**Nisargadatta Maharaj’s Teachings**

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.

# **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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**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 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'.

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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.

# **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.***

***Consciouness 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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Rupert Spira

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.***

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# **Ramana Maharshi**

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. M.: 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. 4th May, 1938 Talk 489. Another group of visitors was asking the method of Realisation. In the course of a reply Sri Bhagavan said: “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 calledHiranyagarbha. 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 cognised 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 Realisation - 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.