



Revealing the Higher Purpose of Self-Enquiry

Self-enquiry is a valid tool, used both in Advaita and Zen, but it alone cannot produce the event of awakening. Awakening is not the recognition of who we are in the present, but rather the activation of our potential to become our higher self. The error in the usual concept of self-enquiry is the assumption that our pure nature is already present but somehow hidden or unnoticed – that it only needs to be revealed through the act of recognition. However, in truth, our higher self does not yet exist; it needs to be given birth to, and self-recognition is only one aspect of that mysterious process.

It should be clear that in the case of an unawakened person, the one who is performing the act of self-enquiry is the observer. The observer cannot awaken I am, which is the very nature and foundation of our true self, because it is simply too shallow; it cannot access it. In addition, I am is not the essence of the observer; therefore the realization of I am does not emerge as the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' Rather, the logical conclusion to this type of self-enquiry is that the observer becomes conscious of itself. The 'unawakened' observer has the mechanism of self-reference already embedded in itself, but within that mechanism, its own subjective presence is too weak to extract itself from the context of thinking. A combination of self-enquiry and training in concentration should at some point bring the observer to experience itself in separation from the mind. When the observer meets its essence as 'me' and then awakens more deeply to its existence, this is what we call the realization of conscious me. In fact, the awakening of conscious me is the final limit of ordinary self-enquiry. It is as far as me can evolve in itself while remaining disconnected from I am.

The problem with the common application of self-enquiry is that it is used for the wrong purposes; meaning that it is used to justify the false assumptions of non-dual philosophy. This means that as a technique, it was originally designed to demonstrate the illusory nature of our personal self in order to create the event of identification with the universal self (or in Buddhist terminology, no-self). This type of self-enquiry is fundamentally dishonest because it seeks only to validate and affirm its preconceived model of reality. In addition, although it may lead one to sense the illusory nature of the mind and ego-self, it is not correct to then assume that there is no individuality as such. It only means that there is no real individuality yet, and this should ideally inspire one to begin seeking it. Seeing the empty nature of personality does not by itself manifest awakening to our soul or to impersonal existence. To recognize that something is an illusion does not take one into what is real.

In order to grasp the role of self-enquiry, we must distinguish between two dimensions of awakening: energetic and existential. Self-enquiry cannot produce energetic awakening, but it can enable us to recognize who we are within the energetically awakened state. In fact, self-enquiry only really comes into play when we have access to I am, the dimension beyond me. Within this higher context, it allows us to embody I am through meeting the essence of our me as our higher individuality and the true subject to unity with the light of I am. Without access to I am, we cannot recognize our true self because who we are in our pure nature comes into existence through our surrender into the universal reality via the energetic portal of the inner state.

There are three doorways to I am, so there are three centers through which we awaken to our true nature. In each of these three centers – consciousness, heart, and being – we must recognize pure me, which is the deepest essence of our personal consciousness. When the term self-enquiry is used, it can carry very gross connotations and mental associations as if some sustained conceptual investigation is necessary to unravel the essence of our true self. In truth, it is not about enquiring but feeling – an act of direct seeing, being, and knowing. The kind of effort that one has to make in order to recognize oneself is more on the level of opening up a deeper sensitivity and activating the capacity for intimacy with one's own existence. If we do need to employ enquiry, we should contemplate: 'Who is feeling I am?', 'Who is surrendering to I am?', 'Who is feeling unity with I am?', 'Who am I in the state of abiding, or resting, or being absorbed in the inner realm?' Of course, as we have said, one can begin this kind of contemplation only when the door to the dimension beyond me is opened.

The deeper purpose of self-enquiry goes beyond the recognition of who one is; it brings a deeper understanding of our multidimensional nature as well as recognition of the essence of our relationship with the beyond. If one is insensitive, lacks the essential intelligence, or is indoctrinated by the philosophy of non-duality, one will be unable to make the most important differentiation – the differentiation between me and I am. For instance, one can mistakenly think that one is I am and that there is no me whatsoever. There are two scenarios within which this confusion can arise. The first scenario is when I am is present but not embodied; meaning our me is still locked in the identity of the observer, unable to meet the deeper dimensions of itself. Here we become tempted to escape from the discomfort of the excessive duality between the false me and I am by trying to artificially identify with I am. This type of identification is not real: I am is not who we are, so we are unable to embody this condition. We can only program our mind to create an illusion that we experience ourselves in this way.

The second scenario is that somehow – without our conscious cooperation and without awakening to pure me – our me spontaneously merges with I am. In this interesting situation, we are in the right state but still do not know who we are because, within its unity and identification with I am, our me is still not conscious of itself. One can more or less comfortably live in that correct state without knowing oneself, but there are deep consequences to this type of ignorance. While merging me with I am is one of the key



factors in reaching complete awakening, a degree of natural duality should be retained within that unity. That duality constitutes the correct relationship between our individuality and universality. Even after being unified with I am, me remains in a dynamic relationship with the inner realm. It is like being submerged in the ocean: we are one with the ocean, the ocean is all around us, but this is just the beginning of learning how to live within its depths. If that dynamic element is missing, we can easily fall into the pitfall of stagnation and false stillness; we can actually freeze and stop evolving.

Being able to differentiate between me and I am within the state of unity enables us to reach the correct relationship with the universal reality. This differentiation is an act of intelligence that is rooted in the consciousness of the soul and the higher sensitivity of pure me. What is the essence of that relationship? How does me relate to I am if they are no longer separated? They are not separated, but they they are not the same; they are different dimensions that meet in the space of the reality of the oneself. The essence of that relationship is the never-ending journey of surrender of me into the beyond, not because it seeks to reach anything in particular but because such is the nature of reality. If me, within the context of being one with I am, is merely passive, this very passivity represents, from the standpoint of reality, the fundamental resistance to surrender. Surrender is the nature of the soul and the essence of true devotion that flows from the heart of the pure subjectivity of me into the innermost beingness of existence.

Self-enquiry is an extension of the complex process of understanding who we are as a multidimensional being; it goes beyond merely discovering our essence. For instance, after the three centers of the soul are awakened, it becomes our intention to meet our true self as their holistic unity. Embodying the three dimensions of pure me, growing into their integration, and merging, while reaching increasingly deeper samadhi in the beyond, we are discovering step by step a new depth and the higher truth of who we really are. Self-enquiry in its highest definition is not limited to the recognition of who we are beyond the mind – it is a journey into our future, the constant revelation of our eternal self.

There are considerable pitfalls to using the tool of self-enquiry wrongly or unconsciously. For instance, to watch the mind and come to the false conclusion that one is not the mind can easily become a justification of the the idea that one is not responsible for the nature of one's thoughts. One has to understand *who* is doing the enquiry, and many are simply too unconscious to be able to recognise this. Here, the main problem is not necessarily the inability to awaken the light of I am, but not being at all in touch with me. One has to first of all know who one is on the level of the observer before one can aspire to realize oneself as the universal self. Getting in touch with me is the essence of becoming a conscious human being. How can one become a buddha before becoming conscious as a human being? We have met thousands of seekers and hardly any of them knew what or who their me was, and even those who did only had a very limited grasp of it. Here we a referring to that very, very basic level



of self-knowledge of knowing oneself as the semi-conscious me or observer, which is what constitutes the identity of most humans.

A spiritual teaching is not a religion but an education – a higher education, but an education nonetheless. People need to be educated and education begins with the basics. All the teachings of enlightenment begin with big concepts: enlightenment, samadhi, moksha, nirvana. But no one is really in touch yet with the fundamental ingredients that constitute human consciousness. Without this prior self-knowledge, there is no bridge between the human and the soul. No one really understands what our mind is, what the correct relationship with thinking is, what the nature of me is, who the observer is, the intricate process through which me develops and grows into itself, and so on. People want to realize god or become Buddha, but first they need to do their basic homework, which is to get to know their ordinary, everyday self. This self cannot be simply ignored in the name of it being false or illusory. It is real enough to enter the path, and it has to meet itself from the very beginning as the essence of me. The same me that begins the path is the one who completes it by becoming whole and pure. If that me does not honor itself as the light of the path, how can it fulfil its destiny?

There can be said to be two stages of self-enquiry: pre-awakening and post-awakening. Prior to awakening, self-enquiry refers more to the contemplation of the nature of me, and through this, our development happens on the level of that me, which prepares the ground for the future reception of the event of awakening. On the other hand, the post-awakening role of self-enquiry refers to bringing deeper recognition and understanding of who we are within the context of the various states beyond the mind and to the preparation of our intelligence for the further expansion into our complete self.

Blessings,

Anadi

For a glossary of the terminology used in this teaching and for further resources, you may visit our website www.anaditeaching.com

