
The Perceived can not be the Perceiver

Questioner: I have been moving from place to place investigating the various Yogas available for practice and I could not decide which will suit me best. I should be thankful for some competent advice. At present, as a result of all this searching, I am just tired of the idea of finding truth. It seems to me, both unnecessary and troublesome. Life is enjoyable as it is and I see no purpose in improving on it.

Maharaj: You are welcome to stay in your contentment, but can you? Youth, vigour, money — all will pass away sooner than you expect. Sorrow, shunned so far, will pursue you. If you want to be beyond suffering, you must meet it half way and embrace it. Relinquish your habits and addictions, live a simple and sober life, don't hurt a living being; this is the foundation of Yoga. To find reality you must be real in the smallest daily action; there can be no deceit in the search for truth. You say you find your life enjoyable. Maybe it is — at present. But who enjoys it?

Q: I confess I do not know the enjoyer, nor the enjoyed. I only

know the enjoyment.

M: Quite right. But enjoyment is a state of mind — it comes and goes. Its very impermanence makes it perceivable. You cannot be conscious of what does not change. All consciousness is consciousness of change. But the very perception of change — does it not necessitate a changeless background?

Q: Not at all. The memory of the last state — compared to the actuality of the present state gives the experience of change.

M: Between the remembered and the actual there is a basic difference which can be observed from moment to moment. At no point of time is the actual the remembered. Between the two there is a difference in kind, not merely in intensity. The actual is unmistakably so. By no effort of will or imagination can you interchange the two. Now, what is it that gives this unique quality to the actual?

Q: The actual is real, while there is a good deal of uncertainty about the remembered.

M: Quite so, but why? A moment back the remembered was actual, in a moment the actual will be the remembered. What makes the actual unique? Obviously, it is your sense of being present. In memory and anticipation there is a clear feeling that it is a mental state under observation, while in the actual the feeling is primarily of being present and aware.

Q: Yes, I can see. It is awareness that makes the difference between the actual and the remembered. One thinks of the past or the future, but one is present in the *now*.

M: Wherever you go, the sense of here and now you carry with you all the time. It means that you are independent of space and time, that space and time are in you, not you in them. It is your self-identification with the body, which, of course, is limited in space and time, that gives you the feeling of finiteness. In reality you are infinite and eternal.

Q: This infinite and eternal self of mine, how am I to know it?

M: The self you want to know, is it some second self? Are you made of several selves? Surely, there is only one self and you are that self. The self you are is the only self there is. Remove and abandon your wrong ideas about yourself and there it is, in

all its glory. It is only your mind that prevents self-knowledge.

Q: How am I to be rid of the mind? And is life without mind at all possible on the human level?

M: There is no such thing as mind. There are ideas and some of them are wrong. Abandon the wrong ideas, for they are false and obstruct your vision of yourself.

Q: Which ideas are wrong and which are true?

M: Assertions are usually wrong and denials — right.

Q: One cannot live by denying everything!

M: Only by denying can one live. Assertion is bondage. To question and deny is necessary. It is the essence of revolt and without revolt there can be no freedom.

There is no second, or higher self to search for. You are the highest self, only give up the false ideas you have about your self. Both faith and reason tell you that you are neither the body, nor its desires and fears, nor are you the mind with its fanciful ideas, nor the role society compels you to play, the person you are supposed to be. Give up the false and the true will come into its own.

You say you want to know your self. You are your self — you cannot be anything but what you are. Is knowing separate from being? Whatever you can know with your mind is of the mind, not you; about yourself you can only say: 'I am, I am aware, I like it'.

Q: I find being alive a painful state.

M: You cannot be alive for you are life itself. It is the person you imagine yourself to be that suffers, not you. Dissolve it in awareness. It is merely a bundle of memories and habits. From the awareness of the unreal to the awareness of your real nature there is a chasm which you will easily cross, once you have mastered the art of pure awareness.

Q: All I know is that I do not know myself.

M: How do you know that you do not know your self? Your direct insight tells you that yourself you know first, for nothing exists to you without your being there to experience its existence. You imagine you do not know your self, because you cannot describe your self. You can always say: 'I know that I am' and

you will refuse as untrue the statement: 'I am not'. But whatever can be described cannot be your self, and what you are cannot be described. You can only know your self by being yourself without any attempt at self-definition and self-description. Once you have understood that you are nothing perceivable or conceivable, that whatever appears in the field of consciousness cannot be your self, you will apply yourself to the eradication of all self-identification, as the only way that can take you to a deeper realization of your self. You literally progress by rejection — a veritable rocket. To know that you are neither in the body nor in the mind, though aware of both, is already self-knowledge.

Q: If I am neither the body nor mind, how am I aware of them? How can I perceive something quite foreign to myself?

M: 'Nothing is me,' is the first step. 'Everything is me' is the next. Both hang on the idea: 'there is a world'. When this too is given up, you remain what you are — the non-dual Self. You are *it* here and now, but your vision is obstructed by your false ideas about your self.

Q: Well, I admit that I am, I was, I shall be; at least from birth to death. I have no doubts of my being, here and now. But I find that it is not enough. My life lacks joy, born of harmony between the inner and the outer. If I alone am and the world is merely a projection, then why is there disharmony?

M: You create disharmony and then complain! When you desire and fear, and identify yourself with your feelings, you create sorrow and bondage. When you create, with love and wisdom, and remain unattached to your creations, the result is harmony and peace. But whatever be the condition of your mind, in what way does it reflect on you? It is only your self-identification with your mind that makes you happy or unhappy. Rebel against your slavery to your mind, see your bonds as self-created and break the chains of attachment and revulsion. Keep in mind your goal of freedom, until it dawns on you that you are already free, that freedom is not something in the distant future to be earned with painful efforts, but perennially one's own, to be used! Liberation is not an acquisition but a matter of courage, the courage to believe that you are free already and to act on it.

Q: If I do as I like, I shall have to suffer.

M: Nevertheless, you are free. The consequences of your action will depend on the society in which you live and its conventions.

Q: I may act recklessly.

M: Along with courage will emerge wisdom and compassion and skill in action. You will know what to do and whatever you do will be good for all.

Q: I find that the various aspects of myself are at war between themselves and there is no peace in me. Where are freedom and courage, wisdom and compassion? My actions merely increase the chasm in which I exist.

M: It is all so, because you take yourself to be somebody, or something. Stop, look, investigate, ask the right questions, come to the right conclusions and have the courage to act on them and see what happens. The first steps may bring the roof down on your head, but soon the commotion will clear and there will be peace and joy. You know so many things about yourself, but the knower you do not know. Find out who you are, the knower of the known. Look within diligently, remember to remember that the perceived cannot be the perceiver. Whatever you see, hear or think of, remember — you are not what happens, you are he to whom it happens. Delve deeply into the sense 'I am' and you will surely discover that the perceiving centre is universal, as universal as the light that illumines the world. All that happens in the universe happens to you, the silent witness. On the other hand, whatever is done, is done by you, the universal and inexhaustible energy.

Q: It is, no doubt, very gratifying to hear that one is the silent witness as well as the universal energy. But how is one to cross over from a verbal statement to direct knowledge? Hearing is not knowing.

M: Before you can know anything directly, nonverbally, you must know the knower. So far, you took the mind for the knower, but it is just not so. The mind clogs you up with images and ideas, which leave scars in memory. You take remembering to be knowledge. True knowledge is ever fresh, new, unexpected.

It wells up from within. When you know what you are, you also are what you know. Between knowing and being there is no gap.

Q: I can only investigate the mind with the mind.

M: By all means use your mind to know your mind. It is perfectly legitimate and also the best preparation for going beyond the mind. Being, knowing and enjoying is your own. First realize your own being. This is easy because the sense 'I am' is always with you. Then meet yourself as the knower, apart from the known. Once you know yourself as pure being, the ecstasy of freedom is your own.

Q: Which Yoga is this?

M: Why worry? What makes you come here is your being displeased with your life as you know it, the life of your body and mind. You may try to improve them, through controlling and bending them to an ideal, or you may cut the knot of self-identification altogether and look at your body and mind as something that happens without committing you in any way.

Q: Shall I call the way of control and discipline *raja yoga* and the way of detachment — *gnana yoga*? And the worship of an ideal — *bhakti yoga*?

M: If it pleases you. Words indicate, but do not explain. What I teach is the ancient and simple way of liberation through understanding. Understand your own mind and its hold on you will snap. The mind misunderstands, misunderstanding is its very nature. Right understanding is the only remedy, whatever name you give it. It is the earliest and also the latest, for it deals with the mind as it is.

Nothing you do will change you, for you need no change. You may change your mind or your body, but it is always something external to you that has changed, not yourself. Why bother at all to change? Realize once for all that neither your body nor your mind, nor even your consciousness is yourself and stand alone in your true nature beyond consciousness and unconsciousness. No effort can take you there, only the clarity of understanding. Trace your misunderstandings and abandon them, that is all. There is nothing to seek and find, for there is nothing lost. Relax and watch the 'I am'. Reality is just behind it. Keep quiet,

keep silent; it will emerge, or, rather, it will take you in.

Q: Must I not get rid of my body and mind first?

M: You cannot, for the very idea binds you to them. 'Just understand and disregard.

Q: I am unable to disregard, for I am not integrated.

M: Imagine you are completely integrated, your thought and action fully co-ordinated. How will it help you? It will not free you from mistaking yourself to be the body or the mind. See them correctly as 'not you', that is all.

Q: You want me to remember to forget!

M: Yes, it looks so. Yet, it is not hopeless. You can do it. Just set about it in earnest. Your blind groping is full of promise. Your very searching is the finding. You cannot fail.

Q: Because we are disintegrated, we suffer.

M: We shall suffer as long as our thoughts and actions are prompted by desires and fears. See their futility and the danger and chaos they create will subside. Don't try to reform yourself, just see the futility of all change. The changeful keeps on changing while the changeless is waiting. Do not expect the changeful, to take you to the changeless — it can never happen. Only when the very idea of changing is seen as false and abandoned, the changeless can come into its own.

Q: Everywhere I go, I am told that I must change profoundly before I can see the real. This process of deliberate, self-imposed change is called Yoga.

M: All change affects the mind only. To be what you are, you must go beyond the mind, into your own being. It is immaterial what is the mind that you leave behind, provided you leave it behind for good. This again is not possible without self-realization.

Q: What comes first — the abandoning of the mind or self-realization?

M: Self-realization definitely comes first. The mind cannot go beyond itself by itself. It must explode.

Q: No exploration before explosion?

M: The explosive power comes from the real. But you are well

advised to have your mind ready for it. Fear can always delay it, until another opportunity arises.

Q: I thought there is always a chance.

M: In theory — yes. In practice a situation must arise, when all the factors necessary for self-realization are present. This need not discourage you. Your dwelling on the fact of 'I am' will soon create another chance. For, attitude attracts opportunity. All you know is second-hand. Only 'I am' is first-hand and needs no proofs. Stay with it. ●●●

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Question