**“I am” Presence**

**“I am” Being**

**“I am” Consciousness**

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# **Introduction**

# As we listen to the teachings of the great masters of jnana yoga, the path of Self-Realization, we are rapidly struck by the clarity and commonality of what all the masters recommend to those who feel an intense yearning to directly realize their fundamental nature.

# “Keep the mind that is before thinking,” recommends the Korean Soen (Zen) Master, Seung Sahn.

# “Focus the mind on the I-thought,” the feeling of presence, recommends Ramana Maharshi.

# “Stay with the sense ‘I Am,’ the pure feeling of being as distinct from being this or that,” suggests Ramana Maharshi.

# “Stay with the sense of Presence,” says Eckhart Tolle.

# “Relax attention from focusing on this or that and abide in that unfocused, dispersed sense of presence,” recommends Florian Schlosser.”

# Keep asking “Who hears this sound, what sees this thought?” and answer with silently looking,” suggests the Zen Master Bassui.

# In all of these cases, the words are different, but the practice (sadhana) is the same. In practice, this becomes very clear.

# **Nisargadatta Maharaj’s Teachings**

A person sitting on a chair

Description automatically generatedA person with his hand up

Description automatically generated

***Just sit and know that you are the “I am” without words, nothing else to be done and shortly you will arrive to your natural Absolute State.***

My Guru ordered me to attend to the sense ‘I am and to give attention to nothing else. I just obeyed. I did not follow any particular course of breathing, or meditation, or study of scriptures. Whatever happened, I would turn away my attention from it and remain with the sense ‘I am’. It may look too simple, even crude. My only reason for doing it was that my Guru told me so. Yet it worked!

Maharaj said – When I met my Guru he told me You are not what you take yourself to be. Find out what you are. Watch the sense “I am” (concentrate on “I am”), find your real self. I obeyed him because I trusted him. I did as he told me. All my spare time I would spend looking at myself in silence. In 3 years I could realize my true nature.

***Establish yourself firmly in the awareness of ‘I am’ of pure being. This is the beginning and also the end of all endeavour.***

***“Just hold on to the knowledge ‘I am’, your sense of ‘being’ or ‘presence’. This feeling that ‘you are’ is the God in you, let it be your guide or Guru, there is nothing else to be done.”***

What is born is consciousness which needs an organism to manifest itself in and that organism is the physical body.

What is it that gives sentience or life — capacity to feel sensations, to respond to stimuli—to a

sentient being? What is it that distinguishes a person who is alive from the one who is dead? It is, of course, *the sense of being,* the knowledge of being present, consciousness, the activizing spirit which animates the physical construct of the body.

It is consciousness indeed that manifests itself in individual forms and gives them apparent existence (like the waves from the ocean). In human beings through such manifestation arises the concept of a separate ‘I’. In each individual the Absolute gets reflected as awareness, and thus pure Awareness becomes self-awareness or consciousness.

The objective universe is in continuous flux, constantly projecting and dissolving innumerable forms. Whenever a form is created and is infused with life (Prana), consciousness (Chetana) appears, simultaneously and automatically, by the reflection of the Absolute Awareness in matter. Consciousness (it must be clearly understood) is a reflection of the Absolute against the surface of matter, bringing about a sense of duality. As different from it, pure Awareness, the Absolute state, is without beginning and end, without the need of any support other than itself. ***Awareness becomes consciousness only when it has an object to reflect against***. Between pure Awareness and awareness reflected as consciousness, says Maharaj, there is a gap which the mind cannot cross. Reflection of the sun in a drop of dew is not the sun!

Manifested consciousness (Manifested consciousness is nothing but the physical body that consciousness has taken) is time-bound. It disappears as soon as the physical construct it inhabits comes to an end. Nevertheless, according to Nisargadatta Maharaj, it is the only 'capital' a sentient being is born with. And manifested consciousness being his only connection with the Absolute, it becomes the only instrument by which the sentient being can hope to get an illusory liberation from the 'individual' he believes himself to be. By being one with his consciousness and treating it as his Atma, his God, he can hope to attain what he thinks as the unattainable.

Do nothing except hold onto yourself. Just be in that “beingness”, then it will tell you how beingness turns into “non beingness”. Catch hold of that touch of “I-am-ness” only, that beingness, dwell on it and contemplate on that only. Do not think “I am” and bring the mind into operation. Just simply be “I am” or abide in “I am”.

Sages recognized the sense of “being” initially and then meditated by abiding in it (abiding in “I am”) and finally transcended it resulting in their ultimate realization.

I-am-ness, beingness, knowingness are all the same and has somatic (of the body) basis which in turn arises from the physical elements. Absolute lies beyond all physicality and cannot be described.

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What were you a hundred years back? At that time, you did not have the knowledge "you are." The memory that you are was missing. Presently, in the temporary phase, you have the knowledge “you are.” But to have this knowledge, what are the prerequisites? The essence is required, sattva-guna. This means the quintessence of the food essence is necessary to sustain the “I-am-ness” or this beingness. And that essence in turn depends on the food body. But all these together - that is, food body quintessence, and the knowledge "I am," the vital breath and the mind - these are all a temporary phase only; so long as food essence is available, the knowingness will last.

Now how to escape from all this? ***This knowingness is to discover itself; it should realize itself. Then, in the process of its realization it will be able to quit this state and abide in the Absolute, in the non-knowingness state. So one must abide in oneself first, in the knowingness state***.

**Consciousness is the Only Capital or Only Principle**

You must have the firmest conviction that this consciousness is our parent principle, the highest god; then you will have all the necessary knowledge. ***If there is one principle which can save us, which is our capital, it is that which gives us the sense of presence, this consciousness. Be one with it, pray to it, and treat it as the only god***. Whatever we have, whatever we acquire, is only because of this consciousness, and to be one with it we don't require any implements, any instruments, any money; there is no expense involved. This consciousness is free of inhibitions, any conditions, and, being without obstructions, it is totally free. If we resort to it, it will also make us free.

***Stay with the feeling of Presence and NOT “I am Presence”.***

Prior to Consciousness we were merged with Absolute and did not even know about our existence. And this "I-am-ness" has come subsequently without your wanting it. And whatever knowledge you have now has been accumulating since the arrival of this “I-am-ness.” But in your original state, the not-knowing is there.

The aim is to awaken yourself to the faith in the self, "I am." That is the entire purpose. So whatever is inducive to that development you may accept. Supposing you have faith in a living guru, then accept a living guru***. If you have faith in a guru who has left his body, accept that guru.***

Knowingness appeared first. Before that nothing was known. Knowingness “I am” appeared first and then you embraced the body, etc… ***Hold on to this only and don’t ask any questions***. I am addressing the consciousness. ***You came to know yourself, “I am.” To abide in that is itself the bhakti, the devotion***.

We are the awareness that is prior to “I am”. "Awareness" knows “I am.” It is pure and separate from “I am” but more than “I am.” That is the highest; there is no gradation in awareness. In the Absolute, the Parabrahman state, there is no question of impure awareness or pure awareness. Awareness or Absolute is the “no-being” state. This gives rise to Consciousness when it manifest as object/human being. Beingness is the feeling “I am”.

**Awareness and Consciousness**

Nisargadatta Maharaj observed that awareness is of the Absolute, and, therefore, beyond the three Gunas (Gunatita - the three guṇas are sattva (goodness, calmness, harmonious), rajas (passion, activity, movement) and tamas (ignorance, inertia, laziness)) whereas consciousness is something fed by, and limited by, the food-body. When the food-body is destroyed, consciousness also disappears. Mind you, no one dies — the body, made of the five elements mingles with the elements when it is lifeless, and consciousness, which is subject to the three Gunas, becomes free of the Gunas. Awareness is the primordial original state, prior to the concept of space-time, needing no cause, no support. ***Awareness simply is****.* However, the moment the concept of consciousness arises on this original state of unicity or Awareness, the sense 'I am' arises, causing a condition of duality. ***Consciousness is with a form, a reflection of awareness against the surface of matter***. *One cannot think of consciousness apart from awareness. There cannot be a reflection of the sun without the sun. But there can be awareness without consciousness.* In deep sleep, for instance, there is no consciousness (it is resting) but awareness is certainly there, because on waking one is aware of having slept; but only on waking.

Maharaj never allows us to forget that **it is consciousness alone which is our constant**

**companion**, and that it is the continuous attention to one's stream of consciousness that takes one on to Awareness — the basic existence, that-which-is-life-love-joy. ***So it is critical to abide in the “I am” or “Sense being”.***

According to Maharaj, the very consciousness of being conscious is already a movement towards Awareness. The mind by its very nature is out-going, always tending to seek the source of things within the things themselves. When it is directed towards the source within, it is almost like the beginning of a new life. Awareness replaces consciousness. The 'I am', which is a thought in consciousness, ceases. In awareness, there is no thought. Awareness is the source of consciousness.

Maharaj suggests that it is an excellent spiritual exercise to sit quietly and watch what comes to the surface of the mind. What we call thoughts are like ripples on the surface of water. Thoughts always lead to identification or condemnation. They are products of pre-conceived notions and stand in the way of real understanding. Just as water is serene when free of ripples, so is the mind serene when free of thoughts when it is passive and fully receptive.

In the mirror of your mind, says Maharaj, all kinds of pictures will appear, stay for a while and

disappear. Silently watch them come and go. Be alert, but not attracted or repelled. It is important not to be involved. This attitude of silent witnessing will have the effect, gradually, of driving away all useless thoughts, like unwanted guests that are ignored.

By being thus within yourself, that is, in the 'I-am-ness', by watching the flow of mind, without interfering or judging, as a dispassionate witness, the 'deep' unknown will be encouraged to come to the surface of consciousness and release its unused energies to enable you to understand the mystery of the origin of life.

It is necessary to be clear about the difference between awareness of the Absolute and the consciousness in which the universe appears. Consciousness is a mere reflection of Absolute. But reflection of the Sun in the dewdrop is not the Sun.

In deep sleep, the apparent universe is not as Consciousness is at rest, but we are. What we are is what the apparent universe is and *vice versa* — dual in presence, non-dual in absence.

**Consciousness**

Consciousness comes from the Absolute (for no apparent reason or for Karma). Consciousness needs a body to manifest.

The whole thing is simple if only one sees the picture clearly. What is this 'me' that I am concerned with? The immediate answer, of course, is — 'this me, this body'. But then the body is only a psychosomatic apparatus. What is the most important element in this apparatus which qualifies it to be known as a sentient being? It is undoubtedly the consciousness without which this apparatus (body), while perhaps technically alive, would be useless as far its functioning is concerned. This consciousness obviously needs a physical construct in which to manifest itself. So, consciousness depends upon the body. But what is the body made of? How does the body come into existence? The body is merely a growth in the woman's womb during a period of about nine months, the growth of what is conceived by the union of the male and female sexual fluids. These fluids are the essence of the food consumed by the parents. Basically, therefore, both consciousness and the body are made of, and are sustained by food. Indeed, the body itself is food — one body being the food of some other body. When the food-essence, the vital sexual fluids, grows from conception into a tiny body and is delivered out of the mother's womb, it is called 'birth'. And when this food essence gets decayed due to age or illness and the psychosomatic apparatus happens to get destroyed, it is called 'death'. This is what happens all the time — ***the objective universe projecting and dissolving innumerable forms***. The picture keeps on changing all the time. But how am 'I' concerned with this? I am merely the witness to all this happening. Whatever happens during the period of the happening, in each case affects only the psychosomatic apparatus, not the 'I' that I am.

***Once it is clear that whatever happens in the manifested world is something apart from me, as the 'I', all other questions resolve themselves.***

At what stage exactly did I come to have the knowledge of my 'existence'? What was I before this knowledge 'I am' came to me? This knowledge 'I am' has been with me ever since I can

remember, perhaps a few months after this body was born. Therefore, memory itself must have come with this knowledge 'I am', this consciousness. What was the position before that? The answer is: I *do not know.* Therefore, whatever I know of anything has its beginning in consciousness, including pain and pleasure, day and night, waking and sleeping — indeed the entire gamut of dualities and opposites in which one cannot exist without the other. Again, what was the position before consciousness arose? These interrelated opposites inevitably must have existed but only in negation, in unicity, in wholeness. This must then be the answer. This unicity is what *I am.* But this unicity, this identity, this wholeness cannot know itself because in it there exists no subject as separate from an object—a position that is necessary for the process of seeing, or knowing, or cognizing. In other words, in the original state of unicity, or wholeness, no medium or instrument exists through which 'knowing' may take place.

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Just look away from all that happens in your mind and bring it to the feeling ‘I am’. The ‘I am’ is not a direction. It is the negation of all direction. Ultimately even the ‘I am’ will have to go, for you need not keep on asserting what is obvious. ***Bringing the mind to the feeling ‘I am’ merely helps in turning the mind away from everything else***. ***When the mind is kept away from its preoccupations, it becomes quiet***. If you do not disturb this quiet and stay in it, you find that it is permeated with a light and a love you have never known; and yet you recognize it at once as your own nature. Once you have passed through this experience, you will never be the same man again; the unruly mind may break its peace and obliterate its vision; but it is bound to return, provided the effort is sustained; until the day when all bonds are broken, delusions and attachments end and life becomes supremely concentrated in the present.

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**Summarizing Maharaj’s key points:**

1. The original state which is the Absolute — the Parabrahman — is unconditioned, without attributes, without form, without identity. Indeed, that state is nothing but fullness (not an empty 'void', but plenum) so that it is impossible to give it any adequate name. For the sake of communication, however, a number of words have been used to 'indicate' that state.
2. In that original state, prior to any concept, consciousness — the thought 'I am' — spontaneously stirs into existence. How? Why? For no apparent reason — like a gentle wave on an expanse of water!!! For no apparent reason (other than that it is its nature to do so), arises the thought or concept I *am,* the Impersonal Consciousness, on which the world appears as a living-dream. It is in consciousness that the world has emerged. Indeed, the very first thought 'I am' has created the sense of duality in the original state of unicity.
3. Consciousness, in order to manifest itself, needs a form, a physical body, with which it identifies itself and thus starts the concept of 'bondage', with an imaginary objectivization of 'I'. Whenever one thinks and acts from the standpoint of this self-identification, one could be said to have committed the 'original sin' of turning pure subjectivity (the limitless potential) into an object, a limited actuality.
4. No object has an independent existence of its own, and, therefore, an object cannot awaken itself from the living-dream; yet — and this is the joke — the phantom individual (an object) seeks some other object, as the 'Absolute' or 'Reality' or whatever. Also this phantom individual thinks he is the “doer”.
5. If this is clear, one must reverse and go back to find out what one originally was (and always has been) before consciousness arose.
6. At this stage comes the 'awakening' that one is neither the body nor even the consciousness, but the unnameable state of total potentiality, prior to the arrival of consciousness (in consciousness, that state, with whatever name, can only be a concept).
7. And so the circle is complete; *the seeker is the sought.*

When impersonal consciousness manifests itself and identifies itself with each physical form

the I-notion arises, and this I-notion, forgetting that it has no independent entity, converts its original subjectivity into an object with intentions, wants and desires, and is, therefore, vulnerable to suffering. This mistaken identity is precisely the 'bondage' from which liberation is to be sought.

And what is 'liberation'? Liberation, enlightenment, or awakening, is nothing other than

understanding profoundly, *apperceiving* — (a) that the seed of all manifestation is the impersonal consciousness, (b) that what is being sought is the unmanifested aspect of manifestation and (c) that, therefore, the seeker himself is the sought!

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All I am, all I have always been, and will be, is what I was before I was 'born'. The pure impersonal “I” is Absolute or Noumenon. We are always the “I” before “I am”. Only body is born. Being Awareness itself, I cannot be aware of awareness. I am no 'thing' and know no 'other' to be aware of. There is nothing to be aware of as I am the awareness that fills the entire space.

As the noumenon, I am not aware of awareness. As a phenomenon (body) I am 'functioning', an aspect of my potential as the noumenon functioning on an impersonal level, spontaneously, non-volitionally (I am not the doer). I am, therefore, the seeing, the hearing, the perceiving, the knowing, the doing, of all that is being seen, heard, perceived, known and done — 'I' apperceiving the objectivization of this here-now.

Noumenally (absolutely) unknowable, phenomenally (relatively) I become an object of

knowledge. Noumenon-I-is what remains after all phenomena are totally negated. I *am this-here-now, total phenomenal absence. How then can I, noumenon, be known, experienced, cognized?* When I manifest myself it is as 'sentience' (being), by conceptual extension in space, measured in duration (time). Any experience can be experienced only in duality, as subject-object, discriminating and judging through interrelated counterparts like joy and sorrow.

***When the mind is totally silent, empty, when space-time conceptualizing is in suspension, then all that you are I am — unicity, wholeness, holiness, humility, love. That is truth — all else is rubbish! Stop conceptualizing and 'you' are 'I’ — no self and no other!***

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Once we understand what we are our living can be simple. It is very clear that there never can be any individual entity as such with independent choice of action. We are clearly not the “doer”. Therefore how can 'I' in future entertain any intentions? And, if I cease to have intentions, how can there be any psychological conflicts? In the absence of intention there can be no psychological basis for any involvement with Karma. There would then be perfect alignment with whatever might happen, an acceptance of events without any feeling either of

achievement or of frustration.

Such living would then be non-volitional living (an absence of both positive and negative

volition, an absence of both deliberate doing and deliberate not doing), going through 'my' allotted span of life, wanting nothing and avoiding nothing, so that this 'life' (this duration of consciousness which has come like an eclipse on my original true state) will disappear in due course, leaving me in my absolute presence. What more could (the conceptual) 'one' want?

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**Maharaj’s advice** - There will be periods of frustration; there will be periods of doubt. Your worldly involvements would hamper your Sadhana (practice) and an atmosphere of defeat would prevail. But, come what may, just throw everything aside, don’t bother about anything and**continue your abidance in the ‘I am’ with all earnestness.** The ‘I am’ would test your endurance, but a moment would come when it will release its stranglehold on you and reveal all the secrets.

Maharaj says - The trouble is that you, as an individual personality, think that you are listening to what I, also an individual, am saying. What is being said is being said not by me as an individual but by consciousness which has no shape or form. The listening too must be done by consciousness without the intrusion of an imaginary individual. Would it be possible for you to have any questions at all if you were not conscious? Would it be possible for me to talk to you if I were not conscious? Let consciousness listen to what consciousness says about consciousness! Do remember that all thoughts are movements in consciousness, observed and cognized by consciousness; the individual has no place in this functioning except as a mere appearance in consciousness!

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What you are is 'presence' only so long as the body, a manifested phenomenon, is there. What

were you before the body and consciousness came upon you spontaneously? I say 'spontaneously' because you were not consulted about being presented with a body, nor did your parents specifically expect to have 'you' as their son. ***Were you then, relatively, not 'absence' rather than 'presence', before the body-consciousness state arose on whatever it was that was 'you'?*** For anything to appear, to exist, there has to be a background of absolute absence — absolute absence of both presence as well as absence. I know that this is not easy to

grasp. But try. ***Any presence can 'appear' only out of total absence***. If there is presence even of

absence, there can be neither phenomenon nor cognizing. Therefore, total, absolute absence implies total absence of conceptualizing. That is your true original state. I repeat: The 'you' is born in the womb of conceptualizing. On the original state of total absence spontaneously arises a speck of consciousness — the thought 'I am' — and thereby on the original state of unicity and wholeness arises duality; duality of subject-object, right and wrong, pure and impure — reasoning, comparing, judging etc. Do ponder over this. But I am afraid this session must end now.

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The body is only an instrument, an apparatus which would be totally useless but for the

energy within, the animus, the sense 'I am', the knowledge of being alive, the consciousness which provides *the sense of being present.* Indeed, this conscious presence (not ABC or XYZ being present, but the sense of conscious presence as such) ***is what one is****,* and not the phenomenal appearance that the body is. It is when this consciousness, feeling the need of some support, mistakenly identifies itself with the body and gives up its unlimited potential for the limitation of a single particular body, that the individual is 'born'.

The sense of presence arises only when there is a body. If there is no body, there is no instrument in which the sense of presence can make its appearance.

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**Sense of Presence “I am” – The only capital we have**

Everything can be considered unreal except that “l exist”. There is a difference between "I exist" and the possessive "mine," because the "me" or the "mine" is like "my body," "my ideas," "my house”. Therefore, whatever we say, whatever we think is a concept. The only thing which is not a concept, the only truth, is the sense of presence. I Am. I'm alive. I exist. That is the

only truth. But that truth, even that truth, is in phenomenality.

The sense of presence is always there. You don't have to have the sense of presence. The sense of presence is there without any object. Originally that sense of presence is impersonal. When you get up in the morning the first sense of presence is impersonal. Then it dawns on you, I am so and so. The personal identification comes later. Originally there is merely the sense of presence, the impersonal sense of presence. You're not really a "me" at all. There is no sense of being a "me"? A sense of presence depends on there being a body. The sense of presence arises only when there is a body. If there is no body, there is no instrument in which the sense of presence can make its appearance.

What is absent in deep sleep is the sense of "me." The identified consciousness is absent, but the impersonal Consciousness has to be present. And that is why Ramana Maharshi repeatedly asked, "Who is it that says when you wake up, I slept well?" ***It is Consciousness that has been aware during deep sleep but that Consciousness is the impersonal Consciousness***. The personal identification is absent.

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What is the most priceless possession of any sentient being? If he had the choice of possessing either all the wealth in the world or his 'beingness', or 'consciousness' (you may give it any name to add to the thousands that have already been heaped upon it), that which gives him the sense of being alive and present, and without which the body would be nothing but a cadaver, what would he choose? Obviously, without consciousness, all the wealth in the world would be of no use to him. This beingness, this conscious presence that he is, is the beingness of every sentient being on the earth, the very soul of the entire universe, — and indeed, therefore, *this-here-now, this conscious* *presence, cannot be anything other than God.* It is this which one loves more than anything else because without it there is no universe, no God. This, therefore, is *Presence-Love-God.*

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There are two kinds of thoughts. Thoughts which form day-dreaming, or thoughts of regret about the events in the past, or thoughts of fear and worry and anticipation regarding the future. Another one that is very different from the above thoughts which spring up spontaneously from the depth of one's psyche, what one might call thoughts that do not need any argument and interpretation by the mind. The first kind of thoughts are to be ignored and avoided, the latter ones are incapable of being ignored or avoided because they are essentially spontaneous and immediate and basically non-conceptual.

***The very first thought 'I am' is surely a thought, but one that does not need any argument or confirmation from the mind***. Indeed, as the basis of all further thought, it is the pre-conceptual thought — very source of the mind. Living according to indirect or mediate thought, in a divided, dualistic mind is what most people do because they have identified themselves with a pseudo-entity that considers itself as the subject of all action. But direct or absolute thought is the process by which the Absolute non-manifest manifests itself. Such thought is spontaneous and instantaneous and therefore, without the element of duration which is an aspect of the split mind. Whenever there is duration the thought must necessarily be an after-thought,

interpreted phenomenally and dualistically.

***No spontaneous, non-dual, intuitive thought can arise unless the storm of conceptual thinking***

***has subsided and the mind rests in a 'fasting' state***; and such thought obviously cannot know

bondage. Instantaneous, pure thought results in pure action without any tinge of bondage, because no entity is involved.

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Do understand how simple and direct this is: 'I', — *in temporality (Timeless)* — am total awareness without being aware of this awareness; total subjectivity, without the slightest touch of objectivity. I manifest through consciousness, through duality, by means of subject and object, through the concepts of space-time and the range of inter-dependent opposites, without which manifestation and objectivization would not be possible. *All manifestation is my expression,* my mirrorization in which I manifest as each sentient being; this object, this sentient being, appears to function and considers itself (erroneously) as the subject. But 'I' am the only subjectivity and all functioning in the manifested world is my objectivization in consciousness, which indeed I am.

All phenomenal objects, aspects of what I am, become sensorially perceptible only when they are extended into what I manifest as 'space' and measured into what I manifest as 'time'. Again, therefore, the simple and obvious truth: *This-here-now,* all manifestation sensorially perceived, is not different from what I am in my unicity. And, of course, every sentient object can say this.

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What is the meaning of "real"? What is the meaning of truth? It is whatever is eternal. Whatever we experience, including the beingness, is unreal because it is not going to last. These are all non-eternal, ***and one experiences only non-eternal items***. The knowledge “I am” is a primary concept and is also non-eternal. ***The One, the Absolute, which is eternal and aware, why should he worry about anybody else?*** Because in that state, whatever appearance takes place is That only. There is no other, so the question about any inquiry about others does not even arise.

Understand whatever is time-bound and eliminate all time-bound stages (like body, mind, thoughts, feelings, etc..). The one who recognizes all these time-bound stages, that one is beyond time, is prior to time. Stay put there. You can understand all these time-bound stages only from a pedestal which is not time-bound. Be there!

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Gradually, by disassociating one's self from all that the mind has accepted as real, the Pure 'I AM' consciousness will shine forth. The Reality is even beyond this. It is Pure Awareness. Perfection. Happiness. Bliss."

***Maharaj’s mantra is “Hold on to the 'I AM' awareness”***

If your mind undergoes any moments of worry go ahead with your *japa* with persistence. With the knowledge that 'I AM', embrace and be One with the knowledge 'I AM'. Do not get worried or entertain the mind with any worries. Automatically and spontaneously all your worries will be dissolved.

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In the unmanifest Absolute. there is no consciousness at all - consciousness of existence. So only when there is this universal consciousness manifesting itself in the various forms, and these forms possess the life force and are subject to the three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas), can each form act through the life force according to the combination of these gunas. Each life form acts according to its own nature (we can call this Karma or pre-destined). It is only when identification takes place, and I begin to think that I am acting, although it is only the combination of the three gunas that acts, that I assume quite unnecessarily the responsibilities and consequences of those actions which are not mine at all.

The message is loud and clear from Maharaj – we are not the “doer”. All activities happen on their own. The actions would have taken place in any case, depending on the three gunas and the life force.

It is amazing, almost silly, that anyone could think that he or she is acting. This is what happens: The waking state, before the other gunas start, is from the sattva-guna; that is, total harmony. In that split second when one wakes up, there is total love, total kindness. There is no question of selfishness. After waking up (after that split second) there are the physical activities caused by necessities, nature and duties - these derive from the rajas-guna. All these activities take place by themselves, but one starts saying "I am doing this," identifying and taking on the responsibilities – that is the work of the tamas-guna.

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***Very important point to ponder***: Who has the knowledge “I am”? Somebody in you knows the knowledge “I am.” Who is it? It is obvious that you know you are, but what or who is it that knows you are? *It is the Awareness that knows or aware of “I am”.*

“I-am-ness” is illusory only. It is not a perfect state, it is illusion. Who knows the illusion? A non-illusory state only can know the illusory state. That non-illusory state is "Awareness". Awareness knows “I am.” It is other than “I am” and it is more than “I am.” That is the highest and Absolute state (Parabhrahman). Also there is no gradation in awareness (there is no question of impure awareness or pure awareness). The no-being state is the Absolute which is Awareness. Beingness is the feeling "I am” known by the Awareness.

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In this body there is the principle which we know as “yourself.” That principle has no form, but you understand that as the knowledge “I am.” We also call it the consciousness, the “I”-consciousness or the beingness. Now the various names are the names of this consciousness only: The consciousness gives rise to the world. *The world is within that consciousness*. Try to understand that. This is the only way to knowledge of the Self; through this consciousness you can know yourself, what you are. All other types of knowledge in the world are ways to enable you to earn a livelihood, to get money and live in the world. Otherwise, that is not knowledge at all. Knowledge of the Self is the only real knowledge.

In the universal consciousness there are no individuals. We are looking at different forms, we give them names like man, God, donkey, and such. But ultimately there is this consciousness only, the universal consciousness. And we should not identify ourselves as a separate entity, a separate body. We are that knowledge; it has no name or form. That is the essence of my teaching.

Presently whatever you know is “I am”. This “I am” is the product of the five elements. Out of the elements comes the food body and because of the food body, that “I-am-ness” is sustained. And you are also not that "I am." "I am" is the taste, or the fragrance, of this food body. You are that which knows the “I am”. The ultimate has no fragrance. no taste. no touch of "I-am-ness."

Hold on to yourself whatever you are. You know you are, just be there.

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You know you are before even speaking the words "I am." Subsequent to the knowingness “I am,” you say “I am” by words. Stay put there only. There begins your spirituality, the foremost “you,” “I am,” without words, before the beginning of words. Be there.

The memory of the body is not your identity; the knowledge "I am" is your present identity. Stabilize in it. From the bodily standpoint, you can talk a lot, thinking that it is knowledge but it is not.

Let anything happen in your body. But stay put in your confidence that you are the manifest Brahman or you are the Absolute. I am asking you to abide in your own self – this primary concept that "you are"; you abide in that and see what happens.

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You are consciousness. Where is the question of your merging with the consciousness? Your consciousness means “you are”. “You-are-ness” and consciousness are not separate. The “you are” state itself is the consciousness. You know you are, without the words you are. That itself is the Consciousness. This consciousness cannot know itself in the absence of a form, of food body essence. Spontaneously you know and remember that you are. Stay put there.

# **Ashtavakra Gita**

The very first step on this path is to understand clearly that the Self is all consciousness, always liberated, an uninvolved witness of all events and happenings. One should abandon the idea of identification with this body-mind complex and remain as a sheer witness to all events and goings-on, divorcing oneself from the mental imaginations of joy and sorrow and without judging them as good or bad, right or wrong, pleasant or unpleasant etc. It will be a choiceless perception. The relationship between the body and the Self is as between an electric bulb and electricity. Electricity is different from the bulb and both have opposite characteristics. ***The bulb has a date of manufacture and may fuse or get broken one day while the electric energy is neither born nor can be destroyed (difference between Absolute and Manifested Consciousness as Physical body)***.

Worldly objects, Ashtavakra exhorts Janaka to avoid all objects of senses as if they are deadly poison. (1-2)

***After separating oneself from the body-mind complex, one is to rest in Consciousness. Consciousness is the capacity to know that "I am' or "I Exist'. This knowledge of "I am' is a direct knowledge which comes to us directly without passing through the medium of our senses like the eye, ear etc. It is an intuitive knowledge while the knowledge of the presence of other objects and persons in the world is a conditioned knowledge filtered and modified through the senses, mind and memory.***

The senses are unreliable instruments as proved by the sighting of a mirage in a desert. The fact that "I AM' is an incontrovertible direct Knowledge which requires no other proof. ***Remaining quietly in that ""am-ness'' or ""is-ness'', remaining as pure existence without any further qualification, is remaining in pure Consciousness***. Do not entertain any projected ideas that I am a woman, I am seventy years old, I am an Engineer, I am a father, I am an Englishman etc. ***Remain as "I AM' and do not repeat in the mind like a Mantra "I AM'. Simply "BE'***.

Nisargadatta Maharaj of "I AM THAT'' fame has claimed that he got his enlightenment in less than three years through the only sadhana of remaining in "I AM'. Ashtavakra claims that enlightenment can be instantaneous. This is the quantum flight from body consciousness to the eternal Existence. There are no processes, stages, auxiliary means or anything else involved. One should be careful not to meditate or think as "I AM' but to simply remain in that fact of one's Existence. One should not also associate himself with any extensions of existence, for instance "I am a Brahmin, I am a monk' etc.

A new born child having no vocabulary cannot think. It is only aware that it is alive ("IT IS'). It just remains in that feeling of "I AM' and is happy. In the same way one should not have any thought including "I AM', but remain in that awareness of "AM-NESS' (Being). All miseries, stress, anxiety, tension etc., stem from our identification with the body. Delinking oneself from the body-sense and remaining in pure existence is a relaxed, peaceful and an effortless state. If we start remaining in such a state even for 3 to 4 hours a day, we shall certainly have self-realisation.

You just remain in the conviction that you are liberated and free and you will be liberated. On the contrary if you consider yourself as a bound and limited being, you will continue to be bound.'' It is as simple as that. "As you think, so you become.''

You have been conditioned and hypnotized into thinking that you are the body subject to various limitations including that of birth, death, old age and bodily afflictions. The process of de-hypnotizing lies in considering oneself as consciousness and thus remain ever-liberated. This is logical and scientific. It is not enough to have an intellectual conviction that ""I am the ATMAN and ever liberated.'' The conviction should come from inside, from the entire being, with every cell in the body being, permeated with the knowledge "I AM EVER LIBERATED.''

The ego is the "I' sense which identifies itself with the body-mind-complex. This impostor of an "I' is sustained solely because we always consider ourselves as the doers of various actions and as the ones who experience the fruits of such good or bad actions resulting in joy or sorrow. Righteousness and sin, pleasure and pain are all imaginations of the mind and are not real. Actually, there is no individual personality at all as all actions including breathing, thinking, eating, talking, walking, etc. are done by the Totality (i.e. the all-pervasive cosmic Consciousness using each human body as an instrument). So we are not the doers at all. The Consciousness, after assuming a body, has forgotten its integral link with the Totality and instead identifies itself with the body with all its limitations. So a false "I' is created which thinks I am breathing, I think, I eat, I talk, I walk, etc. The moment you cease to consider yourself to be the doer or enjoyer, you will recognize yourself to be ever liberated.

So long as one considers oneself as the doer, the actions being motivated by vasanas/desires bind one by forging a chain of birth and death in order to reap the fruits of actions good or bad as the case may be. When once one gets out of the notion of doer ship, being impervious to desires and by considering any action done by one as emanating from the Totality and as being done by the respective senses, oneself remaining as the witness consciousness, one will no longer be bound by one's actions.

Ashtavakra, however, stresses that by simply remaining in the firm conviction that

"I am the Pure consciousness'', you become freed from all miseries and established in happiness. Instead of remaining as immutable consciousness, unattached, actionless and pure, when one tries to meditate on it as ""I am the Brahman'' etc. it constitutes the main bondage (I-15). Simple be “I am”.

Ashtavakra affirms that detachment from sense objects is salvation while

attachment for sense objects is bondage (XV-2, X-4 and IX-8). He repeats the necessity for desirelessness again and again as the main preparation required for the flight into the Absolute. (XVIII-2)

Another unique point made out by Ashtavakra is that a **Bhogi** (who is after more and more of enjoyment) as also a **Yogi** who is bent on renouncing all enjoyments are both qualitatively on the same plane. The minds of both are on "enjoyment' one for grasping it and the other for leaving it. One must go beyond both by adopting the attitude of a witness (Sakshi) i.e. by neither accepting nor rejecting. (XVI-6,7, XIII-1, XVII-5)

One should realise that nothing whatsoever is ever done by the Self which is actionless. One has nothing to gain by striving (as one is already ever liberated) nor does one sustain any loss by inaction. ***All happiness and misery as also birth and death are pre-destined by the effects of past actions (Prarabdha)*.** There is nothing to be accomplished. (XVIII-49, XIII-3,6, XI-4)

One must divorce oneself thoroughly from the sense of doer ship and being an experiencer - one who reaps the fruit of his actions. All the modifications of the mind including the ego get dissolved - this is essential for Self-Realization. A mediocre sadhak who practices control of the mind may succeed temporarily but the moment he stops the practice, all desires and fancies take control of him. The complete stillness of the mind results without any effort or practice through mere self-knowledge.

*Once a person is established in Self-knowledge by leaving off the body- consciousness and resting in pure consciousness, the control of mind becomes a natural by-product (XVIII-51, 41, 75, 33). What a direct path!*

Ashtavakra exhorts us lovingly just to believe and have firm faith that we are that ultimate self-knowledge which is sought, the very Self and the Lord. This results in Self-realization. In between no steps are necessary. (XV-8)

You are the self and ever liberated. Even the meditation on the Brahman or Self should be given up completely in order to have Self-enlightenment. The finite consciousness has to slide directly into the supreme consciousness of the Infinite Self by just hearing with total belief that we are the Self (XVIII-48 & XV-20).

Ashtavakra transcends the principal teachings of the Upanishads when he logically advises that when once we are established as the non-dual Self, there is no question of contemplating on oneself as "I am that Brahman''. The latter

contemplation indicates an inferior state of consciousness where "I' exists apart from the Brahman and sees the Brahman. (XVIII-16) Ashtavakra daringly proclaims that there is no need even to discriminate between Atman (Self) and Anatman (nonself). By merely remaining in the realization that everything is the Self or Brahman one attains the highest bliss. Ashtavakra's path enshrines neither ladders nor steps. (XV-15&9)

This path envisages a way of life where a person is not intellectually affirming his

state of being the Supreme Atman (Self), but there is a deep conviction seeping through each and every cell of his body, mind and heart that he is varily the Brahman (the Supreme Being) and he behaves in his actual life in all circumstances as the pure unconditioned Brahman in an uninterrupted silence without the least reaction to any impact of the world.

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# **Eckhart Tolle**

**Consciousness**

The joy of Being is the joy of being conscious.

Consciousness is already conscious. It is the unmanifested, the eternal (Nisargadatta Maharaj would refer unmanifested Consciousness as the Absolute and consciousness as manisfested). The universe, however, is only gradually becoming conscious. Consciousness itself is timeless and therefore does not evolve. It was never born and does not die. When consciousness becomes the manifested universe, it appears to be subject to time and to undergo an evolutionary process. No human mind is capable of comprehending fully the reason for this process (Maharaj would also say Consciousness needs a human body for manifestation and would manifest for no reason). But we can glimpse it within ourselves and become a conscious participant in it.

Consciousness is the intelligence, the organizing principle behind the arising of form. Consciousness has been preparing forms for millions of years so that it can express itself through them in the manifested.

***Although the unmanifested realm of pure consciousness could be considered another dimension, it is not separate from this dimension of form***. Form and formlessness interpenetrate. The unmanifested ﬂows into this dimension as awareness, inner space, Presence. How does it do that? Through the human form that becomes conscious and thus fulfills its destiny.

Consciousness incarnates into the manifested dimension, that is to say, it becomes form. When it does so, it enters a dreamlike state (this is our waking state which is a dream according to sages). Intelligence remains, but consciousness becomes unconscious of itself. ***Consciousness loses itself in form, becomes identified with forms***. This could be described as the descent of the divine into matter (body).

On our planet, the human ego represents the final stage of universal sleep, the identification of consciousness with form. It was a necessary stage in the evolution of consciousness.

The next step in human evolution is not inevitable, but for the first time in the history of our planet, it can be a conscious choice. Who is making that choice? You are. And who are you? Consciousness that has become conscious of itself.

The human brain is a highly differentiated form through which consciousness enters this dimension. It contains approximately one hundred billion nerve cells (called neurons), about the same number as there are stars in our galaxy, which could be seen as a macrocosmic brain. ***The brain does not create consciousness, but consciousness created the brain, the most complex physical form on earth, for its expression***. When the brain gets damaged, it does not mean you lose consciousness. It means consciousness can no longer use that form to enter this dimension. ***You cannot lose consciousness because it is, in essence, who you are. You can only lose something that you have, but you cannot lose something that you are***.

Although you cannot know consciousness, you can become conscious of it as yourself. You can sense it directly in any situation, no matter where you are. ***You can sense it here and now as your very Presence,*** the inner space in which the words on this page are perceived and become thoughts. ***It is the underlying I Am***. The words you are reading and thinking are the foreground, and the I Am is the substratum, the underlying background to every experience, thought, feeling. ***Spiritual realization is to see clearly that what I perceive, experience, think, or feel is ultimately not who I am, that I cannot find myself in all those things that continuously pass away***.

Consciousness is the light in which perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and feelings come and go. That is Being, that is the deeper, true I. When I know myself as that, whatever happens in my life is only of relative importance. I honor it, but it loses its absolute seriousness, its heaviness.

The only thing that ultimately matters is this: ***Can I sense my essential Beingness, the I Am, in the background of my life at all times? To be more accurate, can I sense the I Am that I Am at this moment? Can I sense my essential identity as consciousness itself? Or am I losing myself in what happens, losing myself in the mind, in the world?***

When forms that you had identified with, that gave you your sense of self, collapse or are taken away, it can lead to a collapse of the ego, since ego is identification with form. When there is nothing to identify with anymore, who are you? When forms around you die or death approaches, your sense of Beingness, of I Am, is freed from its entanglement with form: Spirit is released from its imprisonment in matter. You realize your essential identity as formless, as an all-pervasive Presence, of Being prior to all forms, all identifications. You realize your true identity as consciousness itself, rather than what consciousness had identified with.

Becoming conscious of stillness whenever we encounter it in our lives will connect us with the formless and timeless dimension within ourselves, that which is beyond thought, beyond ego. It may be the stillness that pervades the world of nature, or the stillness in your room in the early hours of the morning, or the silent gaps in between sounds. ***Stillness has no form—that is why through thinking we cannot become aware of it. Thought is form. Being aware of stillness means to be still. To be still is to be conscious without thought***.

**Awareness without thought.**

The realization of yourself as essence identity can be continuous, and that is, you could call that a spiritual practice. It's simply continuously directing attention in your daily life, in addition to paying attention to whatever you need to pay attention to, directing attention to what? Directing attention to attention.

Become aware that you are conscious right now. That's a strange thing. There's no content to that. There's simply a presence, and for that to happen there needs to be the cessation of thought.

The new state of consciousness is a mixture of thought and spaciousness so that you can go about your daily life, walking from point A to point B in that state of simple aware presence.

Simply become aware of yourself as you sit here. Just as I am aware of myself as a conscious presence. This is a very strange thing. It's not, you can't say, "Oh, I'm-" You cannot become an object to yourself in this. ***Everything else is an object that arises in your consciousness, an object of consciousness but knowing yourself you cannot be an object in your own consciousness.*** So you cannot know yourself in a subject/object relationship at the deepest level.

You can only know yourself as the eternal subject. ***There is a space of stillness in that moment of being, of knowing yourself as the essence identity. There is an alive sense of stillness and presence. You can't define Awareness and you can’t think about it. You can only be it.***

Stillness is one word we could use to point to it. Stillness has nothing to do whether there's noise outside or not. ***This inner stillness is the cessation of thinking without loss of consciousness and that is realizing yourself as the unconditioned consciousness because everything else is conditioned by the past but that is the unconditioned in you.***

***That is your essence identity.*** You cannot by exercising will power go stop yourself from thinking and that’s not the way to do it as well. ***Do not stop thinking as an active practice, but simply become so alert that thinking stops by itself***. One way you can do it is by becoming acutely aware of sense perceptions. One example I give in the “Power of Now” of a Cat watching the mouse hole. It will be absolute attention. This is the state of awareness. ***This is the Consciousness that’s the only thing in your life that you cannot question.***

***Consciousness or Awareness is the only reality. Everything else you can question***. For example, whether our gathering here is a dream or not, you don't really know. It could be that you are dreaming that you are sitting here, and there's a man talking on a chair, suggesting to you that you might be dreaming. You cannot know for sure that this life that you're experiencing is not a kind of dream. It may well be a dream ***but one thing you cannot doubt is that you are conscious because if you are not conscious there couldn't be a dream***. A dream can only arise in the light of consciousness. So the one thing, whether or not this is a dream or not becomes irrelevant. The only thing that matters if it is a dream is whether you can realize what the essence of the dream is: consciousness and you can only realize that directly here and now, as this.

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Primordial Spiritual Practice is the ability or look at things or listen to things with other senses like smell, taste, touch, etc… as the awareness rather than the interpreting mind. This is innocent perception which requires awareness. It requires an alertness in the background of your perception. Without the alertness, thinking will always overpower you. The alertness keeps thinking at bay. Need to be alert during chanting of Mantras. You can use Eckhart Tolle’s Zen example from his book – hearing the mountain stream and entering Zen from there. There should be no stress or strain in this alertness. You can’t hold your breath and make yourself more alert. Its relaxed alertness.

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Eckhart Tolle’s Realization in his own words

Eckhart mentioned about this which he says has briefly been covered in his book “The Power of Now” as well.

“When my mind said I can’t live with myself anymore because I was unhappy and I couldn’t stand the unhappiness anymore. I couldn’t live with myself anymore and I suddenly realized it as very strange. I thought there must be two of me here – I and the Self that I cannot live with. That’s an incredible realization there’s two of me – there is the unhappy me that “I” cannot live with. Who am I and who is that unhappy? At this moment, the consciousness that I am that was trapped in the movement of thought and continuously absorbed by the movement of thought. This movement of thought created the entity to the person – the unhappy person, the mind made entity. It was so active that it absorbed all of my consciousness and trapped it in the movement of self identified thoughts. When this strange statement arose in my mind a sudden separation happened between the Consciousness that was trapped in the movement of thought. Suddenly it was able to release itself to extricate itself from being held. At this point there was the “I” as the Consciousness looking at the unhappy thought movement. Once Consciousness separated from the thinking unhappy entity, very quickly thinking subsided as it was no longer fueled by Consciousness. Thinking is not possible without Consciousness but a thought is Consciousness that has taken form whereas the realization of “I” as Consciousness is Consciousness that is bright unconditioned. I became aware of myself as Consciousness.

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# **Rupert Spira**

**Being Aware of Being Aware**

All Objective experience is known. We are aware of our experience. We are aware of whatever is being known or experienced, irrespective of the contents of our knowledge or experience. Thus, knowing or being aware is the continuous element in all changing knowledge and experience. It remains consistently present throughout the three states of waking, dreaming and sleeping. No other element of experience is continuous.

Thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions have changed innumerable times throughout our lives, but the knowing with which they are known – the simple experience of being aware – has remained the same throughout. The known always changes; knowing never changes.

Awareness is always present and aware of itself but seems to cease knowing itself as it truly is when it loses itself in objective experience. Awareness of objects eclipses awareness of awareness.

Knowing or being aware is not inaccessible, unknown or buried within us. It is shining clearly in the background of all experience, just as it could be said that the screen is clearly visible in the background of a movie. Knowing or being aware is the primary ingredient in all knowledge and experience. It is the background on which all knowledge and experience take place.

*The experience of being aware is independent of whatever we are aware of*. No experience affects the non-objective experience of being aware, just as nothing that takes place in a movie affects the screen upon which it plays.

***Simply notice the experience of being aware. The peace and happiness for which all people long reside there. Be aware of being aware.***

‘I’ is the knowing or aware element in all knowledge and experience. ‘I’ is awareness itself. It is ‘I, awareness’ that is aware of being aware. It is awareness that knows or is aware that there is awareness. Thus, being aware or awareness itself is self-aware. Just as the sun illuminates itself, so awareness knows itself. ***Awareness knows itself simply by being itself.***

Knowing, being aware or awareness itself is the essential, irreducible essence of the mind prior to its conditioning in the form of objective experience. It is, as such, unconditioned.

***Only awareness is aware of awareness. Only being aware is being aware of being aware.***

Cease being exclusively fascinated by whatever you are aware of and be interested instead in the experience of being aware itself. Be aware of being aware. Like empty space, relatively speaking, being aware or awareness itself has no objective qualities or features. It is on account of its non-objectivity that the experience of being aware or awareness itself is usually ignored or overlooked. Indeed, most people go through their entire lives without ever questioning who or what it is that knows or is aware of their experience, or how experience comes to be at all.

Most of us are so fascinated by the content of experience – thoughts, images, feelings, sensations and perceptions – that we overlook the knowing with which all knowledge and experience are known. We neglect the simple experience of being aware that remains ever-present and changeless in the background of all experience. We ignore awareness itself. We overlook the simple knowing of our own self-aware being.

Being aware of being aware is nothing but awareness’s awareness of itself. It is the Awareness of “I am”. Awareness knows itself simply by being itself. Before Awareness knows Objective Experience, it knows itself. Nature of Awareness is pure knowing. It is self-illuminating, self-knowing, self-aware.

Being aware of being aware – awareness’s awareness of awareness – is a colorless, non-objective experience. It is an experience of the essence of the mind after it has been divested of its finite qualities. It is, as such, pure mind – awareness itself.

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***Meditation Practice***: Just as the beam of light from a flashlight can be directed towards an object but cannot be directed towards the bulb from which it emanates, so awareness, in the form of attention or mind, can direct the light of its knowing towards objective experience but cannot direct itself towards itself. We cannot direct our mind towards the experience of being aware; we can only direct our mind away from it. ***Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that awareness must relax the focus of its attention, or disentangle itself from the objects of experience, thereby allowing its attention to return to or come to rest in itself***. Thus, the highest form of meditation is not an activity that is undertaken by the mind. It is a relaxing, falling back or sinking of the mind into its source or essence of pure awareness, from which it has arisen.

***This returning of awareness to itself, its remembrance of itself – being aware of being aware – is the essence of meditation and prayer, and the direct path to lasting peace and happiness.***

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All you know is the knowing of your experience. ***That’s all you ever know – knowing of experience. That knowing never disappears.*** It runs constant throughout all the experiences. It is not the property of any experience although it runs through all experience. ***Be interested in “what is the knowing with which I know my experience”***. What could be more interesting than falling in love with that!!!

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**I am awareness**

Normally our attention is focused on objects. If that can be relaxed sufficiently, you can become aware of not only the object but also aware of being aware of the object. If you are listening to music and if your attention is relaxed and pulled to the background you will become aware not only of the music but of the fact that you are listening to the music. In other words, ***you become aware of being aware !!!***

Whatever it is that knows our thoughts and images is not *itself* a thought or image. What is that? Whatever it is that is aware of our feelings and sensations is not *itself* a feeling or sensation. What is that? Whatever it is that perceives the world is not *itself* a sight, sound, taste, texture or smell. What is that? ***It is simply that which knows or is aware. It is our self. It is awareness or consciousness itself*** (Awareness and Consciousness are used synonymously by Rupert Spira). You are the knower.

***The understanding ‘I am awareness’ is the first great understanding***. This is not an extraordinary recognition or something that is difficult to access. In fact, it is enshrined in common parlance. We say, ‘*I know* my thoughts and images’, ‘*I am aware of* feelings and sensations’ and ‘*I perceive* the world’. In each of these statements, we recognize ourself as the *knowing*, *aware* or *perceiving* element, and thoughts, images, feelings, sensations and percep­tions as *objects* that we know, are aware of or perceive. In other words, ***we are not essentially our thoughts, images, memories or stories about our life. We are that which knows them. We are not essentially our feelings or sensations; we are that which is aware of them. We are not the sights, sounds, tastes, textures and smells that constitute our experience of the world; we are that which perceives them. We are nothing that is experienced; we are that which experiences.*** We are not essentially anything that we are aware *of*; we are simply the fact of knowing, being aware or awareness itself.

**You are the happiness you seek**

Every night you willingly and effortlessly let go of everyone and everything with whom you associate or identify and fall deeply asleep. In the experience of deep sleep you are all alone. ***Everything that is not essential to you has been removed and, as a result, you experience the peace of your true nature***. If letting go of everyone and everything were a traumatic or frightening experience, we would dread falling asleep at night. But we look forward to it! Why? *Because it gives us access to the peace of our true nature, which is veiled by the activities of thinking, feeling, acting and relating during the day*.

Almost all our troubles and difficulties in life stem from the fact that we have forgotten or overlooked ourself and by ourself of course I don't mean our thoughts images feelings memories, sensations and so on, These are all experiences that we know or are aware of. We forget or overlook our essential self – the fact of simply being or being aware. We have a sense of being myself but our sense of being is so mixed with the content of experience that we do not see ourselves clearly. Prayer or Meditation is to see ourself clearly to know thyself not to know the various attributes that we experience like thoughts, feelings and sensations. Objective is to know our essential self or that aspect of our self that never leaves us. Our essential self or being remains constantly present in the background of experience and also pervades the foreground. All that is necessary is to separate ourselves from everything that is not essentially us. Whatever remains after removing everything is “not me” remains our essential self.

Our essential aware being is what we refer to when we simply say “I am” and the I am is present throughout and in the midst of all experience. I am listening to a meditation, I am walking down the street, I'm having a shower, I'm feeling upset, I'm writing an email, I'm cooking dinner and so on whatever we are thinking whatever we are feeling whatever we are sensing, perceiving doing to always it's always I who am thinking, feeling, sensing and so on. “I am” is always there in these activities but because it is transparent, silent empty, colorless we overlook it just like the space in a room or the screen in the movie is ignored. We are lost in the content of the experience. Returning to ourself or Remembering ourself requires an effort as we lost our touch with our being which is natural and effortless. Overtime we will naturally fall into our being which is our essential nature.

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**Awareness Meditation**

**Meditate with eyes open or closed for about 15 minutes. Be aware of awareness. Knowingly be the knowingness. Witness every thought, feeling, perception, sensation rise and fall in the soft nothingness/fullness.**

**When you touch an object, there is a perception. If you observe this is essentially knowing.**

**What is thought? There is no entity called thought. It is just a thinking. When you make an effort to be aware of the thought you notice that knowing is not different than thinking. There is no difference between Knowing and perceiving, knowing and sensing. Similarly knowing is feeling as well. This is possible only by completely being in this knowingness. Now take this knowingness into life whatever you do at work or at home. Knowingness is the only truth. Knowingness vibrating and becoming thinking, knowingness vibrating becoming perception. This knowingness is the consciousness. There is no separate entity called mind. Only Brahman.**

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# **Atmananda Menon (“I” Principle)**

**WHAT AM I?**

I can perceive and know my body, sense-organs and mind. Therefore I am evidently the subject, distinct and separate from all of them.

First of all, see that the body, senses and mind are your objects and that you are always the changeless subject, distinct and separate from the objects. The objects are present only when they are perceived. But I exist, always changeless, whether perceptions occur or not, extending through and beyond all states. Thus you see that you are never the body, senses or mind. Make this thought as deep and intense as possible, until you are doubly sure that the wrong identification will never recur.

Real ‘I’-principle (or Awareness) alone lives. The ignorant man believes that either the body or the mind lives, while in fact each of them keeps dying at the end of every perception or thought. But the ‘I’-principle continues unchanged throughout all thoughts and perceptions, lighting them up as well.

Therefore, the ignorant man who identifies himself with body and mind is dying every moment, along with every perception or thought. And the Jnyanin, who identifies himself with the changeless ‘I’-principle, alone really lives and knows no death. The body idea or the ego has to die, in order that *you* may really live. In this sense, it is the Jnyanin alone that really lives, and knows he lives. His advice to every man is: ‘Die, in order to live.’ In other words, annihilate the personal element, or ego, in order that the impersonal element may not appear clouded. This is realization – establishing oneself in the Reality.

Next, examine if there is anything else that does not part with the ‘I’-principle, even for a moment. *Yes*. There is Consciousness. It never parts with the ‘I’-principle, and can never be an object either. So both must mean one and the same thing. Or, in other words, ‘I’ is Consciousness itself. Similarly, wherever there is the ‘I’-principle left alone, there is also the idea of deep peace or happiness, existing along with it.

It is universally admitted that one loves only that which gives one happiness, or that a thing is loved only for its happiness value. Evidently, happiness itself is loved more than that which is supposed to give happiness. It is also admitted that one loves one’s self more than anything else. So it is clear that you must be one with happiness or that you are happiness itself. All your activities are only attempts to experience that happiness or self in every experience. You are the happiness that you seek !!!

A subjective transformation alone is needed for ‘realization’. When one who has realized the Truth looks at the world he finds that every object asserts one’s own self or consciousness, without which the object could never appear. You are the world !!! All this world is my object, and I am the changeless subject. Each one of my objects serves only to point to me and to prove me. I need only make my stand there firmer and establish myself at the real centre, as the ultimate subject ‘I’.

Every perception, thought or feeling is known by you. You are the knower of the world through the sense organs; of the sense organs through the generic mind; and of the mind – with its activity or passivity – by your self alone. In all these different activities, you stand out as the one knower. Actions, perceptions, thoughts and feelings all come and go. But knowingness does not part with you, even for a moment. You are therefore always the knower. How then can you ever be the doer or the enjoyer?

After understanding the ‘I’-principle as pure Consciousness and happiness, always use the word ‘I’ or ‘knower’ to denote the goal of your retreat.

Perceptions are liable to mistakes regarding the object perceived - for example the stump of a tree is mistaken for a man (and Rope for Snake). But regarding yourself, the ‘I’, there can never be any mistaking whatsoever.

Consciousness is all. Objects are nothing but form, sound, touch, taste or smell. It is evident that any one of these can never be separated from its respective sense organ, even in thought. So objects and sense perceptions are one. Similarly, seeing, hearing etc.. can never shine independently of Consciousness. So, by the same logic, they are Consciousness itself. Thus objects are nothing else but Consciousness; and that is the ‘I’-principle.

You are pure Consciousness, the ultimate witness to all your activities. ***This thought (that your pure consciousness) you are not to take during any activity, but only after it. A thought after the incident, that you had been the knower all along, relieves you of even the least taint of an attachment – as doer or enjoyer – that might have crept in unawares during the incident***. During the activity, if you take the thought of the witness, the mind engaged in the activity gets diverted, and the activity suffers to that extent. This is neither desired nor advised. ***To summarize think that you are witness after doing any activity – this will help reinforce that you are not the “doer”.***

***By a subjective transformation alone can realization be complete. Then you have only to make it natural. For that, you must outwardly allow the body, senses and mind to continue their activities as before; but inwardly, after every activity, emphasize the Consciousness or witness aspect, so as not to allow those activities to form new samskaras.***

***You* should not try to know that you are the knower**. Your knowership is objectless and can never be objectified. You are always the witness. ***But you need not attempt deliberately to take the role of a witness. Only take note of the fact that you are always the witness***. ***You are asked to strengthen the conviction that you are the knower, in order to counteract the old samskaras that you are the doer, enjoyer etc.*** Though the substance of doership and enjoyership is removed, the samskaras might still remain as shadows.

***You are only to argue in your mind how you are always the real knower and repeat the arguments over and over again. The time will come when the arguments will become unnecessary, and a mere thought will take you to the conclusion. Gradually, you will find that even when you do not think about the Truth, and whether you are engaged or not engaged in activities, you will feel without feeling that you are always the witness and that you are not affected by any activity or inactivity of the mind and senses in the relative sphere.***

Witnessing is silent awareness. Do not try to make it active in any way. Consciousness never takes any responsibility for proving the existence or the non-existence of an object.

Senses and mind shine only in the presence of the ‘I’, and the ‘I’ shines all alone as in deep sleep. So the ‘I’ is more practical than senses or mind.

The ego is a crude mixture of Consciousness and the material part. When this ego takes this particular thought that it is Consciousness, the material part drops away and Consciousness shines alone, in its own glory. Thus the ego itself gets transformed into pure Consciousness, in course of time.

Consciousness is always your center, in all your activities. ***This fact is only to be understood, and not to be thought of during the activity itself. It will hamper your activity, and sometimes even stop it, if you think of Consciousness during the activity***. So think about the Consciousness part therein, which is your own nature, only after the activity is over and when you are free. But before the activity, you can take the vague thought, avoiding all details, that Consciousness is the general background of all activity.

Working for Work’s sake should be our real goal. Work will be more successful in the absence of the ego than when one’s actions are guided by ego. For when the ego is absent, all your energy is available for the work alone. When the ego is present, part of this energy is usurped by it, for its own maintenance.

Pain and pleasure are two sides of the same coin and they actually beget each other. ***The more you suffer, the more you enjoy afterwards; and vice versa***. If your hunger or thirst has been very sharp, which is unmixed pain, your subsequent enjoyment of pleasure at a sumptuous meal will also be proportionately intense. ***You can never accept or reject any one phase of it alone. But the moment you understand the source of it all to be your own self or real nature, every pleasure or pain you feel becomes yourself, losing the characteristic of pleasure or pain. And then eternal peace prevails.***

Even in worldly enjoyment, it is your own real nature of peace that you experience as Happiness. For example, you enjoy Happiness listening to sweet music. Here music helps you only to empty your mind of all thoughts other than music, and finally it is emptied of the thought of music also. Thus the mind ceases to be and you come to Happiness, and that is your real nature. It is wrong to believe that the happiness came from the hearing of music.

Knower is neither Doer nor Enjoyer because you never cease to be the Knower. Doership and enjoyership come and go. Knowing takes place in a different plane. The doing, perceiving and thinking take place either in the realm of the body or of the mind. When these activities are taking place, they are simultaneously perceived by the ‘I’-principle, from a higher plane. The doer and the enjoyer always change. The knower is beyond all changes. It is evidently Knowledge or Consciousness itself. And it is no function since it is changeless.

The mind may desire happiness.The object of its desire is always that from which it supposes it can derive happiness (basically Mind thinks it can derive happiness from objects). Happiness can never be the object of desire. For Happiness can never be objectified. ***Therefore it is only when the desired object is gained that the mind comes to rest and Happiness is experienced***.

Experiencing Truth is usually asked from a body-mind plane. Truth is uncaused and can never be experienced by effort of any kind. All efforts to that end amount only to thinking and feeling. Truth is beyond mind’s realm. Truth is experience itself and be the truth and do not desire to experience truth.

**MAN’S HUNT AFTER HAPPINESS – AN ANALOGY**

Man hunting for happiness is just like a beetle with a drop of butteron its head. Getting scent of the butter, the beetle hovers aroundknocking about everywhere for the source of the scent, but stayingignorant of the fact that the butter is on its own head.Likewise, man hunts for happiness because it is in himself and heis not able to see it there. But the urge which makes him hunt comesfrom that happiness itself.

**How do I get entangled?**

When I rest in myself alone, in my own glory, there is no manifestation and no question either. I am the only Reality, and this Reality is my own birthright.

Very often, I slip down to the mind and begin to perceive thoughts and feelings. Immediately, I begin to attribute my own Reality to the mind; and even to its objects, namely, thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, I slip further down to the body and perceive gross objects. Here again I attribute my own Reality to these, the body and objects. Thus I apparently entangle myself in the web of this universe.

It may further be explained as follows. In the waking and dream experiences, all perceptions are understood only in relation to their opposites. For example, talk is understood in relation to silence, running in relation to stillness, and so on. This practice has created in man a very strong tendency to superimpose the imaginary opposite of any perception whenever that particular perception vanishes. ***It is as a result of this tendency that he ordinarily superimposes ignorance in deep sleep when all activities cease. This vicious practice must be given up.***

You must understand that all perceptions arise in Consciousness, abide in Consciousness and merge into consciousness. ***So, whenever a perception vanishes, it is Consciousness or Myself alone that remains over, as the background of it all. You must steadily cultivate this habit of perceiving the Reality as the background of all activity***.

The worlds appearing in different states (Waking and Dream) are different from one another. As you change, the worlds change also. Standing limited by the body and mind if you try to change the world to make it beautiful or enjoyable to your mental satisfaction, it will be all in vain. The world will remain only as it is. But if you change your stand or perspective and identify yourself with the real ‘I’-principle, the world also changes; not as beautiful or enjoyable, but as Beauty and Happiness themselves being one with the ‘I’-principle. So correct your inner perspective alone and you shall be free forever and happy in whatever world you are. This is possible only by realizing the Truth, in all its aspects.

One realizes neither as a direct result of renunciation, nor as a direct result of action; ***but only through the deepest conviction that one is not a doer even when engaged in incessant activity***, and that one is not a renouncer or non-doer even when one takes the role of a sannyasin or in deep sleep. ***So realization depends upon the perspective alone, and not upon any external manifestation***.

Consciousness stands as pure experience without an experiencer. ***When I come to know a chair, I realize the existence of something called Consciousness which is distinct and separate from the chair. The chair thus becomes instrumental in directing my attention to the Consciousness***. That is the ‘I’-principle, pure Consciousness.

**HOW TO MEDITATE?**

If you want positively to meditate upon something, without losing sight of your real center, meditate upon the ultimate perceiver. Then the perceived and the perception both disappear; and the perceiver stands alone without being a perceiver, shining as the Absolute. This can be done in two ways:

***1. Meditating as the witness of thoughts.***

***2. Meditating as the witness of feelings.***

**THE ‘I’-PRINCIPLE IN ME AND IN ALL IS ONE AND THE SAME**

You say the ‘I’-principle in ‘*me*’. What is this ‘*me*’? Is it the body, senses, or mind? No. Because these are not there in deep sleep, and still the ‘I’-principle is there all alone. So the ‘*me*’ means the ‘I’-principle itself; and it comes to this. The ‘I’-principle is indivisible and is only one. Duality is only in manifestation – namely body, senses or mind. Beyond this, there cannot be any duality, since there is nothing there to be distinguished from another. Therefore, the ‘I’-principle is unique, and objects alone are different.

So in every experience, objective or otherwise, it is only this pure knowledge or the ‘I’-principle that is really experienced. It expresses itself in all the activities of the mind, senses and body.

If you forget the real nature of experience and view the realm of the mind and body as such, everything there will appear independent and real. But if you look at everything without forgetting the real nature of your experience, everything will appear to be nothing other than Experience itself.

It is impossible to think about the “Absolute” because you are always that. You can only be the Absolute and not think about the Absolute. The Absolute is beyond all thought, and therefore it is impossible to think of it directly. There is no need for that sort of thought either, because you are always that. In order to think of the Absolute in any manner, you have to objectify it. You need only to eliminate yourself from all that is non-atma including body, mind, intellect. When that is done, your real nature as Atma, which is self-luminous, shines all alone in its own glory. So in the guise of thinking of the Atma, think of all that is non-atma, all that constitutes mind, senses and body, and eliminate them from yourself. When left alone, you stand as Atma.

Though you think you are eating when the body is eating, still ***you also know or perceive the eating***. Identification is usually made only after the function. ***During the function, you stand as the function. So, after the eating, stand as the knower of the eating; and then you are saved.*** Apply this to all actions.

When you love an object, the object is outside and the love is inside you. They can never meet, as they are. *The contact is established inside, where the gross object is represented by its subtle form or thought*. ***So the real contact is only between your own thought and your own feeling***. ***Hence it comes to mean that you love only yourself, always.***

You *are* dispassionate, even now. ***When you are caught desiring any one particular object, you have practically renounced everything else, except that one object***. *Now, examining that particular desire more closely, we find that in the moment of the desire, you renounce even that particular gross object, in favour of its thought-form*. ***Because the gross object has no access into the mind’s realm and it in mind alone the desire exists. Therefore, you desire only your own thought-form, which is nothing other than your own Self***. *So you desire only yourself and are always in perfect dispassion. Know this and you shall be free.*

Only if your knowledge of your own Self is correct, can you hope to know anything else correctly. It is our experience that our physical activities do not stand in the way of our thoughts and feelings. Similarly, ***it is possible for me as witness to be always knowing – even when the body, senses and mind are functioning***. Merely note this fact and become deeply convinced of it. ***Don’t attempt to objectify the witness by thought.***

Being and becoming cannot go together. When you are striving to become the Truth, you are admittedly away from Truth; and when you are in the being or Truth, there is no need for any striving at all to become the Truth. ***When you are at the centre, manifestation is not perceived***; and when you are at the manifestation, you are outside your centre. So the ‘I’-principle and the manifestation can never meet.

The Reality is manifest as Consciousness first and Consciousness manifests the object next. If one thing is said to manifest another object, the first thing is really manifesting itself, as the background of the second. Consciousness manifesting perceptions means that Consciousness remains as background and perceptions appear and disappear in it.

When you see a chair, it is admitted without saying that the space all round is lighted up by the gross light. But this light, by itself, is not perceptible to the naked eye except in relation to some object; and so it is not usually noted or emphasized. Similarly, the presence of Consciousness is most essential to make any perception possible. Therefore, the manifestation of any perception first proves the existence of Consciousness, and only next proves the object lit up. Unless you are self-conscious it is never possible for you to be conscious of objects. But the self-consciousness part is usually ignored. It is that Consciousness which has to be emphasized.

When Mind gets distracted, examine it and discover that it is never distracted ***since mind can never take two thoughts simultaneously***. To know this deeply takes you even beyond concentration, a long way towards Reality. ***When the mind’s attention is directed to the silent witness, the mind has to get into tune with the nature of the witness and become silent also or be dissolved in the witness.***

The ordinary man is a slave of the mind and follows implicitly its dictates, as long as he is attracted to sensual pleasures. ***But when you begin to turn away from the mind and start looking inward, the mind becomes bewildered and is ready to follow your footsteps faithfully, like a slave***.

If you take to the deep thought ‘I am pure Consciousness’ with the emphasis rightly placed on ‘I’ and not upon Consciousness it amounts to a regular process of relaxation, and the brain cells do not move in the least. On the contrary, even casual ailments, like a head-ache caused by mental or physical strain, begin to disappear after such relaxation.

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Suppose a bucket is lost in a deep well and you dive down to the bottom to make a search. You touch the bucket there at the bottom and come up to the surface. Coming out of the water you say you found the bucket. ***But the bucket was really found while you were under water, where there was no medium to express that experience***. Similarly, Happiness was experienced in deep sleep, but you get hold of a medium to express that experience only after coming to the waking state (only after waking up from deep sleep you feel happy and say “I slept very well”). ***Experience is always beyond the mind***. The personal ‘I’ knows it only when the ‘I’ comes to that realm of the mind. But the experience was clearly beyond the mind.

**What happens when I see an Object?**

We usually say ‘I see an object.’ What does it really mean? ***It has been proved that objects can never exist independent of seeing and that object (or form) and seeing are only synonyms***. Therefore, the expression ‘I see an object’ is meaningless. There is nothing other than myself in the object in question.

***No perception ever stops half way, but always ends in knowledge. At the point of knowing, there is neither perception nor the object perceived. Therefore, you know only knowledge.*** You say you know a thing because you have seen it many times. It is true, in one sense. Because, every time, you have been brought into direct contact with knowledge and not with the object. *Therefore, it only proves that you know pure knowledge.*

During the period of preliminary investigations in the study of Vedanta, you are asked to try separating body and mind from the ‘I’-principle. It is only to make you understand the relative values of the terms. Such a separation is not really possible; because, ***separated from the ‘I’-principle, the other two do not exist at all***. Therefore, they are really nothing but the ‘I’ principle. Vedanta asks you only to recognize this Truth.

Thought is the enemy of one’s own peace! If a stranger falls ill, you do not usually feel sad but if he is related to you in any way, you indeed do. ***Because you relate yourself to him, at least in thought***. Take away thought and you are free, whatever be that thought regarding the world or your own body or mind. Therefore thought alone destroys your peace.

The reality of every object perceived by you is only your own true reality and that object has no independent existence other than yourself. Perception doesn’t cease till the object has been reduced to knowledge or recorded in knowledge. Then the object no longer exists as such.

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**What is the Witness?**

The witness is that which is changeless – the ‘I’ – amongst changes. ***Changes cannot appear without the changeless. But the changeless exists independent of all changes***. ***Changes can take place only in the changeless***. But changes when examined are found to be nothing but the changeless. All changes are in the changeless. But the changeless itself never changes.

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The ignorant man sees only changes in this world and is ignorant of the changeless background behind all changes. So, Guru first tries to show the changeless ‘I’ as distinct and separate from the changing body, senses and mind. ***Then the disciple is asked to take his stand in that ‘I’-principle, and to look from there at the changing world. Immediately, the changes appear an illusion; and he understands that the changes are nothing but expressions of the changeless ‘I’***. And that alone is the changeless itself. So, when I say the world is shining, it is nothing else but myself expressing or shining. Or in other words, ‘I am I-ing.’ Because shining is not a function, but my real nature.

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**Subject and Object are one !!!**

All questions arise because you wrongly stress the objective part of your perceptions, instead of the subjective part which is Consciousness or Atma itself.

When you see an object, see what goes into the make of that object, and not merely its qualities which come and go.

***The ‘I’, through the sense-organs, goes into the make of the object.***

***The ‘I’, through thoughts, goes into the make of the sense organs.***

***The ‘I’, through Consciousness, goes into the make of thoughts. And***

***Consciousness is nothing but yourself, the ‘I’.***

***In other words, the subject and the object are one.***

Example: A chair is a ‘chair’ by convention alone. It becomes an object when you perceive it. But when you *know* it, its objectivity vanishes, and it becomes knowledge.

The world consists only of perceptions, thoughts and feelings. As soon as any one of these appears, it gets absorbed into yourself as knowledge, thereby destroying completely the objectivity of world.

I am pure Consciousness. Realizing that every object wherever placed is asserting Me, I enjoy Myself everywhere and in everything.

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Problems are of two kinds, fundamental and auxiliary. The ignorant man never concerns himself with the fundamental problem but stays engrossed only with the auxiliary ones and gets lost amongst them. ***The fundamental problem is the identity of the jiva with the body and mind***. All other problems hang upon this central problem. No one else but the Advaitin dares to analyse this Jiva principle directly. ***He successfully eliminates the material part as unreal, from the crude mixture which is called the jiva; and he thus stands identified with the self-luminous life principle in it, which is Atma itself***. Others who follow various other paths also progress to some extent, but do not reach the ultimate Truth. This is because their approach is purely objective. Therefore, he who wants to solve his problems completely and forever must face this fundamental problem first. When that is solved, you will find that all other problems vanish, like mist before the sun.

If during the experience of a dream you ever feel that it is only a dream, you will soon wake up into the waking state. Similarly, if you feel that this waking state is only like a dream, you are sure to wake up to the Reality soon.

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**Practical instruction by which the ‘I’ is visualized.**

In all human activities, there is a fundamental difference between the words expressed and the actual activity. The words ‘I see him’, ‘I hear it’ etc. are quite in order (by order it means “I” comes first and then the activity). But in the actual activity the first and the most important part ‘I’ is lamentably ignored and the activity or the objectivity part alone gets emphasized. This is responsible for all bondage. The only means to liberation is to fill in the omission that you have so ignorantly made.

***In all your daily activities, try to bring in the ‘I’ to the forefront***. If you can succeed in doing this, you have gone a long way towards visualizing the ‘I’. When you do this exercise for some time, you will find that you are that changeless principle in all activity and that the activities themselves change every moment. This clearly proves that action, perception, thought and feeling do not go into your nature at all.

The activities of the ignorant man or the objective part of them usually cloud the ‘I’-principle in him. But this exercise removes all possibility of such a clouding of the ‘I’-principle, since that ‘I’ gets thereby emphasized at every moment.

My role is to remain changeless in the midst of incessant change, or to be unaffected by all opposites, like happiness and misery. To make this possible, one has to understand that one is beyond all opposites and that one is neither the doer nor the enjoyer.

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**How to do Charity?**

***Charity should be spontaneous, unconditional and prompted from beyond the realm of the mind. It should be selfless***.

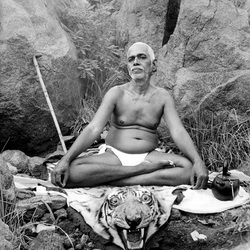
If, after doing any charity, you continue to pride yourself over it or even think about it, you are really degrading yourself to that extent. If you continue to criticize the way in which the amount was utilized, it means that you have not quite actually parted with the ownership of the money.

A conditional charity means that you have engaged the recipient as a servant, to do something for you in your absence according to your instructions, expressed or implied.

***Therefore, the best way to do charity would be to do it and forget all about it immediately.***

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# **Ramana Maharshi**



1st Mangalam verse of Ulladu Narpadu composed by Bhagawan

உள்ளதல துள்ளவுணர் வுள்ளதோ வுள்ளபொரு  
ளுள்ளலற வுள்ளத்தே யுள்ளதா — லுள்ளமெனு  
முள்ளபொரு ளுள்ளலெவ னுள்ளத்தே யுள்ளபடி  
யுள்ளதே யுள்ள லுணர்.

Since our consciousness or awareness of being, ‘I am’, cannot be other than what is (*uḷḷadu*), what is and our awareness of it are one and the same thing. ***That is, what we experience as ‘I am’ is both what is and our awareness of it***. Therefore, the very nature of *uḷḷadu* or what is is to be aware of itself. So in order to be aware of itself, it does not have to think. In fact, since its nature is just to be and to experience that it is (that is, to experience ‘I am’), it is completely devoid of thought, and since it exists within our heart (that is, in the innermost core of ourself) as our heart, it is called ‘heart’.  
  
Since it exists beyond all thoughts or ideas, and is therefore devoid of all thoughts or ideas, how can we think of it or meditate upon it? And how can we experience it by trying to think of it? ***Since thought cannot reach it, in order to meditate upon it we must just be it***: that is, we must be without any thought, as it is, experiencing only ‘I am’. And since it is what we experience as ‘I am’, in order to meditate upon it or to experience it we just have to be without thought as ‘I am’ alone.  
  
Since what is called ‘God’ or ‘*brahman*’ is just *uḷḷadu* or what is, and since *uḷḷadu* is what experiences itself without thought as ‘I am’, in order to meditate upon and experience God or *brahman* we just have to be as ‘I am’, thinking nothing but being clearly aware of ‘I am’ alone. Therefore thinking any thought such as ‘I am *brahman*’ will only take us away from what *brahman* actually is, namely the one thought-free self-aware reality that we always experience as ‘I am’.

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When we focus our entire attention only on ‘I’, thereby ignoring all thoughts or ideas of God or *brahman*, we are actually focusing it on what God or *brahman* really is. That is, since God or *brahman* is not a thought but only what we experience ‘I am’, in order to truly meditate on God or *brahman* ***we must meditate only on ‘I am’ and not on any thought*** — not even on the thought of God or *brahman*.

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You say ‘I AM’. That is it. What else can say I AM? One’s own being is His Power. The trouble arises only when one says, “I am this or that, such and such.” Do not do it - Be yourself (simple be “I am”). That is all.

Does one’s own being require a proof? Only remain aware of your own self, all else will be known.

Do objects exist independently of “I”? Do they say to you “We are”? You see them. You are, and then the objects are also seen. “Without me, these do not exist” - this knowledge is permeation. Owing to the idea “I am the body; there is something in me” the separate objects are seen as if lying outside. Know that they are all within yourself. Is a piece of cloth independent of yarn? Can the objects remain without Me?

Be still and know that I AM GOD. “Stillness” here means “Being free from thoughts”. Where were you in sleep? You were only what you are, but with this difference that you were free from thoughts in sleep. Need to remain free of thoughts in the wakefulness state.

Is the cinema screen affected by a scene of fire burning or sea rising? So it is with the Self. The idea that I am the body or the mind is so deep that one cannot get over it even if convinced otherwise. One experiences a dream and knows it to be unreal on waking. Waking experience is unreal in other states. So each state contradicts the others. ***They*** ***are therefore mere changes taking place in the seer, or phenomena appearing in the*** ***Self, which is unbroken and remains unaffected by them***. Just as the waking, dream and sleep states are phenomena, so also birth, growth and death are phenomena in the Self which continues to be unbroken and unaffected. Birth and death are only ideas. They pertain to the body or the mind. The Self exists before the birth of this body and will remain after the death of this body. So it is with the series of bodies taken up in succession. The Self is immortal. The phenomena are changeful and appear mortal. The fear of death is of the body. It is not true of the Self. Such fear is due to ignorance. Realisation means True Knowledge of the Perfection and Immortality of the Self. Mortality is only an idea and cause of misery. You get rid of it by realising the Immortal nature of the Self.

***There is no difference between Dream and Wakeful state***

Dream is fleeting and unreal. It is also contradicted by the waking state. Ramana Maharshi says the waking experiences are similar. Question occurs but one lives fifty years and finds a continuity in the waking experience which is absent in dreams. For this Maharshi says - You go to sleep and dream a dream in which the experiences of fifty years are condensed within the short duration of the dream, say five minutes. There is also a continuity in the dream. Which is real now? Is the period covering fifty years of your waking state real or the short duration of five minutes of your dream? The standards of time differ in the two states. That is all. There is no other difference between the experiences.

The present experiences are the result of past Karma. If we know the mistakes committed in the past, we can rectify them. Ramana Maharishi says - If one mistake is rectified there yet remains the whole sanchita which is going to give you innumerable births. So that is not the procedure. The more you prune a plant, the more vigorously it grows. The more you rectify your Karma, the more it accumulates. Find the root of Karma and cut it off.

“Holding the mind and investigating it is advised for a beginner. But what is mind after all? It is a projection of the Self. See for whom it appears and from where it rises. The ‘I-thought’ will be found to be the root-cause. Go deeper; the ‘I-thought’ disappears and there is an infinitely expanded ‘I-consciousness’. That is otherwise called Hiranyagarbha. When it puts on limitations it appears as individuals.”

Now, what should one do to overcome the present ignorance. Be eager to have the true knowledge. As this eagerness grows the wrong knowledge diminishes in strength until it finally disappears. D.: The other day you were saying that there is no awareness in deep sleep. But I have on rare occasions become aware of sleep even in that state. M.: Now, of these three factors, the awareness, sleep and knowledge of it, the first one is changeless. That awareness, which cognized sleep as a state, now sees the world also in the waking state. The negation of the world is the state of sleep. The world may appear or disappear - that is to say, one may be awake or asleep - the awareness is unaffected. It is one continuous whole over which the three states of waking, dream and sleep pass. Be that awareness even now. That is the Self - that is Realization - there is Peace - there is Happiness.

If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude that his happiness must increase with the increase of possessions and diminish in proportion to their diminution. Therefore, if he is devoid of possessions, his happiness should be nil. What is the real experience of man? Does it conform to this view? No. In deep sleep the man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Everyone desires to sleep soundly. The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes. One must realize his Self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.

You cannot deny yourself at any time. The Self is ever there and continues in all states. The Self is ever there, there is nothing without it. Be the Self and the desires and doubts will disappear. Such Self is the witness in sleep, dream and waking states of existence. These states belong to the ego. The Self transcends even the ego. Did you not exist in sleep? Did you know then that you were asleep or unaware of the world? It is only in the waking state that you describe the experience of sleep as being unawareness. Therefore, the consciousness when asleep is the same as that when awake. ***If you know what this waking consciousness is, you will know the consciousness which witnesses all the three states***. Such consciousness could be found by seeking the consciousness as it was in sleep. You should remain as if in sleep and be watchful at the same time in the waking state. The state will not be one of sleep, but sleepless sleep. If you go the way of your thoughts you will be carried away by them and you will find yourself in an endless maze.

If thoughts occur, go back tracing the source of thoughts. In that way the thoughts will disappear and the Self alone will remain. In fact there is no inside or outside for the Self. They are also projections of the ego. The Self is pure and absolute. Intellectual understanding can help up to a certain state. Realize that Self transcends the Intellect and the intellect must itself vanish to reach the self.

You see so many objects, plants animals, trees, etc… Do they exist at all apart from the Self? You think that you see them. The thought is projected out from your Self. Find out wherefrom it rises. Thoughts will cease to rise and the Self alone will remain. It is like a cinema-show. There is the light on the screen and the shadows flitting across impress the audience as the enactment of some piece. Similarly also will it be, if in the same play an audience also is shown. The seer, the seen, will then only be the screen. Apply it to yourself. You are the screen, the Self has created the ego, the ego has its accretions of thoughts which are displayed as the world, the trees, plants, etc., of which you are asking. In reality all these are nothing but the Self. “Self if all and all is Self”. If you see the Self, the same will be found to be all, everywhere and always. Nothing but the Self exists.

Ramana Maharshi’s response to a devotee who asked about contemplation. Ramana’s answer was - When a man dies the funeral pyre is prepared and the body is laid flat on the pyre. The pyre is lit. The skin is burnt, then the flesh and then the bones until the whole body falls to ashes. What remains thereafter? The mind. The question arises, ‘How many are there in this body - one or two?’ If two, why do people say ‘I’ and not ‘we’? There is therefore only one. Whence is it born? What is its nature (*swaroopa*)? Enquiring thus the mind also disappears. Then what remains over is seen to be ‘I’. The next question is ‘Who am I?’ The Self alone. This is contemplation. It is how I did it. By this process attachment to the body (*dehavasana*) is destroyed. The ego vanishes. Self alone shines.

Consciousness alone exists. During meditation when the attention is directed towards the Self, the thoughts die down of their own accord. Meditation can be directed to different objects, but when directed to Self it is turned to the subject. When we are free of thoughts we are naturally blissful. The gap between two thoughts is our True State, it is the Real Self. Get rid of the thoughts. When the Thinker is sought through Self Enquiry, Thoughts disappear. True answer to the question “Who am I” does not come in thoughts. All thoughts disappear – even the thinker himself disappears.

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“The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their *prarabdhakarma* (destiny to be worked out in this life, resulting from the balance sheet of actions in past

lives). Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try as you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to prevent it. This is certain. The best course, therefore, is to remain silent.”

Sri Bhagavan was uncompromising in his teaching that whatever is to happen will happen, while at the same time he taught that whatever happens is due to *prarabdha*, a man’s balance sheet of destiny acting according to so rigorous a law of cause and effect that even the word ‘justice’ seems too sentimental to express it. He refused ever to be entangled in a discussion on free will and predestination.

Bhagavan said explicitly: “***All the actions that the body is to perform are already decided upon at the time it comes into existence: the only freedom you have is whether or not to identify yourself with the body***.”

If one acts a part in a play, the whole part is written out beforehand and one acts as faithfully whether one is Caesar who is stabbed or Brutus who stabs, being unaffected by it because one knows one is not that person. ***In the same way, he who realizes his identity with the deathless Self acts his part on the human stage without fear or anxiety, hope or regret, not being touched by the part played***. If one were to ask what reality one has when all one’s actions are determined, it would lead only to the question: Who, then, am I? If the ego that thinks it makes decisions is not real and yet I know that I exist, what is the reality of me? This is the real quest.

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What am “I”? What is this sense of “I”? The source of the “I” thought has to be enquired into. The false “I” is the obstruction which has to be removed in order that the true “I” may cease to be hidden. The body-consciousness is the wrong “I”. Give it up. *If you observe awareness steadily, this awareness itself as Guru will reveal the truth*.

Enquiry of “Who am I” means finding the source of “I”. When that is found, that which you seek is accomplished.

“Who am I” is the best Japa. What could be more concrete than the self? It is within each one’s experience every moment. Why should he try to catch anything outside, leaving out the self? Let each one try to find out the known Self instead of searching for the unknown something beyond.

“Concentrate on the Seer and not on the Seen. All that you see is false and the Seer alone is true”.

The mind is born of the ego. The ego rises from the Self. Search the source of the ego and the Self is revealed. That alone remains. In truth the ego has no free will, because there is no ego. But on the level of apparent reality (which is the false reality) the ego consists of free will – it is the illusion of free will that creates the illusion of the ego.

The mind is only the aggregate of thoughts. Thoughts cannot exist but for the ego. So all the thoughts are pervaded by ego (aham). Seek wherefrom the “I” rises and the other thoughts will disappear.

To bring about peace means to be free from thoughts and to abide as Pure Consciousness. When thoughts arise, see whose thoughts they are. They will vanish. They have their root in the single “I-thought”. Hold to it and they will disappear.

The degree of freedom from unwanted thoughts and the degree of concentration on a single thought are the measures to gauge spiritual progress. The habit makes us believe that it is difficult to cease thinking.

In sleep (deep sleep) there was no world, no ego (no limited self), and no trouble. Something wakes up from that happy state and says “I”. To that ego the world appears. Being a speck in the world a man wants more and gets into trouble. How happy he was before the rising of the ego! Only the rise of the ego is the cause of the present trouble. Let him trace the ego to its source and he will reach that undifferentiated happy state which is sleepless sleep. The self remains ever the same, here and now. There is nothing more to be gained. Because the limitations have wrongly been assumed there is the need to transcend them.

If keenly observed what the feeling is which now shines as “I”, an experience of a new clear and fresh knowledge of one’s existence alone will be experienced.

When we watch wherefrom the “I” thought, the root of all the thoughts sprints, we are necessarily watching the source of breath also, as the “I” thought and the breadth rise from the same source.

# **Jean Klein (I am)**

Simply observe yourself. This allows us to take note of our physical reactions, our mental attitudes and patterns and our motivations at the exact moment they appear. It involves no evaluation, no analysis which is based on memory. At first the observer might find it difficult to be impersonal, to free himself from evaluating. He tends to emphasize the object and thus become its accomplice. Later, however, observing itself is emphasized and becomes more natural, more frequent. There comes a time when a neutrality installs itself between the observer and what he observes, and both poles lose their driving force. There is silence, we no longer nourish the conditioned object.

You must simply observe yourself. Soon attention will shift to thisobservingand not the object you observe. You will *be* attention,attentionwithout object. This might seem to be meaninglessway to talk about attention because we are accustomedto being attentivetowards something. But pure attention isabsolutely empty of all direction. It is not focused on an object,it is free of any memory. It is simply expanded alertness.

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Objects cannot be the cause of our Joy. The object fully satisfies us for a short time during which we are back in our intrinsic nature (pure being), fulfillment. At the moment of fullness there is no awareness of an object. Thus the object cannot be the cause of our experience. It is essential to come to know these moments of joy without object. We habitually attribute a cause to joy, we turn joy into an object because memory links the two together, but in reality they are of two entirely different natures. In reality we need to realize that the object is consumed in the joy of our being.

Be alert in those moments when a desire has been fulfilled and an action completed. Be attuned to these moments. They will give freshness to your desire to be. Once the mind is free from anxiety, fear and dissatisfaction, you will see that your only true desire is to be. This desire is completely free from agitation and dispersion.

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It is only through silent awareness that our physical and mental nature can change. This change is completely spontaneous. If we make an effort to change we do no more than shift

our attention from one level, from one thing, to another. We remain in a vicious circle.

There is no controller, no selector, no personality making choices. In choiceless living the situation is given the freedom to unfold.

Simply be aware of your mental functions. Observe how you function without the slightest idea of changing anything. Vigilance purifies the mind and sooner or later will place you knowingly beyond it.

You must turn to this impersonal background as often as the opportunity beckons. Take note that your attention is constantly turned either towards objects or to ideas. A sense of being without qualification is completely unknown to you. Become the spectator, become aware of the natural flow of life, your motives, actions and what results from them. Observe the walls you have built around yourself. As you become more aware of your body and mind you will come to know yourself. As this image of things as you believe them to be subsides, you will have a clear insight of what you are — something quite other than a product of the mind. You will gradually feel less and less involved in whatever comes up and one day you will discover yourself to be in the perceiving. Once you free yourself from the idea, “I am my body” and the consequences of this idea, you will awaken to your natural state of being. Give yourself up entirely to this discovery.

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A willful ego hinders you from being. The witness must enter upon the scene, enabling the ego to be recognized for what it is, an object. This witness is a pedagogical device that opens the door to being. The ego cannot “know” itself because it identifies with what it thinks, feels, experiences. For the ego, there is nothing but resistance, defense, agitation. It

is the witness that shines forth and shows up the ego for what it is, an illusion.

The contemplative witnessing state leads us to discover what we are not. We become aware of our body and thought patterns, the reasons that motivate our actions of which we were previously scarcely conscious. When we observe thought without interference

or evaluation, without reference, the thought vanishes in the observing. As the emphasis is no longer on the thought process and content but on the observing itself this witness state becomes a purification, a letting go, without there being a person who purifies or lets go. A whole world of unsuspected energies releases itself. Mental activity ceases to be agitated and spontaneously follows its natural course. We discover ourselves in attention. We completely abandon the “I am this, I am that,” reflex. This attention transcends the experience and the experiencer. It is pure awareness.

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The world exists because you exist, but you are not the world. Objects of consciousness, names and forms, are the world. But reality, ever still, is beyond them. It is purely by reflex that you insist upon the name and form, and thus reality escapes you. There is nothing outside consciousness. The universe, your personal I—all appear within it. The imagination has separated us from this awareness, this consciousness, and we have surrounded ourselves, closed ourselves in with fears, concepts and images. The waking state and dream state are both imposed upon this still awareness which we all have in common.

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What you do is of no importance whatsoever; what matters is the way in which you do it, your inner attitude. The role you play on the world’s stage has no meaning other than the clear-sightedness with which you play it. Don’t lose yourself in your performance - this only blurs the vision of your inner being. Disinterested action does not bind you but, on the contrary, leaves you entirely free. Live in the moment, simply be. Making a choice depends upon memory and easily becomes slavery. Live as being and you will awaken to bliss.

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You are always witnessing your actions, so don’t try to witness. Witnessing is not a function and cannot be represented. It is extremely important that you realize that you are the witness and that you cannot try to be it. It is enough that you become fully aware that you are the witness, for that eliminates the old patterns and the habit you have of considering yourself to be the thinker or doer.

When you act you are one with the action, it is only afterwards that the ego appropriates the act from which it was absent, and says “I have done this.” At the moment of acting there is only acting, without an actor. Once the interfering subject is recognized as nonexistent it disappears. What remains is pure consciousness. Without the ego subject there can be no subject/object relation so that what appeared to be an object can no longer rightly speaking be one.

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What do you want to improve? You are perfect; uncover the person who feels something is missing, and what remains is perfection. What is false disappears of its own accord, once it has been seen as false. You identify yourself with your body and your mind and because of this you want to improve. You will be dominated by these instruments just as long as you believe in them.

The moment you no longer believe you are the body and mind the energy used up in this error will be freed. Leave the mind and body free to be what they are and you will no longer be their slave. They are only fragments of the whole which you are. Simply take note of your imperfections and this awareness will take care of them. Once you understand that you are not the body and the mind, you can then accept whatever happens.

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Perception itself is non-dual, it is one with the awareness within which it appears. A perception is the first message given by the senses before the brain names it or the psychological mind qualifies it. Most people’s perception of their bodies is atrophied (wasted or neglected) because they go away from the perception and immediately conceptualize it. The perception is always in the present, immediate, but conceptualization is memory. Most of the time we feel and function through memory. In everyday life we rarely give sensations time to make themselves felt. We prematurely intervene, conceptualizing and qualifying them. Perceptions and concepts cannot exist simultaneously and we tend to cut the perception short before it has fully flourished.

Awareness of oneself is NOT as perception. It is vital that you understand that awareness can never become an object; it is neither outside nor inside, it is free from time and space. It is the vastness, the container, in which all states, all objects appear. It is your nearest and can never be perceived as the eye cannot see its seeing. The ultimate knower knows itself by itself. It needs no agent to be known. Awareness is not a perception. It is an apperception (direct perception that doesn’t go through the mind).

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When a perception is pure, there is no memory. For example, I can direct my attention towards the flower and think that I feel it but I do not really feel it, I have only provoked memory. If, on the other hand, I could remain present to the flower and not refer to the past, to memory, the flower would appear as much more than I have stored in my memory. It would surpass all expectation, appearing in its fullness before my innocent eye. You need to remain present without letting memory intervene.

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The ego itself is no more than a thought and two thoughts cannot take form simultaneously. So identification with the ego only takes place once the thought concerning the object has subsided. Then it claims this thought as its own. The sense of ownership, “I saw it, I did it,” comes after the fact and has nothing to do with the fact. Once this mechanism becomes clear, you realize that the identification you previously took to be real is but an illusion. You neither own nor are a slave to the situation. Your true nature transcends it. Silent awareness is not a state but is the continuum in which all states, all things appear and disappear.

What you take to be reality is only a concept arising from memory. Memory arises from the mind, the mind from the witness, the witness from the Self. You are the witness, the onlooker standing on the bank watching the river flow on. You do not move, you are changeless, beyond the limits of space and time. You cannot perceive what is permanent, because you are it.

Whatever you do you are always consciousness, it cannot be otherwise. Confusion invades you once you believe yourself to be the doer, the thinker, the willer; but in reality you are purely the witness of your actions.

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We divide time into determined periods that we call past, present and future, but when we think of the present it is already part of the past (this is very important to understand – what we think of the present is something already happened and is now the past). The only present that really exists is presence. The notion of time comes into existence as thoughts succeed one another. Silent consciousness is ever present, whether we are thinking or not. If consciousness is not ever present, how could we possibly talk of an absence of thought?

We know time only as a succession of thoughts, based on memory. When we clearly recognize memory as being only a thought, the illusion of time leaves us.

Without an object there is no subject, nor subject without an object. When we are actually perceiving, the subject is absent, it is only afterwards that we say: “I have seen, I have heard.” The subject and object are two separate thoughts. We can only entertain one thought, physical activity or sensorial perception at a time.

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We often try to master the mind, to quiet it through concentration, but with clear-sighted vision we soon realize that concentration and distraction belong equally to the divided mind. We cannot possibly master the mind by means of the mind. Concentration only gives rise to a fixation, imprisoned like a canary in a cage. Silent awareness is beyond dispersion and concentration. Once seen in this light, the mind gives up striving and agitation dies away, giving way to living presence. If we succeed in stopping thoughts by concentration we nonetheless remain in a state of conflict. When the mind is calmed in this way of concentration, we perceive an emptiness, a feeling of quietness which might mistakenly lead us to believe we had attained the ultimate. It is essential to accept that our true Self is never to be found in a perception, in an object. We can never look in the known for what is beyond the known. If we have a preconceived idea of the ultimate we will try to attain it. This striving itself then becomes the major obstacle. So we must meditate on the sayings of the guru and let their content guide us to non-objective experience. When the object is no longer the center of our attention, attention leaves the object and is reabsorbed into the ultimate subject. This experience is lived quite beyond the ordinary dual relationship of subject and object.

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The world in itself cannot be the cause of conflict. We are the ones who build it up out of nothing. Just as long as a man considers himself to be his body, he is a slave to his glands, his bodily functions, his mental projections, to what we could call his conditioning. But if he recognizes the fact that his body has no reality in itself, that is to say, no independence whatsoever, that it is entirely dependent on the perceiver, he comes to realize that the body is no more than an object. In this realization he is no longer an accomplice to the body he inherited. He will see that he is perfect harmony. This corresponds to an impersonal point of view. There is an unfolding, where the body will discover its inner wisdom, consciousness.

All perceptions are objects perceived in consciousness. Fear is therefore an object, a perception. Before we name it there is no fear, there is only the direct perception, the sensation. Naming it as fear is a mental concept or label. Once we name it we lose touch with the perception and live in the concept, the label, for concepts and perceptions cannot coexist. The fear is conceptualized by the relative subject (mind is the relative subject) which is also an object. This subject has no existence in its own right, it only exists within given circumstances.

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Perceptions are perceived in the consciousness. Perceiving is not a function. Consciousness is perceiving. You cannot perceive the perceiving because you are it.

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Once profoundly convinced that you are neither the doer nor the thinker, you will no longer be restless. Only an object, the insecure ego, can be restless and anxious. You will become aware of a host of energies never dreamed of before. Your relationship with those

around you will be perfectly harmonious for you will no longer be seeking a result nor expecting anything in return. You will naturally act for the best, allowing only the circumstances to suggest to you. All action is brought about by numerous factors and you are only one of them. Once you have understood the part which is yours to play, you will be fully capable of creating a society held together by relationships which do not bind but, on the contrary, free you.

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First of all you must realize that nobody lives, there is just life. It is the mistaken belief that there is a personality alive which drives you to look for security in objects, to maintain a feeling of continuity, to try and dominate life. The idea of being the doer of your actions is the one and only pitfall preventing you from really living. Life is free, without fear, it follows its natural course. Attune yourself to life, be one with it.

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Whatever we do or think, we *are* awareness, so why try to be or think it? This awareness is present in deep sleep and in the interval between two thoughts. The pure consciousness we name “I am” is beyond mind and body. It is not subject to discontinuity. All sensation and facts are entirely dependent upon this pure reality. We can imagine absence of feeling, absence of perception but never absence of consciousness.

Perceiving is entirely independent of the perceiver and of the perceived object, which are but concepts. Perception is living, the only reality, now. Each perception is a non-dual experiencing of pure awareness. Subsequently we may say: “I thought this or that,” or “I heard a chord in C major” but at the actual time, there was no thought, only the perception

appearing in the “I am.” With deep conviction, this fact will take root within us and we will no longer need to make an effort to remember it. It is this true understanding that turns the “I am” into a reality.

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You are not the doer, the thinker that rejoices and suffers. Take this for a fact and do not try to be a spectator, to be detached. The fact that you can recall your previous acts proves that you were a witness to them. So above all do not *try* to be a witness—this would only be projection, and would keep you in the frame of ideas and expectations. If you accept this a change will come about within you, probably without your even realizing it at the time it occurs.

The witness is only a crutch to bring you to understand that you are not a doer. Once you are free from doership there will be a change of axis and the energy once directed towards the object will shift to the subject aspect, to the witnessing. In the end all residues of subjectivity dissolve and the witness with them. You discover yourself as that in which the object and subject exist, but you are neither one nor the other. Then there is only living silence.

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Your true nature is obscured because you believe yourself to be independent, a separate entity. This is what binds you and keeps you living in the pleasure-pain cycle.

Who is this I? Nothing other than the mind. And who knows the mind? The true “I.” The mind is simply an activity which comes and goes. The witness records this lack of continuity: body and mind are only perceptions and concepts. Silent non-directed attention

reveals this to you and as a result you are filled with living presence: you live in awareness, which is sacred. This is your true nature.

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Problems cannot be solved through choosing and deciding. Opinions arise from the fractional mind. When the I is absent the situation presents itself to you as a collection of facts. When there is no one involved in these facts right action appears spontaneously. Seeing all the facts calls for acceptance. Where there is no longer psychological involvement there are no opposing factors and therefore no choices of some facts, some elements over others. Acceptance does not come from the body-mind, it comes from our wholeness. Once all the elements of the situation are welcomed in our acceptance free from qualifying, the situation itself calls for action, but we do not go to it already armed.

Acceptance is our inherent state, non-acceptance is artificial, fabricated. We do not need to force ourselves to accept, simply recognize this fact. If you see this non-acceptance clearly at different moments of the day, you will be outside the process. The energies thus fixated in non-acceptance or dispersed in various methods of escape will return to their source. Once you live in your natural state of observing, your acts will no longer leave any trace within you. You will know when the situation has been totally accepted, fully experienced because you feel entirely free from it. It appears within your freedom.

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The timeless presence, the background behind and between perceptions, thoughts, is pure consciousness. Thinking, perceiving is functional consciousness. Pure consciousness is continuous, its functioning is discontinuous. Body and mind are for functional consciousness,

that it is born and dies, but pure consciousness is before we are born and never dies.

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We cannot think of Consciousness because we are it. Things are lost in consciousness but consciousness is not lost in them. Thus activities go on and we remain firmly established in our true being.

There is nothing to be found, nothing to achieve. Searching and wanting to achieve something are the fuel for the entity you believe yourself to be. Don’t project an idea of reality, of freedom. Be simply aware of the facts of your existence without wanting change. Seeing things in this way will bring you a state of deep relaxation both physical and psychological. Even this state becomes an object of perception and dissolves in your observation where there is no longer observer or state observed.

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Deep sleep is found in consciousness. Deep sleep is closer to your natural non-state than the waking or dreaming states because it is without ego not in the subject/object relation. The experience of deep sleep is a profound reminder of our being. This reminder is still an organic memory because all our physical structure is struck by the peace of living in non-volition. This reminder of presence invites us to inquire, to meditate.

It is an instantaneous apperception that your total being is always present, always in the “now.” As our psychosomatic structure is affected by the insight we qualify it as peace, joy, plenitude, but these are symbols, pointers to describe an experience which is lived beyond description.

The unknown is the closest to us, too near to be perceived. It is closer than picking a flower as the Upanishads say.

*How can we destroy this illusion that makes us believe we are the person?*

You will recognize this illusion through investigation. Everything you take to be personal, everything the I creates or repeats, is false. Liberation consists in being free from the me. Understanding this is instantaneous, total, without return. It is a sudden opening to a new dimension which leaves us in silent plenitude where there is no one who claims and no one who suffers.

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When you think of the present moment it is already part of the past. So all your qualifications and feelings about life are already past.

When we live without qualifying we live in the moment, the eternal present “now.” Here, in the absence of thoughts of the past and longings for the future, we are in our fullness. From fullness flows love and all actions come out of love.

Presence is your real nature in which all appears. Because you identify with your thoughts instead of presence, you feel limited, restricted. In freeing yourself from this restriction you come to live your limitlessness. Then everything that happens in your life will have new meaning.

A man always speaks of himself as an I and gives this I many roles: I run, I eat, I’m hungry, I’m sitting, sleeping. All these activities refer to the body he firmly believes himself to be. He also says: I remember, I think, I’m surprised, worried, etc., Thus he also takes himself to be his thoughts. Here the I-image identifies with the body and the mind. But if we observe things more closely, we soon come to realize that it is the body that is doing the acting and the mind the thinking. These are the tools of consciousness which function without an I image.

We can only know and remember what we have already experienced, something that happened to us, a thought we had, or something we did. When thinking or doing, there is only thinking or doing, nothing else. In the moment of doing something there is no doer. The mind and the object of its perception are not two. The world and the mind are not different. They are discontinuous but appear in the present continuum which is silent awareness, so that in the end we could say that everything is awareness.

In the state of deep sleep, the ego is not involved and the body and brain continue to function. There is only the pure awareness that is present when the I-image is absent, when we are free from all thought constructs. It is from this awareness that statements arise such as “I slept well.” Consciousness is its own light, it does not need a vehicle. Objects, on the contrary, depend entirely on consciousness. They could not otherwise be perceived.

Consciousness knows itself by itself. Once we clearly recognize this truth we are freed from our mental framework and the true I knowingly reveals itself.

Look, when someone asks you, “Are you alive? Are you conscious?” you immediately say “Yes” without having to think. You don’t refer to any feeling or representation first. This spontaneous “Yes” comes from the deep conviction that you are consciousness.

When the mind is free from all desire to become, it is at peace and attention spontaneously shifts from the object to the ultimate “subject,” a foretaste of your real Self. Be vigilant, clear-sighted, aware of your constant desire to be this or that and don’t make any effort.

Really going with the flow of life is “passive-active,” passive in that the ego, the personality is completely absent, there is no intention, will, goal or motive. But active in that in the absence of the ego you live in your presence, your awareness and all your energies and talents are liberated. You are alert, adequate to every situation, always vigilant, ready for

anything. It is a state without choice, where action appears out of the situation and non-action also appears as action. In awareness there is no thought of action or not, you simply function in the moment itself.

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# **Shirdi Sai Baba**

# Original Photos of Shirdi Sai BabaOriginal Photos of Shirdi Sai Baba

Do not be misled by what you see around you or be influenced by what you see. You live in a world which is a playground of illusion, full of false paths, false values and false ideals. But you are not part of that world.

You must be a lotus unfolding its petals when the sun rises in the sky, unaffected by the slush where it is born or even the water which sustains it.

What matters is to live in the present, live now for every moment is now. It is your thoughts and acts of the moment that create your future. The outline of your future path already exists, for you created its pattern by you past (Prarabdha Karma).

Man is lost and is wandering in a jungle where real values have no meaning. Real values can have meaning to man only when he steps on to the spiritual path, a path where negative emotions have no use.

***I am formless and everywhere. I am in everything. I am in everything and beyond. I fill all space. All that you see, taken together, is myself. I do not shake or move.***

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# **David Bingham**

David Bingham is the author of “Effortless Being”. Below are extracts from the book.

For much of your childhood, as you played and created, you still functioned from effortless being. Instead of using the mind to make decisions, intuition guided your experience.

You’ll notice how very young children first refer to themselves in the third person. If Jane sees her face in a photo she will say “That’s Jane,” not “That’s me.” Young children label the body just as they would a chair or a hat. The experience of the body they see in the mirror holds no more significance than the appearance of other objects.

But as you grew older, more and more concepts were introduced that placed greater importance on your body and mind. Everything from the education system to the healthcare system to the entertainment system reinforced that you are nothing more than a separate, limited individual. And as you consented to more concepts, you functioned less from effortless being and your intuition, and you eventually became mind predominant.

You forgot that you are the impersonal, infinite ocean of beingness.

Remember the mind is simply a collection of concepts. What you are, infinite being, is concept-less, time-less, attribute-less. You cannot find it with the mind.

It would be like a character in a virtual reality game finding the person wearing the headset (WoW!!! What an analogy to explain that Mind cannot find our True Nature!)

Right now you have the ability to realize your true nature by noticing what is arising in your field effortlessly, just as you did as an infant. Are there any thoughts arising in this moment? Notice how the thoughts are appearing effortlessly. There's nothing you’re doing to initiate them, they are arising without any effort. Notice the thoughts impersonally. Instead of thinking, “I hear my thoughts,” just notice that thoughts are arising.

Are there any sensations or emotions arising at this moment?

Notice how they, too, are arising effortlessly. You’re not doing anything to create them, and they do not belong to you. They are just arising. Without effort.

Are there any sounds arising at the moment?

Notice how sounds also arise effortlessly and in the same awareness as thoughts and sensations. Any sense that something is “within me” or “outside of me” are concepts you’ve been taught. Notice how everything is arising equally in the same field of awareness. When you do this you are functioning from effortless being, from unity consciousness. That is the only place sensations can be noticed fully and directly.

Directly notice that the sound is arising effortlessly. You’re not doing anything to create it. There is just effortless awareness of it. Notice it impersonally. You don’t have to think about it for it to be. It’s just arising in awareness.

Then there is the option to engage the mind. The way we engage the mind is to comment with words.

Now use the mind to comment on or describe the same sound as before. You may even say your comment out loud, something like, “It’s the sound of my neighbour’s lawn mower,” or “It’s a low-pitch noise to my left.” When you do this you activate the mind.

So you can see that the sound you described is just a sensation arising effortlessly. It’s effortlessly known. You are not initiating anything. You are not making that sound happen. The mind is not required. And then you have the option of consenting to utilizing the mind and its concepts. That’s what you did when you provided commentary, which is a bit like putting a car into gear. It creates motion.

So when you are seeing that everything is arising effortlessly, including the mind chatter and emotions, that’s it! That is functioning from effortless being. To see that you are not the mind, but instead that which is aware is self-realization. It’s impersonal, timeless, and effortless. People often remark that it’s so simple. So simple in fact, that it’s often overlooked.

So there’s what you are, and then you have the option of engaging the mind. Seeing this difference is the end of seeking.

Where we’ve gotten into trouble is in believing that everything we experience comes through the mind, when, in fact, it’s being registered directly in awareness first. The sound of the neighbour’s mower is just a sensation effortlessly arising, but seen through the mind it can seem like an annoyance and lead to all sorts of drama. The mind is meant to be a useful tool that we can access when needed, but instead it has become our identity.

You can repeat the above exercise with all sensations—taste, pain, the sound of a voice—none of these are created by you. None of these are personal to you. There is first awareness of them, then there is the option to make them personal.

Now you can see the distinction between effortless being and engaging the mind, and it’s in this distinction that you are able to unplug your energy from the mind. This means instead of being a slave to thoughts and emotions, you can return to being guided by infinite being and allow life to unfold in magnificent ways…effortlessly.

# **Mooji**

When the Presence “I am” remains without association the attention an Beingness are effortlessly One and the Self is spontaneously revealed.

**Stay as the ‘I Am’ (Practice)**

We are all familiar with the sense of being. Without practicing anything, we spontaneously refer to ourselves as ‘I.’ Each person can confirm, *I am, I exist*. *Am* means “to exist, to be.” The sense of existence is naturally present and feels totally comfortable. It is the beginning of perception, and it functions during the waking state as the effortless witness and observer of all that arises.

This feeling *I am, I exist* is the natural untaught way through which we recognize our existence.

But who is the ‘I’ that *am*, the ‘I’ that exists? Let’s look together. The practice of self-inquiry is powerful enough to take you all the way from identification with the body to unshakable and lasting peace.

***Start with the feeling I exist***. It takes no time, for it is already naturally here before any thoughts arise. It is no distance from you, so you don’t have to go to it.

***Don’t look for the ‘I am’—you are the ‘I am’! It is naturally here as consciousness. Just be self-aware.***

Don’t let this natural feeling of presence combine with any other concept, thought, or intention. All intentions such as *I want to accomplish such-and-such*, *I hope this inquiry pans out*, or *I want to become enlightened* should be left aside. ***Stay with the vibration of presence not merely the words, but the intuitive, subjective sense of being—I am, I am here***. That’s all. The mind may creep in and say, “Well, I don’t *see* anything; this isn’t working out,” and then it will mischievously start playing the usual distracting person-noise to draw away your attention. But you just remain in the sense of being, *I exist*. If the attention starts to drift off, don’t worry. Just bring the attention back to the simple ‘I am.’

Practice this inquiry for short periods of about five to seven minutes at a time. You can do this with eyes open or closed, while seated or while walking— it doesn’t matter. In the beginning, you may find it easier to just sit by yourself. Try to find a space and time when you are least likely to be disturbed, though this is not a condition or requirement. Remember: wherever you are, the sense of presence must be there. It is there without any effort at all. The fact that you can know you are alive and awake is because the sense ‘I am’ or presence is there first.

Stay with the natural sense ‘I am,’ the feeling of being. In the beginning you may feel tired, as though you are having to make a great effort to keep this sense ‘I am’ from mixing with other

thoughts. Other thoughts come and want to play, but do not engage them. Just be with the ‘I’ feeling.

Gradually, with a little practice, you will see that the sense ‘I am’ stays by itself, without intrusion, and you will start feeling a sense of expansiveness and peace. A natural feeling of wanting to stay more in this state will develop, but just start out like this, with brief periods of five to seven minutes of self-observation.

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There is only one “I” as all the beings refer to themselves as “I”. There can be no “you” or “others” before the “I”. “I” is the first and its relative to “I”, the sense “you” come. Actually there is no you. There is only “I” because all beings are aware only of “I”. So you come in when the “I” takes another body to be another self but all selves including an ant or a worm have the intuition “I” they know that they exist. I means “I am” or “I exist”.

“I” is there before anything else can come. This is the consciousness.

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# **J. Krishnamurti**

Jiddu Krishnamurti did not prescribe any methods and was generally against spiritual paths and spiritual authorities including gurus. However, sometimes on rare occasions, he did prescribe a method and give hints and clues about meditation, often when speaking with children at the various schools he visited. This is what is captured here. Here is a wonderful example of how he simply and profoundly explains meditation to a student. It is a rare example. The following excerpt is taken from ‘On Education’.

First of all, sit very quietly; do not force yourself to sit quietly, but sit or lie down quietly without force of any kind. Do you understand? Then watch your thinking. Watch what you are thinking about. You find you are thinking about your shoes, your saris, what you are going to say, the bird outside to which you listen; follow such thoughts and enquire why each thought arises. Do not try to change your thinking.

See why certain thoughts arise in your mind so that you begin to understand the meaning of every thought and every feeling without any enforcement. And when a thought arises, do not condemn it, do not say it is right, it is wrong, it is good, it is bad. Just watch it, so that you begin to have a perception, a consciousness which is active in seeing every kind of thought, every kind of feeling. You will know every hidden secret thought, every hidden motive, every feeling, without distortion, without saying it is right, wrong, good or bad. When you look, when you go into thought very very deeply, your mind becomes extraordinarily subtle, alive. No part of the mind is asleep. The mind is completely awake.

That is merely the foundation. Then your mind is very quiet. Your whole being becomes very still. Then go through that stillness, deeper, further - that whole process is meditation. Meditation is not to sit in a corner repeating a lot of words; or to think of a picture and go into some wild, ecstatic imaginings. To understand the whole process of your thinking and feeling is to be free from all thought, to be free from all feeling so that your mind, your whole being becomes very quiet. And 43 that is also part of life and with that quietness, you can look at the tree, you can look at people, you can look at the sky and the stars. That is the beauty of life.

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Meditation is not the repetition of the word, nor the experiencing of a vision, nor the cultivating of silence. The bead and the word do quieten the chattering mind, but this is a form of self-hypnosis. You might as well take a pill.

**Meditation is not wrapping yourself in a pattern of thought, in the enchantment of pleasure. Meditation has no beginning, and therefore it has no end.**

If you say: “I will begin today to control my thoughts, to sit quietly in the meditative posture, to breathe regularly” – then you are caught in the tricks with which one deceives oneself. **Meditation is not a matter of being absorbed in some grandiose idea or image: that only quietens one for the moment**, as a child absorbed by a toy is for the time being quiet. But as soon as the toy ceases to be of interest, the restlessness and the mischief begin again.

Meditation is not the pursuit of an invisible path leading to some imagined bliss. **The meditative mind is seeing** – watching, listening, without the word, without comment, without opinion – attentive to the movement of life in all its relationships throughout the day. And at night, when the whole organism is at rest, the meditative mind has no dreams for it has been awake all day. It is only the indolent who have dreams; only the half-asleep who need the intimation of their own states. **But as the mind watches, listens to the movement of life, the outer and the inner, to such a mind comes a silence that is not put together by thought.**

**It is not a silence which the observer can experience. If he does experience it and recognize it, it is no longer silence.** The silence of the meditative mind is not within the borders of recognition, for this silence has no frontier. There is only silence – in which the space of division ceases.

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Meditation implies, not the orthodox meditation, not the Zen meditation, not the meditation through repetition, all that is stupefying, mechanical, has no meaning. The real meditation is to find out whether the brain with all its activities, with all its experiences, can be absolutely quiet, not force it, because the moment you force it there is again duality. The entity that says, 'I'd like to have a marvellous experience, therefore I must force my brain to be quiet, will it' - you will never do it. But if you begin to enquire, watch, observe, listen to all the movements of thought, its conditioning, its pursuits, its fears, its pleasures, how the brain operates, then you will see the brain becomes extraordinarily quiet. And the quietness is not dormancy, sleep, but tremendously active and therefore quiet. You understand? A machine, a big dynamo that is working perfectly, ticking over, well-oiled, hardly makes any sound, it's only when there is friction, there is noise. So the brain and therefore the body, must be completely quiet.

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Do we clearly understand that the observer is the observed? I observe that tree, but I am not that tree. I observe various reactions as greed, envy and so on. Is the observer separate from greed? ***The observer himself is the observed, which is greed.*** Is it clear, not intellectually, but actually, that you can see the truth of it as a profound reality, a truth which is absolute? When there is such observation, the observer is the past. And when I observe that tree, all that past association with that tree comes into being. I name it as oak, or whatever it is; there is like or dislike. ***Now, when I observe fear, that fear is me***. I am not separate from that fear. So the observer is the observed. In that observation there is no observer to observe because there is only the fact: the fear is me, I am not separate from fear. Then, what is the need for analysis? In that observation, if it is pure observation, the whole thing is revealed, and I can logically explain everything from that observation without analysis.

When I am angry, at the moment of anger, there is no `me' at all; there is only that reaction called anger. A second later, I say, I have been angry. I have already separated anger from me.

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If I want to listen to you, what you are saying, ***I must give my attention***. I mustn’t think what my neighbour is saying; I mustn’t have opinions; I must listen. So total attention is necessary. Don’t say ‘how’ – there is no ‘how’ – but listen. You will have it if you listen, and the listening is the miracle. If you listen, you pay attention completely, to everything.

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# **Self Enquiry and “I am” Meditations**

**A little theory**

A little interlude for theory. What’s going on here? What is self-inquiry attempting to achieve? Briefly, the mind is a set of thoughts which you can think of like a set of filters. Each filter changes the color a bit more. So there’s originally white light — that’s the light of the true, original Self.

Then upon waking there is the thought “I am.” That’s the first filter the light passes through. That’s what gives the possibility of having experiences — there has to be a separation between “I” and that which “I” experience. Without that thought “I am,” that couldn’t happen.

Next, the light passes through other filters of identity. “I am” then touches the mind, the senses, thoughts. No need to be too rigid or scientific about this. These are all connected. It’s not like there’s a particular sequence in which all these necessarily happen.

The important point is that the “I am” thought then begins to associate itself with these other identities. It begins to think of itself as a body, as a person, as having relationships, as being a co-worker or a citizen or a mother or a father or having such-and-such personality and such-and-such likes and dislikes.

But these are all what are called superimpositions (overlays) on the original white light, which, in truth, has never been changed.

Now all of this is just a metaphor — it’s to be taken as a teaching but not too literally. The actual truth is beyond words.

The “I am” thought, which is, after all, just a thought, is painful and binding because of another invisible thought — it’s the ‘veiling’ thought. That is, the fact that the “I am” thought is itself merely a filter for the original pure light, is hidden. There is an invisible thought that ‘covers up’ the fact of the space within which thoughts occur. It hides that space. It hides the reflectivity of thought and perception — the fact that these are all things that occur to us.

Because the veiling thought of forgetfulness (in eastern philosophy it is called “ignorance”) hides the background from us, we take these identifications seriously. Actually, it is not even we who take them seriously; taking them seriously is also a thought. It’s a thought of taking things seriously.

Anyhow, it is this “I am” thought which has gone through all these filters and which sustains itself that is taken seriously because we cannot see its background because of the veiling thought. We are tracing back the “I am” thought back through the all the various filters to its origin in that first filter.

And if we examine it like that, we will ultimately find that it is just a thought. That’s the purpose of self-inquiry. When we see that the “I am” is just a thought, we will see that it’s a filter. If we see that it’s just a filter, then we cannot help but see what it is a filter for. We will then see through the veiling thought and have a glimpse of the fact that the normal “I” is a lie; that what we are is in fact not subject to its limits. We will have a glimpse of the background of the “I,” which is our true Self. In that there is silence, bliss, and peace, and questions do not bother us anymore.

And then usually we’ll fall back, due to habits of mind, into our own old pattern of seeing things. But with repeated effort, it will become easier and easier to stay in the real truth. The real truth is so sweet and free that we gradually stop pursuing the old mental habits, which are based around desires for various things. These desires are based on our limited identification — the thought “I am a person.” Those desires are seen to be painful, even the pleasant ones, because they draw us away from the bliss of our true Self, which is available to us at all times if we can stop distracting ourselves from it. Those thoughts which connect us to our old identity will fade away. Eventually it will become effortless, and we will stop falling back. The piercing of the veil of ignorance will be accomplished.

All these are just words. You will have to see for yourself what it is actually like.

Another way of looking at it is that it is like those illusion cubes that change shape depending on how you look at them. If you look at the lower middle corner, you can make it change perspective. The “I” is like this corner; it is the point where, if focus is pointed, the perspective can be shifted.

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You know that "I am" right now, right? It's obvious. Well, how do you know it? Where is that feeling coming from? Try to find out where this certainty that you are is coming from. Start in your body. Just like if someone asked you where you were feeling cold, and you searched your experience and said "Oh, my feet are feeling cold." In the same way, ask about the feeling of the "I" that you somehow know with certainty.

And every time you think you know where it's coming from, you must ask yourself if you are aware of that thing which you think is the source of the I. If you are aware, you haven't found the real source yet. So you keep going. Anything that we are aware is not the “I”. Its just another Object that the Subject is aware.

If, for example, you say "It's coming from my head" -- well, ask yourself "Well, I am aware of the feeling and sight of my head, right?" Notice that. So where is the "I" that is aware of the head? It's not coming from the head -- it is aware of it. So where is the I feeling? It's just like you notice that there is light in a room, and you're looking for the source of the light. Is it coming from this chair? No. The chair is lit up by something else. Is it coming from that table? Same deal. So keep searching until you find the light bulb. You'll know it when you find it.

You can do it sitting for a set time at first, even just a few minutes, but eventually you must graduate to attempting it at all waking moments. In other words, you must inquire even when you are doing other things — walking, talking, studying, working.

Dedicate a small amount of attention to the task at hand, and meanwhile attempt to inquire. With practice you will be able to balance the two, but put the greater focus on inquiry. If you are worried that you won’t work as well, or won’t work at all, inquire into who has that question/feeling/problem. Ultimately self-inquiry does not exactly require you to give up work, but it may require you to realize that you’re not really the one who decides what work to do.

Be assured that the work that needs to get done will get done, regardless of your pursuit of self-inquiry.

"I am aware that I am aware" is just a thought. It is not your true Self. Who is aware of that thought? "I am." It's so clear, right?

Turn your attention to that clear feeling of "I am" and try to find it. Every waking moment, turn from every thought and feeling back to try to find one who is aware of it.

Why are we saying “try to find”? Because if you think you have focused on the "I am," it is NOT the "I am." It is just a thought. The true "I am" cannot be focused on. You ARE it. When you focus on “I am” it becomes a thought. So if you think you have caught the "I am," look at what you thought you have caught, *notice it is just a thought, and turn to what is aware of it.*

If you are confused by this, ***just focus on the "I am" as best you can every waking moment***, turning from every thought and feeling back to the "I am" who is aware of it. Focus on the "I am" night and day.

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**You are already what you seek**

The idea of self-inquiry is that you are already what it is that you seek. The belief that you are a person, and all the desire-based thoughts, feelings, and actions based on that deeply-ingrained belief — those are the problem. They hide the fact of your true nature. They distract you from an underlying, constant peace.

So the question is how to get rid of those distractions. The answer is that you stop paying attention to them. And that happens over time. When you put in effort to inquire, you will eventually start to touch the real Self. It will be sweet enough that it will eventually become quite easy to stay there rather than allowing the mind to go chase so-called happiness elsewhere.

The basic stages of self-inquiry are a looking into the “I” feeling through the body and then into the mind; then a feeling that one cannot go any further… a kind of impasse. You might see that you are the witness of your thoughts, but not be able to go any further. But the idea that you are a witness is also not true. Are you not aware of being the witness? Yes. Then that fact cannot be you. The witness is just an idea. You cannot be an idea. You are that which is aware of all ideas.

Then you keep trying, keeping the focus on the I, keep going and going, looking with an intensely curious and inquisitive mind: “Who is this I?” It’s not a verbal question that you repeat mechanically like some parrot — it’s an intense inner searching attention, not resting with content with any specific answer. Someone is aware even of the impasse. You look for that someone.

Eventually the penny will drop, the light bulb will be revealed, and you’ll experience what I call the spacious mind — it’s a kind of inversion where what you thought was the “I” actually turns out to be on the inside of the true Self. Everything reveals itself to be perfect and effortless.

If there is peace and clarity then, there will at this point be no question of what to do next. There will simply be peace and clarity.

This is in fact, simply put, the Truth of your being. This is your real Self.

But what will usually happen then is that you will seem to be dragged back before you even know it by your thoughts, your old identity, the old distractions.

You’ll have to repeat the inquiry process over and over to “get back” to the spacious mind, and every time it will get slightly easier. What are you doing? Each time you touch the spacious mind you are re-recognizing the illusion.

At a certain point you will have burned enough of the old habits away that you won’t come back, that your perspective will have been permanently altered.

Another way of looking at that fact is to ask yourself: who is it that keeps going into the spacious self and coming back? Is that you?

A curious, open looking is what self-inquiry ultimately requires. See what is actually there. It requires, however, some time and practice.

**Self-inquiry is ultimately to be engaged in at every waking moment.**

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**Is Self-Inquiry same as Abiding in Awareness?**

There seems to be a technique that some people talk about where they try to ‘stay’ as awareness. ***The reality is that you cannot stay as awareness; that is just a thought***. ***You are awareness.*** Still, any concentration practice can be useful, so do that if you believe it helps. The important thing eventually is to ask yourself who is it that thinks they are abiding in awareness? Who is it that is making the decision to act like that? “I am,” right? And who is that I?

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**Surrender**

Self-inquiry and surrender are complementary processes. Surrender is letting go of all your desire for things to be other than the way they are. Ultimately it is letting go of all effort and of all thinking.

You cannot fully surrender just by trying. You won’t be able to. But surrender even partially is very helpful. And it really simply is the flip side of self-inquiry, because eventually you will be forced to ask: who is surrendering? And what about surrendering surrender? What would that be like?

In parallel, self-inquiry automatically involves surrender. Because as you realize that you are not the doer of actions or the experiencer of the world — that you are not the person that you thought you were — then the thinker, the body, and all the desires connected with those identities will be automatically surrendered, since they make no sense anymore.

Surrender is ignoring thought and therefore falling backwards into the Self. Self-inquiry is chasing the I and by doing that ignoring thought.

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The point is simple: right now, you know that you are. Right? You know "I am reading these words." You know that automatically, instantly, immediately, and it is beyond a shadow of a doubt. So the question is: how do you know that? Where is that absolutely certain feeling of knowledge that "I am" coming from? Where in your field of experience? If someone lit a match under your hand and then asked you where the heat was coming from, you wouldn't have to intellectually think about it ("sometimes matches heat hands and sometimes feet... I wonder which one it is this time?") — you would know, immediately, that it was coming from your hand. Similarly, it's not about thinking about theories of where it could be coming from, but literally trying to feel where that feeling of "I-ness" is coming from. Is it coming from your body? Is it coming from your mind somewhere? Hunt that feeling. And every time you think you've found it ("it's coming from my head") — ask yourself who is aware of that ("who is aware of my head? I am") and then keep going ("but then where is that I coming from?"). So in this way, go deeper and deeper and focus on that feeling. It may be frustrating at first; you may not easily find it. But hold on to that feeling. Stop only when you have a dramatic change of perspective about that "I" — and enter a state of clear peace.... you'll know it when you have it. Then stay in that state. And if you fall out of it, repeat the self-inquiry.

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Grab on to the "I" feeling and hold on to it with a death grip no matter what else happens till you figure out what the hell it actually is. What actually is that feeling? When you say "I," which seems obvious, what are you actually referring to at a deep, felt level? And then of course you knock out all the things you think you are when you notice that "I am aware of them." So when you've eliminated all of those, what's left?

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For some people, breathing exercises can be useful to help concentrate the mind. Then you will have to direct that concentrated mind by inquiring "who is it that is watching this breathing?" “Who am I?" Breathing alone is not enough.

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**Awareness Practice**

To Stay as Awareness, here are the 3 steps to practice:

* ***1st step is to ask yourself - “Am I Aware?”***. Don’t try to come up with an answer using your mind. Instead, just feel the presence of Awareness when you ask the question. Don’t desperately try to hold onto Awareness either. Just sense the feelings of relief, peacefulness and happiness that come with it. Over time your mind will start to become quieter.
* ***2nd step is noticing Awareness***. Once your mind beings to quieten you will start to notice Awareness more automatically without needing to ask yourself if you are aware. Try to focus on the feeling of Awareness as many times throughout the day as you can. Doing this should leave you with a deep sense of peace.
* ***3rd step is to practice staying as Awareness***. To do this you need to modify the way you direct your attention. Normally your attention is on narrow, specific things. You should keep your attention open and wide to stay as Awareness.

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**How to glimpse your true nature very clearly**

The question Who am I? points us to our true nature.

It guides us inward to notice the formless Reality which is ever-present.

Formless Reality is NOTICED.

But what is it that NOTICES?

Pause and reflect.

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Funny enough, it is also the formless Reality which is NOTICING.

***Formless Reality is aware of itself, being***.

This is why it is called awareness of Self.

I, Self, am aware, that I am.

(Being Aware of Being Aware)

--

Now here's something incredible..

In that very moment that you are aware of being, the mind subsides into the heart.

The concepts of personal identity, story, time, journey, progress, and suffering are nowhere to be found.

Don't let the mind downplay this.

It is a HUGE deal.

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**How To Experience (BE) Pure Awareness - Guided Meditation**

You are not a body “having this experience.”

You are not a mind thinking to interpret these words.

You are That in which the mind, body, and world are appearing as a transient experience.

You are That to whom the experience of a body reading a message and the mind interpreting and trying to benefit from that message, is appearing.

Pause and reflect :)

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**How To Detach "I AM" From Thoughts**

To experience our real being, we must separate “I am” from thoughts.

Here’s a teaching that will help us with this. It is by Nisargadatta Maharaj.

"To know what you are, you must first investigate and know what you are not.

And to know what you are not you must watch yourself carefully, rejecting all that does not necessarily go with the basic fact: "I am".

The ideas: I am born at a given place, at a given time, from my parents and now I am so-and-so, living at, married to, father of, employed by, and so on, are not inherent in the sense "I am".

Our usual attitude is of "I am this".

Separate consistently and perseveringly the "I am" from "this" or "that", and try to feel what it means to be, just to be, without being "this" or "that".

Thinking creates an association of “I am” with concepts of the mind and objects of the sense perceptions. In doing so, it is constantly turning “I am” into “I am this.”

A large part of Self inquiry meditation is to keep allowing thinking to sink again and again into “I am.”

Keep relaxing “I am this” into “I am.”

As Maharaj suggested in the teaching above, cleanse “I am” from all concepts of the mind and feel what it means to just be.

Then, we begin to grow in clarity about our true nature.

It may seem difficult and confusing, but it need not be.

“I am” isn’t hidden somewhere that you have to find.

“I am” shines in every experience. It is your sense of being, your felt sense of existence.

Take a moment to feel it now.

You can also try to notice it in all experiences as the sense of aliveness.

You can even bring your attention to the sense of presence, or now.

Notice how when you practice any of these pointers, your mind is still.

“I am this” has relaxed into “I am.”

Surely it is subtle for a little while, but with practice it becomes crystal clear.

Try it out!

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**Whatever Triggers you is your Teacher.**

Relax your expectations of how the outer experience must be and how others should act :)

When we give too much importance to the mind's ideas of what others should and should not do, and what conditions must and must not be present FOR ME to be happy, then we become very contracted, stressed, and miserable.  
  
Worst of all, we really become convinced that our suffering is due to external factors, whereas in truth, the root of it is always internal.

In difficult situations, try to remember that whatever triggers you is your teacher.  
  
Instead of resenting your teachers, appreciate them and forgive them.  
  
Use them to look within and part ways with what is no longer serving you.  
  
See how you could look at the situation differently in order to learn from it and grow spiritually.  
  
That will help you in the personal aspect.  
  
***Inquire what is aware of all external conditions and internal reactions coming and going, while itself remaining unaffected and unmoved?***  
  
That will help you in the spiritual aspect.

When we use our problems, triggers, and inconveniences as our teachers, we keep growing spiritually and live happily in the world.

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"I" might appear to be individual and unique, but it is not.

Only the contents of experience that the "I" **shines in** are unique.  
  
"I" is the sense of identity; the feeling of being; the immediacy of now.  
  
The contents of experience, for example, the body and mind(thoughts, feelings, interests, personality) are unique and individual.  
  
But the "I" that shines in all of them is the **presence of the same, one Self.**

It is like the moon which is one, but its reflection appears in many lakes around the world.

"I" is the presence of the one Self which is reflected in every body/mind dream as "I."

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Notice how thoughts speak **from** the point of view "I" and they only speak about "Our life."  
  
Who are you without this mental narrative? When this narrative about "me" and "my life" subsides for the moment, what am I???

What do I remain AS?

Without mind claiming what I am and what I am not, what am I?  
  
Do I have a form? A name? Am I a sound? A sensation? A thought?  
  
What is "I?" Meditate on this without words. Words only tell stories about the body and mind. In silence, in the **absence of words**, my true nature comes to be known.

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In standard meditation, we are taught to focus our attention on an object, such as the breath. This is good, especially in the beginning, because our attention is so scattered. At first, we need to harness the attention and learn to concentrate it in one place. This helps us rescue our attention from thoughts which project endless concepts.  
  
We learn what it feels to BE without thought; be PRESENT without concept. Gradually, this prepares us to take the next, subtler step from awareness of breath to **awareness of awareness.**  
  
To take this subtler step, reflect on this:The breath is an object **I see**. What is the "I" that sees? Bring "I" into your noticing. This is the cornerstone of Self inquiry meditation.  
  
Instead of focusing on an object that "I" am aware of, the very "I" that is aware is brought into my noticing. The notic**er** becomes the notic**ed**. The notic**ed** is the notic**er**.

Feel into these words. Thinking about this is useless.

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One of the most powerful pointers that you've heard many teachers constantly recommend is focusing and establishing yourself in the sense I am - In the sense of being

There is a sense that “I” exist. There is a sense that “I am”. See what these words are pointing you to. The words are just words, empty labels but the sense is very actual and real. There is a reality to it. It is at the center of your experience. It is where the experience begins. Bring your attention – bring your noticing to the sense “I am”. Don’t associate it with anything. Don't attach it to anything. Its pure presence, “I am” present, “I am aware”, the sense of being that is present is the stamp of reality of the real. Be open to the possibility that this presence is not the body’s presence, it is not the mind’s presence. It is the presence that cannot be named, it has no shape, no form, beyond the realm of experiencing.

Within the realm of experience it announces itself as “I am” and within this presence there is the body and there are thoughts, there is the world. Let the body and the thoughts and the world be as they are but bring your conscious noticing towards just the presence free of objects. Be interested in this sense of being or knowing. Bask not in the words but what they are pointing to.

The mind itself dissolves into its source the moment you acknowledge I am aware. Notice that there is a certain nowness, realness to the sense “I am”. “I am” and “Nowness” are not separate. They are again the stamp of reality.

Carry the presence with you throughout your day. Notice that whatever you are doing, however active your life is – There is always the sense “I am” rather than letting it recede into the background of experience laying dormant neglected covered by the world of concepts.

Bring it into your conscious observation and acknowledge it to be the place of seeing. Make this your spiritual practice regardless of what happens and what doesn’t happen for you.

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**Finding “I” or “Awareness”**

Just feel your hand. Maybe you are going to feel some tingling vibrations, some energy flow may be there, may be heat or cold but forget all these concepts because in reality you don’t know what it feels like. Its just a sense. Without naming it just feel it and be aware of it. Now feel the thing that felt the hand. Feel the feeler. Feel the one that was feeling the hand. No need to search for it as its right there. Find the one that’s feeling. You may keep saying its in heart or head or hand or foot. Keep trying until you get to a point where you say I don’t know.

To repeat just feel your hand. Now feel the one that felt the hand. ***When you say I don’t know and can’t find it that’s you.*** Seeker is seeking and you can’t find and the search ends. You are that!!! Your mind might say what the hell are you talking about or that’s boring that’s not me but that is YOU. That was before your name before body and doesn’t have any location and not appearing in time. Its you and it’s the very thing in which all your experience including your body appears.

If you have trouble finding it right away just feel your hand and see what is feeling the hand. This is “self-inquiry”. When you search for “I” and find it you are going to switch your identification. You will no longer be identified with the body and the mind chatter. You will not be identified with the phenomenal life. You are going to be identified with the unnamable that thing which is the source or Awareness. When you are identified with source magically everything in your phenomenal physical life will change and it will become balanced and harmonious. You are not going to suffer.

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# **Escaping Prison of Time (Simply Always Awake – Angelo Dilullo)**

Take a moment to allow some attention to flow down into the feelings in the body.  Notice the feeling of your feet.  Whether they feel heavy, light, cool, warm or tingly, just *feel* effortlessly into that sensation.  There is no need to put labels on the feeling.  The raw sensation is enough here.  Similarly notice how attention can shift to the feeling in the chest, neck or face.  Is there sensation there?  Any tightness, tingling, fullness?  Any sensation at all no matter what the quality?  Allow attention to rest there.  There is no need to label or wonder if you are “feeling what you are supposed to.”  Wherever attention naturally rests is already correct.  We are just interested the raw sensation.

Now notice that attention can effortlessly move to the sounds in the room.  The hums, clicks, exterior noises, whatever arises.  You may also notice the subtle “ring” that is always present in the ears.  It is pretty quiet so we rarely notice it but if you tune in you’ll hear it.  Now notice you can hear all of those ambient sounds at once.  There is no need to pick one sound out or name any of the sounds.  Attention may rest in a dilated fashion on all sound at once or it may partially move from sound to sound without your direction.  Do you see how effortless this sensing is?

Now you might notice that in the same way that attention can move between sounds in the room effortlessly and spontaneously, it can move between the feelings in the body such as the hands or feet and any sound in the room.  It has that ability to move freely among the various senses.  It does this without holding on or making preferences.  Attention simply moves here and then there.  It doesn’t pick and choose.

As you notice attention move from here to there effortlessly and spontaneously you might notice a *spacious* quality to attention.  Almost as if attention is moving through some invisible weightless fluid.  This spaciousness is not something you can see or feel or hear but it is still there.  Do you sense it?  The experience will be *immediate,* it is not something you have to think about.  Thoughts may arise and attention may move to thoughts but it moves as effortlessly as it moved among sensory stimuli.  So even as attention moves to a thought and back to a feeling or a sound you may notice that this spacious quality of attention remains.  It feels light, free and fluid.  There is almost a joyful quality to how freely it accommodates all of the sounds, sights, thoughts and feelings.  Do you sense this space?  It may feel very subtle at first compared to the senses but that is perfectly OK.  You just need a taste of it, a glimpse of it.  If you feel that you are definitely not sensing this spaciousness at all, then just start the exercise at “So as we begin…” a few paragraphs back.  It may take a few attempts to begin to feel into this colorless, weightless space in which attention and all sensory stimuli move.

Once you have recognized this spaciousness, then just tune in to it a bit.  Do not try to hold it as it is not graspable or solid.  Do not try to see it as it is not visible.  Simply recognize that somewhere in your experience it has become conscious.  As you allow some attention to rest in this spaciousness, the actual *source*of the attention, you will find that it remains even as sounds or feelings arise.  This actually happens not by trying to make it happen or grasping but simply by noticing that as the sounds in the room are recognized, attention flows to them naturally and this space in which all of that is happening remains.  It remains silent, weightless and free.  As attention moves again into the sensation in the feet, the chest or neck, you might notice that the spaciousness is also present.

So as you read on, notice that attention will continue to move from sound to sensation, to thought.  It does this freely and effortlessly.  While you read I want you to simply allow it to be.  Wherever attention moves that is exactly where it is supposed to go.  As you read on we will direct some of your attention to the nature of this spaciousness, but this will be an effortless movement.  Simply read the words and notice how they point to this space.

Notice the quality of the space.  Notice how it is not inside the body and not outside the body.  Notice it doesn’t occupy any specific space and yet it never loses its spacious quality.  Notice it can easily accommodate any sound but it is not altered by any particular sound.  Notice that you cannot put your finger on exactly what it is or label it with the mind and yet it feels very familiar, very close, very intimate with your experience.  Notice that as you tune into the nature of this space it seems to move toward you although you cannot locate it in the room.  Notice how even though you experience sounds, feelings and thoughts, this space remains prominent in your experience.  Notice how peaceful it is.  Notice how it desires nothing.  Notice how it needs nothing.  Notice how it resists nothing.

Do things feel a bit lighter?  Does everything seem a bit quieter?  Is the space still there?  Of course it is.  It doesn’t have to be anything specific does it?  It is not altered in the least by anything it touches is it?  Have you noticed how familiar this space is?  Almost like it has always been here?  Like it has never left you?  It’s almost seems like this space is what attention is actually made out of.  Like this space can be simultaneously pure, free, colorless, weightless space *and* it can become anything that it touches.  It can arise as any sound, any color, any shape, any sensation.

Now, notice how this space is already in the feeling in the hands.  Notice how this space is already in the feeling in the chest, neck and face.  Notice how this space is already in every color and shape arising.  Notice how this space is already in every arising thought.  And while it is already a part of all of these experiences, it also stands untouched, undisturbed, still and free.

You carry this space around with you at all times.   It has actually never left you.  It can seemingly be overlooked but now that you realize you can *intentionally*return attention to it, you can do this at any time.  You never have to force this.  It will feel spontaneous, natural and simple.  If at any moment throughout your day you feel moved to do so, just return some attention to this free, timeless, ever-present space.  If you forget how, then simply reread this post.  After a time you will find it gets easier and more spontaneous, and that it starts to come to you more often.  It might come to you out of the blue in various situations.  It may come when you are alone or with people.  It may come when you are active or at rest.  It may come when there are a lot of thoughts or it may come when your mind is relaxed.  Whenever and wherever this space arises it is the right time and right place.  As this spaciousness becomes more prominent in your life you will start to see it literally everywhere.  ***At some point you will be in unbroken contact with it***.  You will find yourself in in ongoing, unbroken peace.

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