a tree exists. In this case the word 'exists' is a verb describing something that the tree does. It exists. But this is wrong. The sentence should read 'existence trees' because existence is the subject for every object, not the object of multiple subjects. Every object comes from existence, the substance of all objects.

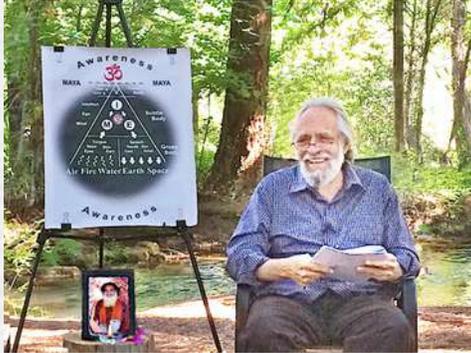
If you analyze your experience you will see that objects...thoughts and feelings, for example...material objects as well...appear and disappear in your consciousness. This simple fact shows that you, the conscious subject, are present before an object appears and after an object disappears. It is also a matter of common sense that objects don't exist for you unless they are known to exist. And it is also a fact that you cannot have knowledge without consciousness. So what is the connection between the conscious subject...awareness/consciousness...and the existence of the inert objects presenting themselves to you?

If you are asked if you are conscious, you will say yes. If you are asked if you exist you will also say yes. Both are self evident facts. If you try to separate your existence from

your consciousness/awareness you will fail to do so, not because you do not know the technique for so doing, but because there is no technique. There is no technique because awareness and existence are one. There is no way to separate them.

So when you say, the tree exists, what does it mean? It means that the existence of the tree is actually consciousness and since you are consciousness, your oneness with the tree is definitively established.

One more step is required for liberation. If you are one with the tree you have a problem. You will not be conscious and you will not be one with other trees and other non-trees, so



there will still be duality and no liberation for you. So how do you remain one with the tree and still be free of the tree? By understanding *Maya* as it is encapsulated in the teaching on *satya* (real) and *mithya* (apparent). All trees are wood. Within the category of woodness, there are many different kinds of trees. Wood is the substrate, the 'support' of all trees. It is the essence of tree. Is the treeness of wood free of woodness? No. Is the woodness free of the

treeness? Yes. Treeness depends on woodness but woodness does not depend on treeness. So they are one but they are not the same.

Similarly, all names and forms (objects) exist but they all depend on existence. But existence does not depend on any particular object. Objects are material but they also exist. If they exist they are consciousness but consciousness...you...are not them. Problem solved.

So when you experience an object, all that is required is to separate the existence from the name and form. You cannot physically separate yourself from an object, gross or subtle, because reality is non-dual. There are not two existences or two consciousnesses. But you can separate them in your mind because you understand that *Maya* makes the one reality seem as if it is a duality. When you are able to separate yourself in this way from every object...remember experiences are objects...as it appears, you are free.

Here's another cool Panchadasi Teaching that I particularly like:

The Debtor - Maya and the World

The apple does not fall far from the tree. If the world evolves from space, whatever applies to space applies to the world. If the world exists on its own, it cannot be negated. Who or what borrows existence?

The world is a debtor; it borrows existence. Just as a rich man need not borrow money, an existent thing need not borrow existence because it has



existence already. A non-existent thing cannot borrow existence because it does not exist. Therefore only a completely unique something that is neither existent nor non-existent can borrow existence. The borrower is Maya, which is mithya. It is always in debt. Vedanta is the only teaching that has mithya and when all things are considered it is the only teaching of Vedanta. The self can't create. Matter can't create. Only Maya can create. It is neither the self nor the not-self.

What's New



This year in the US has been blessed by the gift of our first real home together, thanks to the generosity of our sponsor, Dave. We will be looking forward to our return next year. Time has flown and the onset of Fall reminds us that my time in the US will soon be over. I will be heading off to South Africa in a few weeks to spend time with my beloved daughter who is about to give birth to her first child. Grannyhood awaits and I look forward with great love to meeting this new jiva, the Self in a baby body ☺ !



Ramji will be in the US until early November before returning to Europe for a weekend seminar, then joining me in SA for two seminars. Isvara willing, this will be followed by some time to catch up and relax on the ocean with my family and its newest member. James will have the opportunity of finding out what it feels like to be a jiva Granddaddy ☺ before heading off to India.

We are setting the dates for the 2015 calendar and will be adding our new home in Bend to the list of venues for seminars. Watch the website for more details.

Publications



Ramji's latest book will soon be available in hard cover and on kindle.

My book on Lifestyle and the gunas, which has been on the back burner for a while, is back on the boil and I hope to have time to get it finished in the next few months.

New E-Satsangs

Please check the website for the latest postings from Ram and me, as well as the other endorsed writers.

An Addition to the Shiningworld Work Team

As many of you are well aware, Shiningworld is a veritable gold mine of the purest, high level Vedanta. There is still much to do to properly preserve and to render the material more accessible. It is too much for Ramji and me to reasonably cope with, even with Christian's efficient help.

By the grace of Isvara, we are pleased to welcome Isaiah on board to help us. He will still be writing e-satsangs and we have no doubt that he will be a great addition to the shiningworld work team for years to come.

Our first big project will be to reorganize the e-satsang section with more defined categories. Anyone with editing and proof reading skills who would like to assist, please contact me at: sundari.shiningworld@gmail.com

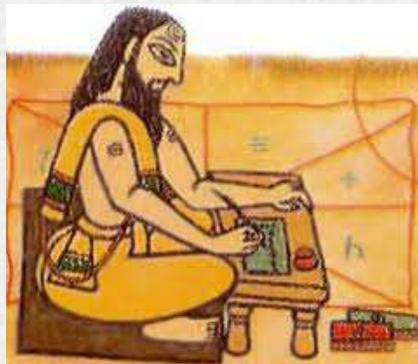
New videos

The latest Panchadasi videos will be available on audio and video in the next couple of weeks...not to be missed!

Next Webinar

The next webinar teaching on the 5th chapter of The Essence of Enlightenment will be broadcast on Sunday the 28th September, 11am Pacific Standard Time.

Twelve Month Teaching Course



Lesson 4 Qualifications - Answers (lesson 5 follows)

1. (A) Because they view enlightenment as a matter of experience. No qualifications are needed for experience. (B) They do not understand that the self is always experienced, that there is one self and that it is always free which means that

enlightenment is the removal of ignorance. Ignorance takes place in the mind. For knowledge to remove ignorance the mind needs to be qualified i.e. prepared.

2. (A) Because to qualify one needs to put forth effort and today most seekers are conditioned to the idea of instant gratification. The idea that anyone can just 'get it' fits with this belief. (B) Seekers are attached to their biases and prejudices. A qualified mind is relatively free of unexamined biases and prejudices.
3. (A) No. (B) Observation and analysis. Individuals with qualified minds assimilate the teachings and those lacking the qualifications have difficulty assimilating the teachings.
4. A. The certain appreciation of the fact joy is not in the object and (B) that life is a zero-sum game.
5. What is always present. What never changes. Pure consciousness. Pure existence. My self.
6. It is mithya, apparently real. Clay and pot. Wave and ocean. Gold and ornaments.
7. Because the self, which is real, is confused with the apparently real objects that appear in it.
8. Lack of dispassion causes emotionality. Discrimination is exceptionally difficult when the mind is emotionally disturbed.
9. Because the doer is attached to the results of its actions and life does not always deliver the desired results.
10. Mistaking one object for another. Adding value to an object.
11. Because what you think is not under the control of the individual.
12. Because actions have consequences that rebound to disturb the mind.
13. Looking after the karma of others. Manipulating others. Trying to change the world. Trying to live up to an ideal. Trying to be something you aren't.
14. You cannot attain liberation until you have worked out most of the karma brought you into this life. If you refuse to do your duty to yourself, your mind will be very conflicted and unable to discriminate.
15. Learning to keep the mind on one topic for an extended period of time.

16. Lack of commitment to liberation. Attachment to the belief that desired objects can bring happiness.
17. Objectivity toward pain of all kinds without anxiety, complaint or attempt at revenge.
18. Because liberation is liberation from self ignorance. Faith does not remove ignorance. Faith means that I do not know.
19. a) Faith in the teaching. B) Faith in the teacher.
20. Because self ignorance is hard wired. There are many obstacles to overcome and many setbacks. Unless your desire to be free is intense, you will lose heart and fail.
21. Because your Self ignorance will cause you to interpret what you have read and heard about the self and how to realize it incorrectly.
22. Because an individual's interpretation of his or her experience does not apply to everyone. Knowledge is not subjective. It is the same for everyone.
23. Because silence is not opposed to ignorance. If you are sitting in silence you expect and experience of the self not knowing that you are always only experiencing the self.
24. The Grace of God.

Lesson 5 - WHO AM I?

Awareness, The Self

I always start teaching with a chant from one of Vedanta's source texts. It is a description of you.

*Om Brahmanandan parama sukkadam kevalm jnana murtim
dvandvatitam gangana sad drisham tatvamasyaadhi lakshyam.
Ekam nityam vimalam achalam sarvadhi sakshi bhootam
Bhavatam triguna rahitam sad gurum tam namami.*

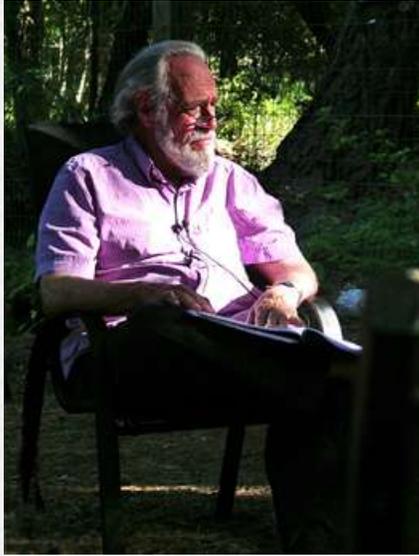
The self, pure awareness, is limitless bliss and unending pleasure. It is beyond the dualities of the mind. It is the isness that sees, the isness that is known through Vedanta's statement, "You are That.' It is the one, eternal, pure, unchanging witness of everything. It is beyond experience and the three qualities of nature. I bow to that self, the one that removes ignorance.

Is this what your mind is telling you about who you are? Undoubtedly there is a voice inside that has another opinion. It probably says something like this, "I'm a frightened needy little worm, munching my way through the experiential garbage heap of the world, looking for fulfillment. Life is tough and I am lonely, fearful, depressed and driven by my desires most of the time. You say I am fine but I don't experience myself this way."

We all know this voice. It is one protagonist in the inner war between the truth of who you are and what we think we are. The teachings can't resolve that war; you have to resolve it by contemplating the meaning of the teachings. Vedanta is your ally. It reveals the non-dual truth of your experience and stands by your side, ever vigilant.

It affirms your identity as unborn eternal actionless unconcerned awareness. It shows you that you are the goodness beyond good and bad, that the beauty of this creation...the sun, moon and stars...is just a pale reflection of the beauty of your own self. Vedanta says that because you are awareness/consciousness you are everything that is. Therefore you need to know yourself as everything. And, for those still longing for some kind of experiential enlightenment it unequivocally states that what you seek...the self...is 'beyond experience.'

Vedanta is concerned with a single topic...identity. You would think the teaching would start with the topic of the self and stick to it exclusively, but there is a lot more to self inquiry than just saying we are awareness, which in itself is not a complex topic. It is a subtle topic, however, one that does not yield to imprecise and clumsy thinking or necessarily lead to a simple solution like asking 'Who am I?' It is also not straightforward owing to the fact that experience seems to contradict it, setting up a natural resistance to the assimilation of the teachings. And since the problem is ignorance and



ignorance is hard-wired, you cannot just walk in off the street backed by an epiphany, awakened by quick read of a popular book on non-duality or primed by the gushing testimonials of friends and expect to 'get it' immediately. If you do, you will unget it as quickly. Many with Einsteinian IQs never crack the code. Self inquiry is a unique pursuit.

A successful teaching like Vedanta needs to patiently set up the context in which self inquiry becomes meaningful. This involves clarity with reference to your goals, getting a precise understanding of the nature of enlightenment, eliminating erroneous notions, appreciating the need for a means of knowledge and seeing to your qualifications...before you even begin to inquire. And you should know that the topic of the self...which in one sense is the only topic...sits roughly in the middle of the whole train of logic that constitutes the vision of non-duality, meaning that although it is the first, last and only word, it isn't.

The statement 'it is and it isn't' typifies the teaching. For example, there are many obviously contradictory statements in the texts. What does "It is bigger than the biggest and smaller than the smallest" mean? "Sitting still it runs faster than the mind." "The mind is the self but the self is not the mind." There is no quick and easy answer until a careful unfolding of the teachings resolves apparent contradictions and makes explicit what is implicit.

Imagine that you are out in nature on a path and you meet a stranger. Before any words are exchanged, what do you experience? You see a body and you see consciousness. If there is no consciousness, the body will not be vertical. It will be rotting away on the ground, food for worms. Consciousness appears as the spark of life that animates the body. You don't 'see' it with your eyes but you know it by inference, which is just as good as direct experience since knowing it is nearly all that is required. We say 'nearly' because simply knowing it indirectly as an object is not quite enough. It is only truly known when you know what it means to know it in terms of your experience of duality.

Usually when you walk into a room and someone is in it, you immediately introduce yourself; neither person sits and stares at each other without speaking. In terms of self knowledge this presents a problem because the way we are conditioned to interact...which reveals what we know and what we don't know...demands that information about our respective identities be exchanged. You can't really function in the 'real' world without knowing *who* you are dealing with. This information may come indirectly by inference or directly in the form of statements about the self. I seriously doubt that you have ever met a complete stranger who introduced his or her self as non-dual ordinary actionless unconcerned limitless unborn awareness. These are the words that most accurately identify the being sitting in the body in front of you but that is not what that being says.

I Am Not My Story

The situation is a bit more complicated because even though the self did not actually come from anywhere, one of the first details to emerge in conversation is where it came from. Even though it is unborn it speaks of a mother and a father. Even though it is free of everything it seems to think that it is tied to a place, a dwelling, a spouse and offspring. Even though it is not a doer because there is nothing other than it, it tells you that it does a certain job. Though nothing ever happened to it, it can regale you ad infinitum, usually ad nauseam, about all the things that happened: "my mother did this; my father did that; and then I" It has a story to tell.

And that story is somehow meant to add up to the consciousness that is in front of you wagging its apparent tongue. The story is meant to be 'me.' But is there an equal sign between me and my story? If you added up all the things that happened to 'you' over time...and what you thought about them...would they all equal you?

If all those words about you referred to something real, their referents would be available for experience here and now. Reality...awareness, meaning you...is always present. But none of these things are present apart from the words that supposedly represent them. They are not glued to your body for people to touch. They do not hover around you like a cloud of mosquitos for observation. They are simply words coming out of you that disappear immediately into thin air.

I Am Ordinary Awareness

To extract an identity from a series of happenings, real and imagined, does not work. My story, my idea of who I am, is not me. If you want to know who you are, subtract your story. What is left over is you, one simple awareness...conscious being. There are not two of you, three of you or ten of you. There is only one ever-present ordinary awareness.

We are at another important point in the teaching because everything we have read and heard, particularly the shallow testimonials of the plethora of so-called enlightened beings that flood the spiritual marketplace with their books, videos and websites, have convinced us that what we are seeking is some kind of mind blowing amazing life transforming experience... something that is supposed to turn us into enlightened super beings and give us lives that we can only dream of. Without the hyperbolic spiritual porn that passes for knowledge these days, the gargantuan spiritual world shrinks to the size of a small pea and the modern gurus would have to hang up their hats and get day jobs. The idea that self realization is something special...it is, but not in the way you think it is...is the greatest imaginable impediment to enlightenment.

The persistence of this myth is due solely to the fact that the egos of those seeking it are so bored, lonely, and generally disenchanted with life, that they will only chase something they think is: Incredible! Fantastic! Unbelievable! So the fantasy of the extraordinary self...the TRANSCENDENTAL self, the COSMIC self, etc. survives, nay thrives, from age to age. If you hang on to the notion that you are going to experience something special and proceed with this inquiry you will be very disappointed because...sad to say...the self that you are, the self that you are going to realize...is totally ordinary. It is the awareness that is observing your mind take in these words, nothing more. It is not inaccessible at all. It is hidden in plain sight. It is always present and greatly unappreciated for no other reason than lack of understanding.

In this pure simple unchanging awareness that we are thoughts, feelings, memories, dreams, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions arise and dissolve like mist in the early morning. Although awareness and consciousness are

synonyms I tend to use word awareness because we almost invariably take consciousness to be the mind i.e. the events that arise and subside in consciousness. Owing to its association with the mind, consciousness, which is often referred to as a 'stream' or a flow of subjective experiences, is not as helpful a word as awareness, although in usage awareness often also refers to the mind.

The Most Obvious Thing

Here is a brilliant short inquiry from one of my friends, Christian Leeb. I fattened it a bit, but he gets all the credit.

“What is the most familiar experience to you? Shouldn't that be easy to answer? I know it's a rather vague question, but still, doesn't it seem like you should easily know what it is? Think about it. It shouldn't take more than a few seconds but it may take a long time because the answer is soooo obvious that most people don't get it.

When you experience something all of the time and it never ever changes it's almost impossible to notice it, like gravity. Gravity is pushing strongly on your body all of the time but you never notice it...because it's always there. What's interesting about the most familiar experience to you is that it is also a constant like gravity, but you **can** know it. Although it never ever changes, you can be aware of it. So what is it?

The most familiar experience to you is that you exist. Every single thing you experience and know happens within the context of your existence. This is super obvious, right? But it doesn't come to mind because it's in the background and we don't think about it or appreciate it for what it is because...well...because it is always there. As you think about the fact that you exist right now, you immediately 'feel' or 'sense' or 'experience' or 'know' your existence in some way, don't you?

How do you know you exist? Well, you just know it, that's all. It's not because you see your existence, or hear, feel, or think it...or for any other reason. No other source of information is required. That you exist is the most important knowledge that every person has. It is obvious, fundamental, and ongoing. And you know it simply because you know it. Nothing new here; I'm just pointing out what you already know, all of the time.

There is one more very important fact about you that you need to consider. That you exist is clear, but what is the nature of your existence? What exactly is existence? Existence is awareness. These two words mean exactly the same thing. The most familiar experience to you is that you are aware. Existence, awareness, has to be there or you don't experience or know anything. Or you could say that existence or awareness has to be there, or you aren't there. Obvious, isn't it?

Some people in the spiritual world...most, in fact...seem to think that awareness is something special, something somewhere else, something to be discovered or realized or experienced in some mystical way. I am pointing out how completely normal and obvious awareness is to you.

It is one thing to understand that you are existence/awareness but it is another to know what it means to be what you are. This will take a bit more time if you want to do it on your own but if you listen to what I have to say, it will not take very long at all. What it means is that you are always full, whole and complete. This is what we mean by bliss. It means you are always satisfied with yourself. You will, of course argue with me on this topic because your experience does not warrant that conclusion. Sometimes you feel positively dissatisfied. Before you stop listening consider this: why are you not satisfied with dissatisfaction? The answer is because you are not focused on your existence awareness, your self. You don't feel satisfied because you just got what you want or avoided what you didn't want...you feel satisfied because you are at one with you.

There is something that obstructs your appreciation of yourself...your fears and desires! If you can lay them to rest you can be satisfied all the time. There are several solutions to this problem...*karma yoga*, for example, but the quickest one, if you are qualified, is self inquiry. Apply the truth about your self...the knowledge I am whole and complete ever-existent actionless awareness...whenever a gratuitous fear or desire arises and you will eventually knock them out. Every time you do it you will feel very satisfied because you are standing as you are, standing as existence awareness, not as your silly desires and fears want you to think you are...a small inadequate incomplete little wimp.

It's like being in school and being told by the teacher to erase the chalkboard of your past. When you take self-inquiry to your mind you are erasing the

old stuff. Take a few swipes with the eraser and you'll see an immediate difference, which is a wonderful thing with Vedanta. However, some of that chalk has been on there for a long time and needs many wipes and a bit of elbow grease. If you doubt that the eraser will work, it won't work because you're not using it. Use it consistently and absolutely for sure, it will eventually work. That's self-inquiry.

Another terribly important point about enlightenment is to know that the idea that when you realize yourself you will discover something new is a complete lie. You will not discover or experience anything new. It will not fix your karma. If you're looking for something new...a special kind of experience...then you are just feeding your self ignorance. In fact, when you realize the self, what happens is that you see that the most obvious and familiar experience to you - your existence/awareness - is what you've been looking for. That's why it's not a big deal and it is not an experience.

Our thoughts, feelings, and body are obvious to us. We all have them and we all know that they are separate from us. Our existence/awareness is super obvious to us now, but nobody ever told us that existence/awareness is different from them. So we assumed that our obvious sense of existence/awareness comes **from** the body. It doesn't. There's your body, your thoughts, your feelings, your ego, and then, standing quite alone...your awareness/existence. Although they are one because reality is non-dual, your body, thoughts feelings and ego are different from you, existence. They are objects...like trees and mountains. You, existence/awareness are what witnesses them. Awareness, the witness, is what you actually are.

Knowing this won't necessarily enlighten you, though it certainly could. But it is very important because it will keep your mind from getting all magical and spiritual about this mysterious awareness that everyone in the non-dual world is going on about. Even if you don't fully grasp it, be confident that the awareness you are thinking about is nothing more than that which is the most familiar experience to you - your existence.

It really is that simple.”

A Second Awareness

Duality is a very tricky business. It is the belief that the one awareness is actually two or more. This is why you hear so much about the 'higher self'

and the 'lower self,' the 'true' self and the 'false' self, the 'real self' and the 'illusory' self. Duality is completely understandable and you should know at the beginning of this teaching that duality and non-duality are not incompatible because they inhabit different orders of the one reality or, if you prefer, duality is a subset of non-duality. They do not contradict each other just as a wave does not contradict the ocean. It is the ocean but the ocean is not it. We need not destroy duality. We need only negate it. If we experientially destroyed duality, we would have to invent a whole new way of living in the world. In fact there would be no world, as we know it, to live in. When you realize the truth of your self, things on the ground are going to be the same as they were before your liberation...but they will also be different in a very good way. Paradoxes abound.

The 'second awareness' is reflected awareness. Later on when we unfold the teaching of the macrocosmic principles we will discuss it in detail...it is quite technical...but now we need to briefly explain it to make it easy to understand why seeking enlightenment is not straightforward. It is not something you would figure out on your own. If it weren't for Vedanta it would escape your attention altogether.

The second awareness is like the moon and the first awareness is like the sun. The moon has no light of its own. It is a dead planet. The sun is a radiant fire shining in all directions, generating light from within itself. On a full moon night it is quite possible to make your way on the earth. If a child comes out at night it will see the moon and think that it is actually shining. It is shining but not with its own light. It reflects the light of the sun.

When *Maya*, the creative force, about which much will presently be said, is operating the self appears as an individual with a gross, subtle and causal body. The Gross Body is well known. Not to put too fine a point on it, the Causal Body is your conditioning. It motivates your actions. The Subtle Body is the person you think you are. It is reflected awareness. And like the moon it is not actually conscious, although it is taken to be conscious because it is virtually impossible to separate the light shining on it from the reflective surface on which it shines. To further obscure the truth about the Subtle Body, it is the place in you where experience takes place, where all your feelings and thoughts happen. When Subtle Bodies (people) say 'I think' or 'I feel' it is not true because awareness, the 'I' does not think or feel. Subtle Bodies don't consciously think or feel because they are not actually conscious. Pure awareness, like the sun, reflects off the Subtle

Body and the thoughts arising in it are illumined and known. If you take awareness away from the Subtle Body, you cannot see thoughts arising in it. In deep sleep awareness does not illumine the Subtle Body so there is no 'you' there.

Before we continue, you will notice that we are starting to introduce some technical terms...Gross, Subtle and Causal Body.¹ If you are serious about self inquiry, you should start to think about yourself in our scientific language to help you make the transition from the person that you think you are to the impersonal awareness that you actually are. Once you have made the transition, you can jettison the language.

Thinking of yourself as a person is a big problem. In fact it is the only problem. In a way, it is a shame that I have to tell you this because you may very well toss Vedanta and head off in search of a more warm and fuzzy teaching. It may be just too scary to let go of your story. It has been with you...in fact you think it is you...for as long as you can remember. You cannot imagine life without it. Actually, you need not worry...you can keep your personhood if you wish...because it does not cancel you. You cannot be cancelled. You have a much more illustrious identity, one that easily accommodates any story.

It is your thinking that creates *your* reality and, in so far as your story is not in harmony with *the* reality, which is obviously impersonal, you are going to suffer. Thinking of yourself as impersonal ordinary awareness, the knower of the person that you are so attached to may seem a bit precious and unnecessary, but I assure you it isn't. As we supply the logic to back up our assertion about who you are, it will make more and more sense.

In any case, when pure awareness is under the spell of *Maya*, it becomes fascinated with the subjective events appearing in the Subtle Body, identifies with them and fails to realize that it is merely experiencing an inert reflection of itself. When you don't know this, you try to do the impossible: connect with yourself and/or realize yourself. It is not possible because reality is always only awareness experiencing itself. Awareness is 'realized,' meaning that it knows who and what it is without the aid of words. It is self aware. It is self existent. It is free of the notion of subject and object that ignorance seemingly imposes on it.

¹*Sthula sarira, suksma sarira and karana sarira*

Ask yourself this: what are you doing to be what you are? You are not doing anything to be what you are. You can't do anything to be what you are because you are what you are. Enlightenment is not knowing *that* you are. It is knowing *what* you are and what it means to be what you are.

I Do Not Die

When you take yourself to be the Subtle Body you are prone to certain beliefs that do not jibe with who you actually are. One of those beliefs is that you are born and that you die. This belief consciously or unconsciously influences everything you do. You believe that time is running out and that you need to get everything you want before you die. If you knew yourself as you are, you would not be interested in cramming desired experiences into to your small life before you die because you would understand that you are immortal.

Awareness is unborn. If this is true...and you need to follow our inquiry to see if it is...then a lot of problems are solved. If you are not born, you do not die. Of course, you believe that you do but where is the evidence that you die? Yes, we know the body dies but it is clear that you are not the body because it is known to you. To have knowledge of death you would have to be there to observe it. If you are there to observe it, it is obviously something other than you. In fact the body and death are only thought objects appearing in you at any moment. The body is not a solid object 'out there' nor is death an event waiting to happen. They are just words that have no meaning apart from the reality that ignorance of your nature lends to them.

I Am a Partless Whole

It is not enough to know that you don't die, although it's a good start. If you are a miserable person it will not be good news. So we have to tell you something else, perhaps the most important fact about you. You are whole and complete. You can't deny that you are aware. It is obvious. That you are the awareness that is aware is not so obvious but if you take yourself to be reflected awareness, the Subtle Body, you will always feel a sense of lack. This sense of lack, which you think belongs to you, actually belongs to the Subtle Body. It is a feeling that causes you to chase things and to hold on to them when you get them. It is a problem because the things that you

want are not under your control. Not getting what you want and losing what you value is the number one cause of suffering. But if you knew that you are always full, you would be relieved of suffering. So it is very important to know that nothing can be added to you or subtracted from you. If you are not made up of parts, how can anything be added or subtracted?

Subtle Bodies often spend their whole lives trying to get themselves 'together.' It is a futile task for this reason: the awareness that you are has no parts. It very much seems to be an assemblage, but it is not. It is a partless whole. When you understand this fact you will stop trying to fix yourself because there is no glue that can hold you together. You are already together.

During those moments when your mind is quiet you may have noticed a steady 'current' of bliss, an unexplained feeling of satisfaction, a sense of self confidence unconnected to anything you have accomplished. That experience is going on all the time in you. It is you experiencing the fullness that you are. It is hidden from you because you are distracted by the mind's agitations.

I Am Not a Doer

I have to tell you another important fact about yourself: you are not a doer because you are non-dual. Non-dual means that there is only you. If there is only you, you cannot move from one place to another. Movement can apparently take place within the scope of your awareness, but awareness can't move. It may seem to move when *Maya* operates but it doesn't.

You are everywhere. If you journey to the end of the cosmos you will find that you are already there when you arrive. This fact is as important as the others because the burden of doership hangs heavy on the back of the one who does not understand who he or she is. A doer is someone who does actions to enjoy the results. The doer is not a real person. It is an idea that afflicts awareness when it does not know that it is the ground of being. When it thinks it is a doer it suffers all manner of unpleasant and pleasant emotions because the results of its actions are not up to it. The most common emotions the doer suffers are fear, desire and anger. So if you would like to be free of these feelings, self knowledge is for you.

I am Not Unique in Any Way

Another very important fact: you are not unique in anyway. But wait! When you think about it you are totally unique because there is only you, reality being what it is. It is so cool to understand this because most Subtle Bodies are afflicted with the notion that they are one among many billions of 'others.' Consequently, they work day and night to distinguish themselves, to be 'seen' or 'heard.' It is a great relief to the status conscious Subtle Body when it learns that there is no one to compare itself to.

No Need to be Pure and Holy

Another benefit of being a partless whole is that the desire to be pure and 'holy' disappears. Pure means partless. Everything in the apparent reality... life as we know it...is impure, meaning it is made up of parts. Purification is a process of removing various contaminants...parts...that are not in harmony with the nature of the thing to be purified. For example, what is called 'pure' alcohol is not actually 100% alcohol. It can be purified up to 99% but some impurities will remain, no matter how hard you work to remove them. One of the most salient characteristics of Subtle Bodies with spiritual inclinations is the desire to be pure. Much effort is wasted on this work...although if you take yourself to be a Subtle Body it may be useful to purify some of the dross for reasons we will shortly discuss...and much frustration is encountered because you can never get to 100%. And when you are caught in the purification game you are just as frustrated at 99% as you were at 47%. That 1% becomes a glaring limitation, like the pea under the mattress of the proverbial princess.

I Don't Change

Next you need to know that you don't change. You don't become anything other than what you are...ever. This too is a saving and liberating knowledge because most of us are always striving to become something that we aren't. We don't like ourselves that much and would prefer to be a more, better or different someone. The desire to change one's situation is built into the Subtle Body and the desire to be different from what one is, is also built in.

Here are several important words that apply to you: ‘unconcerned, untainted, unaffected and associationless. This means that whatever happens does not affect you in any way. Awareness is that part of you that never changes. It is not modified or validated by good experiences or invalidated by bad experiences. It validates itself.

I Can't Become More Aware

Seekers often believe that through self inquiry they will become more conscious, more ‘aware.’ It is a myth. When you know who you are this desire disappears because you understand that you are the awareness which neither grows nor shrinks.

I Reveal Myself to Myself

You are self effulgent effortless awareness. You reveal yourself to yourself without the aid of a body and mind. You can be likened to a light bulb that shines steadily even though it was never switched on. It is a bulb that is not connected to the electric grid. It is its own self-generating electric grid. It cannot be turned off. If you know who you are and someone asks you who you are you can truthfully say, “I am the light.”

The Real and the Apparently Real

You, awareness, are what is. Reality is one but it appears as a duality. This duality is made up of you and the objects appearing in you. The objects come and go, but you don't come and go. Because of this they are called ‘apparently real.’ You are always present. You are ‘what is.’ We use several analogies to help you understand this point. If you have a lump of gold you can make it into a bracelet or a necklace or a small figurine. If you melt down the bracelet or the necklace or the figurine, the gold seems to change but it doesn't change. The gold is ‘what is’ and the ornament apparently exists. It is a bracelet...until it isn't.

What a valuable understanding! Subtle Bodies are congenitally bedevilled with the notion of becoming something...because they are always in a state of flux. Think about it for a minute. The ‘you’ that you take yourself to be now is not the same you that you took yourself to be some time ago. And it

will not be the same you tomorrow that it is today. That 'you' is constantly melted down in the furnace of time and is reconstituted as something else. That 'you' is non-essential and you are essential, the 'part' that observes the changes, the part that can't be removed. When we say that knowledge is not negatable we mean that it always is. It does not change. You can see why self knowledge is your saving grace, your complete security. You cannot be negated because you are existence itself. You are what is. And you are everything that is, the gold from which all ornaments are fashioned.

We started this chapter with the idea that non-dual awareness does not mean anything without a context. Where there is only one there is no meaning. Years ago when I was wandering around India being 'spiritual' I met a person who showed me a book on the self. It had no title and nothing was written on the pages. In itself it made an important point, but I thought that it also was a good symbol of the modern non-dual teachings. They tell us about the self all right, but they leave out the context. They say that there is no body and mind, no world, no 'you.' No, no, no....ad nauseam. We say it too because it is ultimately true. But it does not constitute a teaching. Negation does not mean denial. Ocean is a lovely topic but where do you go with it? Ocean and waves is a meaningful topic. Gold is a lovely topic but it is not interesting apart from all the forms that it can assume. If there is anything that is not clear in this short Chapter on the self, it will become increasingly clear as we now discuss the waves.

Questions

- 1) Why is it difficult to resolve the conflict between my limited identity and my limitless identity?
- 2) There are two sources of knowledge of my limitless identity, one impersonal and reliable and one personal and unreliable. What are they?
- 3) Why do non-dual mystic experiences generate vague and false self knowledge?
- 4) The topic 'Who am I' is the fifth Chapter of The Essence of Enlightenment. Why do we wait to make a systematic inquiry into the knowledge of the self until the fifth stage of inquiry?

- 5) Vedanta gives both indirect and direct self knowledge. What is indirect self knowledge and what is direct self knowledge? Give an example of a statement of your identity in both indirect and direct knowledge.
- 6) Why is one's story about one's self not one's self?
- 7) Why is the word 'ordinary' used to describe you, the self?
- 8) Although awareness and consciousness are synonyms, why is awareness a better word for the self than consciousness?
- 9) Why is the self, the most obvious aspect of our experience, universally unknown?
- 10) To know the self is not difficult but to know what it means in terms of one's everyday life is difficult. In terms of my everyday experience what does it mean to say "I am awareness"?
- 11) If bliss is not an experience, what is it?
- 12) What is the universal obstruction to one's sense of satisfaction?
- 13) What is the best direct practice to eliminate fear and desire?
- 14) Our bodies and minds are us but why are we not our bodies and minds?
- 15) Why are duality and non-duality not incompatible?
- 16) Why is the person I think I am neither conscious nor unconscious?
- 17) Why can't you connect with yourself?
- 18) Why don't I die?
- 19) Why can't you get yourself together?
- 20) Why are you not a doer?
- 21) Why are you unique and not unique?

22) What is the definition of purity?

23) Why don't you change?

24) Why can't you become more aware?

25) Why don't you need an experience of awareness...the light...to become enlightened?

26) You, awareness, are real. The person you think you are is apparently real. Why is this knowledge liberation?

