

# Self

Who Am I? - (Nan Yar?)  
Ramanna Maharishi

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## 1 . *Who am I ?*

The gross body which is composed of the seven humours (dhatus), I am not; the five cognitive sense organs, viz. the senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell, which apprehend their respective objects, viz. sound, touch, colour, taste, and odour, I am not; the five cognitive sense-organs, viz. the organs of speech, locomotion, grasping, excretion, and procreation, which have as their respective functions speaking, moving, grasping, excreting, and enjoying, I am not; the five vital airs, prana, etc., which perform respectively the five functions of in-breathing, etc., I am not; even the mind which thinks, I am not; the nescience too, which is endowed only with the residual impressions of objects, and in which there are no objects and no functioning's, I am not.

## 2. *If I am none of these, then who am I?*

After negating all of the above-mentioned as 'not this', 'not this', that Awareness which alone remains - that I am.

## 3. *What is the nature of Awareness?*

The nature of Awareness is existence-consciousness-bliss

## 4. *When will the realization of the Self be gained?*

When the world which is what-is-seen has been removed, there will be realization of the Self which is the seer.

## 5. *Will there not be realization of the Self even while the world is there (taken as real)?*

There will not be.

## 6. *Why?*

The seer and the object seen are like the rope and the snake. Just as the knowledge of the rope which is the substrate will not arise unless the false knowledge of the illusory serpent goes, so the realization of the Self which is the substrate will not be gained unless the belief that the world is real is removed.

## 7. *When will the world which is the object seen be removed?*

When the mind, which is the cause of all cognition's and of all actions, becomes quiescent, the world will disappear.

## 8. *What is the nature of the mind?*

What is called 'mind' is a wondrous power residing in the Self. It causes all thoughts to arise. Apart from thoughts, there is no such thing as mind. Therefore, thought is the nature of mind. Apart from thoughts, there is no independent entity called the world. In deep sleep there are no thoughts, and there is no world. In the states of waking and dream, there are thoughts, and there is a world also. Just as the spider emits the thread (of the web) out of itself and again withdraws it into itself, likewise the mind projects the world out of itself and again resolves it into itself. When the mind comes out of the Self, the world appears. Therefore, when the world appears (to be real), the Self does not appear; and when the Self appears (shines) the world does not appear. When one persistently inquires into the nature of the mind, the mind will end leaving the Self (as the residue). What is referred to as the Self is the Atman. The mind always exists only in dependence on something gross; it cannot stay alone. It is the mind that is called the subtle body or the soul (jiva).

9. *What is the path of inquiry for understanding the nature of the mind?*

That which rises as 'I' in this body is the mind. If one inquires as to where in the body the thought 'I' rises first, one would discover that it rises in the heart. That is the place of the mind's origin. Even if one thinks constantly 'I' 'I', one will be led to that place. Of all the thoughts that arise in the mind, the 'I' thought is the first. It is only after the rise of this that the other thoughts arise. It is after the appearance of the first personal pronoun that the second and third personal pronouns appear; without the first personal pronoun there will not be the second and third.

10. *How will the mind become quiescent?*

By the inquiry 'Who am I?'. The thought 'who am I?' will destroy all other thoughts, and like the stick used for stirring the burning pyre, it will itself in the end get destroyed. Then, there will arise Self-realization.

11. *What is the means for constantly holding on to the thought 'Who am I?'*

When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should inquire: 'To whom do they arise?' It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should inquire with diligence, "To whom has this thought arisen?". The answer that would emerge would be "To me". Thereupon if one inquires "Who am I?", the mind will go back to its source; and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source. When the mind that is subtle goes out through the brain and the sense-organs, the gross names and forms appear; when it stays in the heart, the names and forms disappear. Not letting the mind go out, but retaining it in the Heart is what is called "inwardness" (antar-mukha). Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as "externalisation" (bahir-mukha). Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the 'I' which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self which ever exists will shine. Whatever one does, one should do without the egoity "I". If one acts in that way, all will appear as of the nature of Siva (God).

12. *Are there no other means for making the mind quiescent?*

Other than inquiry, there are no adequate means. If through other means it is sought to control the mind, the mind will appear to be controlled, but will again go forth. Through the control of breath also, the mind will become quiescent; but it will be quiescent only so long as the breath remains controlled, and when the breath resumes the mind also will again start moving and will wander as impelled by residual impressions. The source is the same for both mind and breath. Thought, indeed, is the nature of the mind. The thought "I" is the first thought of the mind; and that is egoity. It is from that whence egoity originates that breath also originates. Therefore, when the mind becomes quiescent, the breath is controlled, and when the breath is controlled the mind becomes quiescent. But in deep sleep, although the mind becomes quiescent, the breath does not stop. This is because of the will of God, so that the body may be preserved and other people may not be under the impression that it is dead. In the state of waking and in samadhi, when the mind becomes quiescent the breath is controlled. Breath is the gross form of mind. Till the time of death, the mind keeps breath in the body; and when the body dies the mind takes the breath along with it. Therefore, the exercise of breath-control is only an aid for rendering the mind quiescent (manonigraha); it will not destroy the mind (manonasa).

Like the practice of breath-control. meditation on the forms of God, repetition of mantras, restriction on food, etc., are but aids for rendering the mind quiescent.

Through meditation on the forms of God and through repetition of mantras, the mind becomes one-pointed. The mind will always be wandering. Just as when a chain is given to an elephant to hold in its trunk it will go along grasping the chain and nothing else, so also when the mind is occupied with a name or form it will grasp that alone. When the mind expands in the form of countless thoughts, each thought becomes weak; but as thoughts get resolved the mind becomes one-pointed and strong; for such a mind Self-inquiry will become easy. Of all the restrictive rules, that relating to the taking of sattvic food in moderate quantities is the best; by observing this rule, the sattvic quality of mind will increase, and that will be helpful to Self-inquiry.

13. *The residual impressions (thoughts) of objects appear wending like the waves of an ocean. When will all of them get destroyed?*

As the meditation on the Self rises higher and higher, the thoughts will get destroyed.

14. *Is it possible for the residual impressions of objects that come from beginningless time, as it were, to be resolved, and for one to remain as the pure Self?*

Without yielding to the doubt "Is it possible, or not?", one should persistently hold on to the meditation on the Self. Even if one be a great sinner, one should not worry and weep "Oh! I am a sinner, how can I be saved?"; one should completely renounce the thought "I am a sinner"; and concentrate keenly on meditation on the Self; then, one would surely succeed. There are not two minds - one good and the other evil; the mind is only one. It is the residual impressions that are of two kinds - auspicious and inauspicious. When the mind is under the influence of auspicious impressions it is called good; and when it is under the influence of inauspicious impressions it is regarded as evil.

The mind should not be allowed to wander towards worldly objects and what concerns other people. However bad other people may be, one should bear no hatred for them. Both desire and hatred should be eschewed. All that one gives to others one gives to one's self. If this truth is understood who will not give to others? When one's self arises all arises; when one's self becomes quiescent all becomes quiescent. To the extent we behave with humility, to that extent there will result good. If the mind is rendered quiescent, one may live anywhere.

15. *How long should inquiry be practised?*

As long as there are impressions of objects in the mind, so long the inquiry "Who am I?" is required. As thoughts arise they should be destroyed then and there in the very place of their origin, through inquiry. If one resorts to contemplation of the Self uninterruptedly, until the Self is gained, that alone would do. As long as there are enemies within the fortress, they will continue to sally forth; if they are destroyed as they emerge, the fortress will fall into our hands.

16. *What is the nature of the Self?*

What exists in truth is the Self alone. The world, the individual soul, and God are appearances in it. Like silver in mother-of-pearl, these three appear at the same time, and disappear at the same time. The Self is that where there is absolutely no "I" thought. That is called "Silence". The Self itself is the world; the Self itself is "I"; the Self itself is God; all is Siva, the Self.

17. *Is not everything the work of God?*

Without desire, resolve, or effort, the sun rises; and in its mere presence, the sun-stone emits fire, the lotus blooms, water evaporates; people perform their various functions and then rest. Just as in the presence of the magnet the needle moves, it is by virtue of the mere presence of God that the souls governed by the three (cosmic) functions or the fivefold divine activity perform their actions and then rest, in accordance with their respective karmas. God has no resolve; no karma attaches itself to Him. That is like worldly actions not affecting the sun, or like the merits and demerits of the other four elements not affecting all pervading space.

18. *Of the devotees, who is the greatest?*

He who gives himself up to the Self that is God is the most excellent devotee. Giving one's self up to God means remaining constantly in the Self without giving room for the rise of any thoughts other than that of the Self. Whatever burdens are thrown on God, He bears them. Since the supreme power of God makes all things move, why should we, without submitting ourselves to it, constantly worry ourselves with thoughts as to what should be done and how, and what should not be done and how not? We know that the train carries all loads, so after getting on it why should we carry our small luggage on our head to our discomfort, instead of putting it down in the train and feeling at ease?

19. *What is non-attachment?*

As thoughts arise, destroying them utterly without any residue in the very place of their origin is non-attachment. Just as the pearl-diver ties a stone to his waist, sinks to the bottom of the sea and there takes the pearls, so each one of us should be endowed with non-attachment, dive within oneself and obtain the Self-Pearl.

20. *Is it not possible for God and the Guru to effect the release of a soul?*

God and the Guru will only show the way to release; they will not by themselves take the soul to the state of release. In truth, God and the Guru are not different. Just as the prey which has fallen into the jaws of a tiger has no escape, so those who have come within the ambit of the Guru's gracious look will be saved by the Guru and will not get lost; yet, each one should by his own effort pursue the path shown by God or Guru and gain release. One can know oneself only with one's own eye of knowledge, and not with somebody else's. Does he who is Rama require the help of a mirror to know that he is Rama?

21. *Is it necessary for one who longs for release to inquire into the nature of categories (tattvas)?*

Just as one who wants to throw away garbage has no need to analyse it and see what it is, so one who wants to know the Self has no need to count the number of categories or inquire into their characteristics; what he has to do is to reject altogether the categories that hide the Self. The world should be considered like a dream.

22. *Is there no difference between waking and dream?*

Waking is long and a dream short; other than this there is no difference. Just as waking happenings seem real while awake, so do those in a dream while dreaming. In dream the mind takes on another body. In both waking and dream states thoughts, names and forms occur simultaneously.

23. *Is it any use reading books for those who long for release?*

All the texts say that in order to gain release one should render the mind quiescent; therefore their conclusive teaching is that the mind should be rendered quiescent; once this has been understood there is no need for endless reading. In order to quieten the mind one has only to inquire within oneself what one's Self is; how could this search be done in books? One should know one's Self with one's own eye of wisdom. The Self is within the five sheaths; but books are outside them. Since the Self has to be inquired into by discarding the five sheaths, it is futile to search for it in books. There will come a time when one will have to forget all that one has learned.

24. *What is happiness?*

Happiness is the very nature of the Self; happiness and the Self are not different. There is no happiness in any object of the world. We imagine through our ignorance that we derive happiness from objects. When the mind goes out, it experiences misery. In truth, when its desires are fulfilled, it returns to its own place and enjoys the happiness that is the Self. Similarly, in the states of sleep, samadhi and fainting, and when the object desired is obtained or the object disliked is removed, the mind becomes inward-turned, and enjoys pure Self-Happiness. Thus the mind moves without rest alternately going out of the Self and returning to it. Under the tree the shade is pleasant; out in the open the heat is scorching. A person who has been going about in the sun feels cool when he reaches the shade. Someone who keeps on going from the shade into the sun and then back into the shade is a fool. A wise man stays permanently in the shade. Similarly, the mind of the one who knows the truth does not leave Brahman. The mind of the ignorant, on the contrary, revolves in the world, feeling miserable, and for a little time returns to Brahman to experience happiness. In fact, what is called the world is only thought. When the world disappears, i.e. when there is no thought, the mind experiences happiness; and when the world appears, it goes through misery.

25. *What is wisdom-insight (jnana-drsti)?*

Remaining quiet is what is called wisdom-insight. To remain quiet is to resolve the mind in the Self. Telepathy, knowing past, present and future happenings and clairvoyance do not constitute wisdom-insight.

26. *What is the relation between desirelessness and wisdom?*

Desirelessness is wisdom. The two are not different; they are the same. Desirelessness is refraining from turning the mind towards any object. Wisdom means the appearance of no object. In other words, not seeking what is other than the Self is detachment or desirelessness; not leaving the Self is wisdom.

27. *What is the difference between inquiry and meditation?*

Inquiry consists in retaining the mind in the Self. Meditation consists in thinking that one's self is Brahman, existence-consciousness-bliss. Page | 5

28. *What is release?*

Inquiring into the nature of one's self that is in bondage, and realising one's true nature is release.

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### **Self-Enquiry**

Ramana Maharishi

*Question : Should I go on asking 'Who am I?' without answering? Who asks whom? Which bhavana [attitude] should be in the mind at the time of enquiry? What is 'I', the Self or the ego?*

Ramana Maharshi : In the enquiry 'Who am I?', 'I' is the ego. The Question really means, what is the source or origin of this ego? You need not have any bhavana [attitude] in the mind. All that is required is that you must give up the bhavana that you are the body, of such and such a description, with such and such a name, etc. There is no need to have a bhavana about your real nature. It exists as it always does. It is real and no bhavana.

*Question : But is it not funny that the 'I' should be searching for the 'I'? Does not the enquiry 'Who am I?' turn out in the end to be an empty formula? Or, am I to put the Question to myself endlessly, repeating it like some mantra?*

Ramana Maharshi : Self-enquiry is certainly not an empty formula and it is more than the repetition of any mantra. If the enquiry 'Who am I?' were a mere mental Questioning, it would not be of much value. The very purpose of self-enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its source. It is not, therefore, a case of one 'I' searching for another 'I'. Much less is self-enquiry an empty formula, for it involves an intense activity of the entire mind to keep it steadily poised in pure Self-awareness.

*Question : When I think 'Who am I?', the answer comes 'I am not this mortal body but I am chaitanya, atma (consciousness, the Self).' And suddenly another Question arises, 'Why has atma come into maya [illusion]?' or in other words, 'Why has God created this world?'*

Ramana Maharshi : To enquire 'Who am I?' really means trying to find out the source of the ego or the 'I'-thought. You are not to think of other thoughts, such as 'I am not this body'. Seeking the source of 'I' serves as a means of getting rid of all other thoughts. We should not give scope to other thoughts, such as you mention, but must keep the attention fixed on finding out the source of the 'I' - thought by asking, as each thought arises, to whom the thought arises. If the answer is 'I get the thought' continue the enquiry by asking 'Who is this "I" and what is its source?'

*Question : Am I to keep on repeating 'Who am I?' so as to make a mantra of it?*

Ramana Maharshi : No. 'Who am I?' is not a mantra. It means that you must find out where in you arises the 'I'-thought which is the source of all other thoughts.

*Question : Shall I meditate on 'I am Brahman' (aham Brahmasmi)?*

Ramana Maharshi : The text is not meant for thinking 'I am Brahman'. Aham ['I'] is known to every one. Brahman abides as aham in every one. Find out the 'I'. The 'I' is already Brahman. You need not think so. Simply find out the 'I'.

*Question : I am aware of the 'I'. Yet my troubles are not ended.*

Ramana Maharshi : This 'I'-thought is not pure. It is contaminated with the association of the body and senses. See to whom the trouble is. It is to the 'I'-thought. Hold it. Then the other thoughts vanish.

*Question : Is soham (the affirmation 'I am he') the same as 'Who am I?'*

Ramana Maharshi : Aham ['I'] alone is common to them. One is soham. The other is koham [Who am I?]. They are

different. Why should we go on saying soham? One must find out the real 'I'. In the Question 'Who am I?', 'I' refers to the ego. Trying to trace it and find its source, we see it has no separate existence but merges in the real 'I'.

You see the difficulty. Vichara is different in method from the meditation sivoam or soham ['I am Siva' or 'I am he']. I rather lay stress upon Self-knowledge, for you are first concerned with yourself before you proceed to know the world and its Lord. The soham meditation or 'I am Brahman' meditation is more or less a mental thought. But the quest for the Self I speak of is a direct method, indeed superior to the other meditation. The moment you start looking for the self and go deeper and deeper, the real Self is waiting there to take you in. Then whatever is done is done by something else and you have no hand in it. In this process, all doubts and discussions are automatically given up just as one who sleeps forgets, for the time being, all his cares.

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### **Self-centred Activity**

Most of Us, I think, are aware that every form of persuasion, every kind of inducement, has been offered us to resist self-centred activities. Religions, through promises, through fear of hell, through every form of condemnation have tried in different ways to dissuade man from this constant activity that is born from the centre of the 'me'.

These having failed, political organizations have taken over. There again, persuasion; there again the ultimate utopian hope. Every form of legislation from the very limited to the extreme, including concentration camps, has been used and enforced against any form of resistance. Yet we go on in our self-centred activity, which is the only kind of action we seem to know.

If we think about it at all, we try to modify; if we are aware of it, we try to change the course of it; but fundamentally, deeply, there is no transformation, there is no radical cessation of that activity. The thoughtful are aware of this; they are also aware that when that activity from the centre ceases, only then can there be happiness.

Most of us take it for granted that self-centred activity is natural and that the consequential action, which is inevitable, can only be modified, shaped and controlled. Now those who are a little more serious, more earnest, not sincere - because sincerity is the way of self-deception - must find out whether, being aware of this extraordinary total process of self-centred activity, one can go beyond.

To understand what this self-centred activity is, one must obviously examine it, look at it, be aware of the entire process. If one can be aware of it, then there is the possibility of its dissolution; but to be aware of it requires a certain understanding, a certain intention to face the thing as it is and not to interpret, not to modify, not to condemn it.

We have to be aware of what we are doing, of all the activity which springs from that self-centred state; we must be conscious of it. One of our primary difficulties is that the moment we are conscious of that activity, we want to shape it, we want to control it, we want to condemn it or we want to modify it, so we are seldom able to look at it directly. When we do, very few of us are capable of knowing what to do.

We realize that self-centred activities are detrimental, are destructive, and that every form of identification - such as with a country, with a particular group, with a particular desire, the search for a result here or hereafter, the glorification of an idea, the pursuit of an example, the pursuit of virtue and so on - is essentially the activity of a self-centred person.

All our relationships, with nature, with people, with ideas, are the outcome of that activity. Knowing all this, what is one to do? All such activity must voluntarily come to an end - not self-imposed, not influenced, not guided.

Most of us are aware that this self-centred activity creates mischief and chaos but we are only aware of it in certain directions. Either we observe it in others and are ignorant of our own activities or being aware, in relationship with others, of our own self-centred activity we want to transform, we want to find a substitute, we want to go beyond.

Before we can deal with it we must know how this process comes into being, must we not? In order to understand something, we must be capable of looking at it; and to look at it we must know its various activities at different levels,

conscious as well as unconscious - the conscious directives, and also the self-centred movements of our unconscious motives and intentions.

I am only conscious of this activity of the 'me' when I am opposing, when consciousness is thwarted, when the 'me' is desirous of achieving a result, am I not? Or I am conscious of that centre when pleasure comes to an end and I want to have more of it; then there is resistance and a purposive shaping of the mind to a particular end which will give me a delight, a satisfaction; I am aware of myself and my activities when I am pursuing virtue consciously. Surely a man who pursues virtue consciously is unvirtuous. Humility cannot be pursued, and that is the beauty of humility.

This self-centred process is the result of time, is it not? So long as this centre of activity exists in any direction, conscious or unconscious, there is the movement of time and I am conscious of the past and the present in conjunction with the future. The self-centred activity of the 'me' is a time process. It is memory that gives continuity to the activity of the centre, which is the 'me'. If you watch yourself and are aware of this centre of activity, you will see that it is only the process of time, of memory, of experiencing and translating every experience according to a memory; you will also see that self-activity is recognition, which is also the process of the mind.

Can the mind be free from all this? It may be possible at rare moments; it may happen to most of us when we do an unconscious, unintentional, unpurposive act; but is it possible for the mind ever to be completely free from self-centred activity? That is a very important question to put to ourselves, because in the very putting of it, you will find the answer.

If you are aware of the total process of this self-centred activity, fully cognizant of its activities at different levels of your consciousness, then surely you have to ask yourselves if it is possible for that activity to come to an end. Is it possible not to think in terms of time, not to think in terms of what I shall be, what I have been, what I am? For from such thought the whole process of self-centred activity begins; there, also, begins the determination to become, the determination to choose and to avoid, which are all a process of time. We see in that process infinite mischief, misery, confusion, distortion, deterioration.

Surely the process of time is not revolutionary. In the process of time there is no transformation; there is only a continuity and no ending, there is nothing but recognition. It is only when you have complete cessation of the time process, of the activity of the self, that there is a revolution, a transformation, the coming into being of the new.

Being aware of this whole total process of the 'me' in its activity, what is the mind to do? It is only with renewal, it is only with revolution - not through evolution, not through the 'me' becoming, but through the 'me' completely coming to an end - that there is the new. The time process cannot bring the new; time is not the way of creation.

I do not know if any of you have had a moment of creativity. I am not talking of putting some vision into action; I mean that moment of creation when there is no recognition. At that moment, there is that extraordinary state in which the 'me', as an activity through recognition, has ceased. If we are aware, we shall see that in that state there is no experiencer who remembers, translates, recognizes and then identifies; there is no thought process, which is of time. In that state of creation, of creativity of the new, which is timeless, there is no action of the 'me' at all.

Our question surely is: Is it possible for the mind to be in that state, not momentarily, not at rare moments, but - I would rather not use the words 'everlasting' or 'for ever', because that would imply time - but to be in that state without regard to time? Surely that is an important discovery to be made by each one of us, because that is the door to love; all other doors are activities of the self. Where there is action of the self, there is no love. Love is not of time. You cannot practise love. If you do, then it is a self-conscious activity of the 'me' which hopes through loving to gain a result.

Love is not of time; you cannot come upon it through any conscious effort, through any discipline, through identification, which is all of the process of time. The mind, knowing only the process of time, cannot recognize love. Love is the only thing that is eternally new. Since most of us have cultivated the mind, which is the result of time, we do not know what love is. We talk about love; we say we love people, that we love our children, our wife, our neighbour, that we love nature; but the moment we are conscious that we love, self-activity has come into being; therefore it ceases to be love.

This total process of the mind is to be understood only through relationship - relationship with nature, with people, with our own projections, with everything about us. Life is nothing but relationship. Though we may attempt to isolate ourselves from relationship, we cannot exist without it. Though relationship is painful we cannot run away, by means of isolation, by becoming a hermit and so on. All these methods are indications of the activity of the self.

Seeing this whole picture, being aware of the whole process of time as consciousness, without any choice, without any determined, purposive intention, without the desire for any result, you will see that this process of time comes to an end voluntarily - not induced, not as a result of desire. It is only when that process comes to an end that love is, which is eternally new. Page | 8

We do not have to seek truth. Truth is not something far away. It is the truth about the mind, truth about its activities from moment to moment. If we are aware of this moment-to-moment truth, of this whole process of time, that awareness releases consciousness or the energy which is intelligence, love. So long as the mind uses consciousness as self-activity, time comes into being with all its miseries, with all its conflicts, with all its mischief, its purposive deceptions; and it is only when the mind, understanding this total process, ceases, that love can be.

*J. Krishnamurti*

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### **Self-Knowledge Is a Process**

So, to understand the innumerable problems that each one of us has, is it not essential that there be self-knowledge? And that is one of the most difficult things, self-awareness—which does not mean an isolation, a withdrawal. Obviously, to know oneself is essential; but to know oneself does not imply a withdrawal from relationship. And it would be a mistake, surely, to think that one can know oneself significantly, completely, fully, through isolation, through exclusion, or by going to some psychologist, or to some priest; or that one can learn self-knowledge through a book. Self-knowledge is obviously a process, not an end in itself; and to know oneself, one must be aware of oneself in action, which is relationship. You discover yourself, not in isolation, not in withdrawal, but in relationship—in relationship to society, to your wife, your husband, your brother, to man; but to discover how you react, what your responses are, requires an extraordinary alertness of mind, a keenness of perception.

"No expert, no specialist, can show us how to understand the process of the self. One has to study it for oneself. You and I can help each other by talking about it, but none can unfold it for us, no specialist, no teacher, can explore it for us.

We can be aware of it only in our relationship - in our relationship to things, to property, to people and to ideas."

*The First and Last Freedom, p.75*

"...when the mind seeks a timeless spiritual state which will go into action in order to destroy the self, is that not another form of experience which is strengthening the 'me'?...The self has projected that thing which you feel and believe will come and destroy the self.

...Thus our action from the beginning to the end is the same action, only we think it is evolving, growing, becoming more and more beautiful; but, if you observe inwardly, it is the same action going on, the same 'me' functioning at different levels with different labels, different names.

When you see the whole process, the cunning, extraordinary inventions, the intelligence of the self, how it covers itself up through identification, through virtue, through experience, through belief, through knowledge; when you see that the mind is moving in a circle, in a cage of its own making, what happens? When you are aware of it, fully cognizant of it, then are you not extraordinarily quiet - not through compulsion, not through any reward, not through any fear?"

"The self is a problem that thought cannot resolve. There must be an awareness which is not of thought. To be aware, without condemnation or justification, of the activities of the self - just to be aware - is sufficient. If you are aware in order to find out how to resolve the problem, in order to transform it, in order to produce a result, then it is still within the field of the self, of the 'me.' So long as we are seeking a result, whether through analysis, through

awareness, through constant examination of every thought, we are still within the field of thought, which is within the field of the 'me,' the 'I,' of the ego, or what you will."

*The First and Last Freedom*

"The self cannot be destroyed through discipline, because discipline is a process of strengthening the self. Yet all your religions support it; all your meditations, your assertions are based on this. Will knowledge destroy the self? Will belief destroy it? In other words, will anything that we are at present doing, any of the activities in which we are at present engaged in order to get at the root of the self, will any of that succeed? Is not all this a fundamental waste in a thought process which is a process of isolation, of reaction? What do you do when you realize fundamentally or deeply that thought cannot end itself? What happens? Watch yourself..."

*The First and Last Freedom, p.118*

"...when there is an awareness of the self and a realization that all its activities, however subtle, must inevitably lead to conflict and pain, then the craving for certainty, for self-continuance comes to an end."

"To know oneself is an extraordinary process, because the self is never the same from moment to moment; there are so many contradictory desires, so many compulsions, so many urges."

*Talks by Krishnamurti in Europe, 1956*

"When a machine is revolving very fast, as a fan with several blades, the separate parts are not visible but appear as one. So the self, the me, seems to be a unified entity but if its activities can be slowed down then we shall perceive that it is not a unified entity but made up of many separate and contending desires and pursuits. These separate wants and hopes, fears and joys make up the self. The self is a term to cover craving in its different forms. To understand the self there must be an awareness of craving in its multiple aspects."

"Every effort of the self to be or not to be is a movement away from what it is. Apart from its name, attributes, idiosyncrasies, possessions, what is the self? Is there the 'I,' the self, when its qualities are taken away? It is this fear of being nothing that drives the self into activity; but it is nothing, it is an emptiness."

"Though there may be unpleasant discoveries, the movements of the self must be exposed and understood... Only in discovery can there be joy - the discovery from moment to moment of the ways of the self."

*Commentaries on Living, First Series*

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#### Question - **Is Self-Actualization a basic need?**

**Osho** - There are many questions. The first: IS SELF-ACTUALIZATION A BASIC NEED OF MAN? First, try to understand what is meant by self-actualization. A. H. Maslow has used this term "self-actualization." Man is born as potentiality. He is not really actual -- just potential. Man is born as a possibility, not as an actuality. He may become something; he may attain actualization of his potentiality or he may not attain. The opportunity may be used or it may not be used. And nature is not forcing you to become actual. You are free. You can choose to become actual; you can choose not to do anything about it. Man is born as a seed. Thus, no man is born fulfilled -- just with the possibility of fulfillment.

If that is the case -- and that is the case -- then self-actualization becomes a basic need. Because unless you are fulfilled, unless you become what you can be or what you are meant to be, unless your destiny is fulfilled, unless you actually attain, unless your seed becomes a fulfilled tree, you will feel that you are missing something. And everyone is feeling, that he is missing something. That feeling of missing is really because of this, that you are not yet actual.

It is not really that you are missing riches or position, prestige or power. Even if you get whatsoever you demand -- riches, power, prestige, anything -- you will feel this constant sense of something missing within

you, because this something missing is not related with anything outward. It is related with your inner growth. Unless you become fulfilled, unless you come to a realization, a flowering, unless you come to an inner satisfaction in which you feel, "Now this is what I was meant to be," this sense of something missing will be felt. And you cannot destroy this feeling of something missing by anything else.

So self-actualization means a person has become what he was to become. He was born as a seed and now he has flowered. He has come to the complete growth, an inner growth, to the inner end. The moment you feel that all your potentialities have become actual, you will feel the peak of life, of love, of existence itself.

Abraham Maslow, who has used this term "self-actualization," has also coined another term: "peak experience." When one attains to oneself, he reaches a peak -- a peak of bliss. Then there is no hankering after anything. He is totally content with himself. Now nothing is lacking; there is no desire, no demand, no movement. Whatsoever he is, he is totally content with himself. Self-actualization becomes a peak experience, and only a self-actualized person can attain peak experiences. Then whatsoever he touches, whatsoever he is doing or not doing -- even just existing -- is a peak experience for him; just to be is blissful. Then bliss is not concerned with anything outside, it is just a by-product of the inner growth.

A buddha is a self-actualized person. That is why we picture Buddha, Mahavir and others -- why we have made sculptures, pictures, depictions of them -- sitting on a fully blossomed lotus. That fully blossomed lotus is the peak of flowering inside. Inside they have flowered and have become fully blossomed. That inner flowering gives a radiance, a constant showering of bliss from them. All those who come even within their shadows, all those who come near them feel a silent milieu around them.

There is an interesting story about Mahavir. It is a myth, but myths are beautiful and they say much which cannot be said otherwise. It is reported that when Mahavir would move, all around him, in an area of about twenty-four miles, all the flowers would bloom. Even if it was not the season for the flowers, they would bloom. This is simply a poetic expression, but even if one was not self-actualized, if one were to come in contact with Mahavir his flowering would become infectious, and one would feel an inner flowering in oneself also. Even if it was not the right season for a person, even if he was not ready, he would reflect, he would feel an echo. If Mahavir was near someone, that person would feel an echo within himself, and he would have a glimpse of what he could be.

Self-actualization is the basic need. And when I say basic, I mean that if all your needs are fulfilled, all except self-realization, self-actualization, you will feel unfulfilled. In fact, if self-actualization happens and nothing else is fulfilled, still you will feel a deep, total fulfillment. That is why Buddha was a beggar, but yet an emperor.

Buddha came to Kashi when he became enlightened. The king of Kashi came to see him and he asked, "I do not see that you have anything, you are just a beggar, yet I feel myself a beggar in comparison to you. You do not have anything, but the way you walk, the way you look, the way you laugh makes it seem as if the whole world is your kingdom. And you have nothing visible -- nothing! So where is the secret of your power? You look like an emperor." Really, no emperor has ever looked like that -- as if the whole world belongs to him. "You are the king, but where is your power, the source?"

So Buddha said, "It is in me. My power, my source of power, whatsoever you feel around me is really within me. I do not have anything except myself, but it is enough. I am fulfilled; now I do not desire anything. I have become desireless."

Really, a self-actualized person will become desireless. Remember this. Ordinarily we say that if you become desireless, you will know yourself. The contrary is more true: if you know yourself, you will become desireless. And the emphasis of tantra is not on being desireless, but on becoming self-actualized. Then desirelessness follows.

Desire means you are not fulfilled within, you are missing something so you hanker after it. You go on, from one desire to another, in search of fulfillment. That search never ends because one desire creates another desire. Really, one desire creates ten desires. If you go in search of a desireless state of bliss through desires,

you will never reach. But if you try something else -- methods of self-actualization, methods of realizing your inner potentiality, of making them actual -- then the more you will become actual the less and less desires will be felt, because really, they are felt only because you are empty inside. When you are not empty within, desiring ceases.

What to do about self-actualization? Two things have to be understood. One: self-actualization doesn't mean that if you become a great painter or a great musician or a great poet you will be self-actualized. Of course, a part of you will be actualized, and even that gives much contentment. If you have a potentiality of being a good musician, and if you fulfill it and you become a musician, a part of you will be fulfilled -- but not the total. The remaining humanity within you will remain unfulfilled. You will be lopsided. One part will have grown, and the remaining will have stayed just like a stone hanging around your neck.

Look at a poet. When he is in his poetic mood he looks like a buddha; he forgets himself completely. The ordinary man in the poetic mood is as if he is no more there. So when a poet is in his mood, he has a peak -- a partial peak. And sometimes poets have glimpses which are only possible with enlightened, buddha-like minds. A poet can speak like a buddha. For example, Khalil Gibran speaks like a buddha but he is not a buddha. He is a poet -- a great poet.

So if you see Khalil Gibran through his poetry, he looks like Buddha, Christ or Krishna. But if you go and meet the man Khalil Gibran, he is just ordinary. He talks about love so beautifully -- even a buddha may not talk so beautifully. But a buddha knows love with his total being. Khalil Gibran knows love in his poetic flight. When he is on his poetic flight, he has glimpses of love -- beautiful glimpses. He expresses them with rare insight. But if you go and see the real Khalil Gibran, the man, you will feel a disparity. The poet and the man are far apart. The poet seems to be something which happens to this man sometimes, but this man is not the poet.

That is why poets feel that when they are creating poetry someone else is creating; they are not creating. They feel as if they have become instruments of some other energy, some other force. They are no more. This feeling comes because, really, their totality is not actualized -- only a part of it is, a fragment.

You have not touched the sky. Only one of your fingers has touched the sky, and you remain rooted on the earth. Sometimes you jump, and for a moment you are not on the earth; you have deceived gravity. But the next moment you are on the earth again. When a poet is feeling fulfilled, he will have glimpses -- partial glimpses. When a musician is feeling fulfilled, he will have partial glimpses.

It is said of Beethoven that when he was on the stage he was a different man, altogether different. Goethe has said that when Beethoven was on stage directing his group, his orchestra, he looked like a god. It could not be said that he was an ordinary man. He was not a man at all; he was superhuman. The way he looked, the way he raised his hands, was all superhuman. But when he came back from the stage he was just an ordinary man. The man on the stage seemed to be possessed by something else, as if Beethoven was no more there and some other force had entered into him. Back down from the stage he was again Beethoven, the man.

Because of this, poets, musicians, great artists, creative people are more tense -- because they have two types of being. Ordinary man is not so tense because he always lives in one: he lives on the earth. But poets, musicians, great artists jump; they go beyond gravity. In certain moments they are not on this earth, they are not part of humanity. They become part of the buddha world -- the land of the buddhas. Then again they are back here. They have two points of existence; their personalities are split.

So every creative artist, every great artist is in a certain way insane. The tension is so much! The rift, the gap between these two types of existences is so great -- unbridgeably great. Sometimes he is just an ordinary man; sometimes he becomes buddha-like. Between these two points he is divided, but he has glimpses.

When I say self-actualization, I do not mean that you should become a great poet or you should become a great musician. I mean that you should become a total man. I do not say a great man because a great man is always partial. Greatness in anything is always partial. One moves and moves and moves in one direction, and

in all other dimensions, all other directions, one remains the same -- one becomes lopsided.

When I say become a total man, I do not mean become a great man. I mean create a balance, be centered, be fulfilled as a man -- not as a musician, not as a poet, not as an artist, but fulfilled as a man. What does it mean to be fulfilled as a man? A great poet is a great poet because of great poetry. A great musician is great because of great music. A great man is a great man because of certain things he has done -- he may be a great hero. A great man in any direction is partial. Greatness is partial, fragmentary. That is why great men have to face more anguish than ordinary men.

What is a total man? What is meant by being a whole man, a total man? It means, firstly, be centered; do not exist without a center. This moment you are something, the next moment something else. People come to me and I generally ask them, "Where do you feel your center -- in the heart, in the mind, in the navel, where? In the sex center? Where? Where do you feel your center?"

Generally they say, "Sometimes I feel it in the head, sometimes in the heart, sometimes I do not feel it at all." So I tell them to close their eyes before me and feel it just now. In the majority of cases this happens: they say, "Just now, for a moment, I feel that I am centered in the head." But the next moment they are not there. They say, "I am in the heart." And the next moment the center has slipped, it is somewhere else, at the sex center or somewhere else.

Really, you are not centered; you are only momentarily centered. Each moment has its own center, so you go on shifting. When mind is functioning you feel that the head is the center. When you are in love, you feel it is the heart. When you are not doing anything particularly, you are confused -- you cannot find out where the center is, because you can find this out only when you are working, doing something. Then a particular part of the body becomes the center. But YOU are not centered. If you are not doing anything, you cannot find where your center of being is.

A total man is centered. Whatsoever he is doing, he remains in the center. If his mind is functioning, he is thinking, thinking goes on in the head but he remains centered in the navel. The center is never missed. He uses the head, but he never moves to the head. He uses the heart, but he never moves to the heart. All these things become instruments, and he remains centered.

Secondly, he is balanced. Of course, when one is centered one is balanced. His life is a deep balance. He is never one-sided, he is never at any extreme -- he remains in the middle. Buddha has called this the middle path. He remains always in the middle. A man who is not centered will always move to the extreme. When he eats he will eat much, he will overeat, or he can fast, but right eating is impossible for him. Fasting is easy, overeating is okay. He can be in the world, committed, involved, or he can renounce the world -- but he can never be balanced. He can never remain in the middle, because if you are not centered you do not know what middle means.

A person who is centered is always in the middle in everything, never at any extreme. Buddha says his eating is right eating; it is neither overeating, nor fasting. His labor is right labor -- never too much, never too little. Whatsoever he is, he is always balanced.

First thing: a self-actualized person will be centered.

Second thing: he will be balanced.

Thirdly: if these two things happen -- centering, balance -- many things will follow. He will always be at ease. Whatsoever the situation, the at-easeness will not be lost. I say whatsoever the situation -- unconditionally, the at-easeness will not be lost, because one who is at the center is always at ease. Even if death comes, he will be at ease. He will receive death as one receives any other guest. If misery comes, he will receive it. Whatsoever happens, it cannot dislodge him from his center. That at-easeness is also a by-product of being centered.

For such a man, nothing is trivial, nothing is great; everything becomes sacred, beautiful, holy -- everything! Whatsoever he is doing, whatsoever, it is of ultimate concern -- as if of ultimate concern. Nothing is trivial. He will not say, "This is trivial, this is great." Really, nothing is great, nor is anything small and trivial. The touch of

the man is significant. A self-actualized person, a balanced, centered person, changes everything. The very touch makes it great.

If you observe a buddha, you will see that he walks and he loves walking. If you go to Bodhgaya where Buddha attained enlightenment, to the bank of the Niranjana -- to the place where he was sitting under the Bodhi tree -- you will see that the place of his steps has been marked. He would meditate for one hour, then he would walk around. In Buddhist terminology this is called CHAKRAMAN. He would sit under the Bodhi tree, then he would walk. But he would walk with a serene attitude, as if in meditation.

Someone asked Buddha, "Why do you do this? Sometimes you sit with closed eyes and meditate, then you walk." Buddha said, "Sitting in order to be silent is easy, so I walk. But I carry the same silence within. I sit, but inside I am the same -- silent. I walk, but inside I am the same -- silent."

The inner quality is the same... When he meets an emperor and when he meets a beggar, a buddha is the same, he has the same inner quality. When meeting a beggar he is not different, when meeting an emperor he is not different; he is the same. The beggar is not a nobody and the emperor is not a somebody. And really, while meeting a buddha, emperors have felt like beggars and beggars have felt like emperors. The touch, the man, the quality remains the same.

When Buddha was alive, every day in the morning he would say to his disciples, "If you have to ask anything, ask." The day he was dying, that morning it was the same. He called his disciples and said, "Now if you want to ask anything, you can ask. And remember, that this is the last morning. Before this day ends, I will be no more." He was the same. That was his daily question in the morning. He was the same! The day was the last, but he was the same. Just as on any other day, he said, "Okay, if you have to ask anything, you can ask -- but this is the last day."

There was no change of tone, but the disciples began to weep. They forgot to ask anything. Buddha said, "Why are you weeping? If you would have wept on another day it would have been okay, but this is the last day. By the evening I will be no more, so do not waste time in weeping. Another day it would have been okay; you could have wasted time. Do not waste your time in weeping. Why are you weeping? Ask if you have anything to ask." He was the same in life and death.

So thirdly, the self-actualized man is at ease. Life and death are the same; bliss and misery are the same. Nothing disturbs him, nothing dislocates him from his home, from his centeredness. To such a man you cannot add anything. You cannot take anything out of him, you cannot add anything to him -- he is fulfilled. His every breath is a fulfilled breath, silent, blissful. He has attained. He has attained to existence, to being; he has flowered as a total man.

This is not a partial flowering. Buddha is not a great poet. Of course, whatsoever he says is poetry. He is not a poet at all, but even when he moves, walks, it is poetry. He is not a painter, but whenever he speaks, whatsoever he says becomes a painting. He is not a musician, but his whole being is music par excellence. The man as a totality has attained. So now, whatsoever he is doing or not doing... when he is sitting in silence, not doing anything, even in silence his presence works, creates; it becomes creative.

Tantra is concerned not with any partial growth, it is concerned with you as a total being. So three things are basic: you must be centered, rooted, and balanced; that is, always in the middle -- of course, without any effort. If there is effort you are not balanced. And you must be at ease -- at ease in the universe, at home in the existence, and then many things follow. This is a basic need, because unless this need is fulfilled you are a man only in name. You are a man as a possibility, you are not actually a man. You can be, you have the potentiality, but the potentiality has to be made actual.

Source - Osho Book "Vigyan Bhairav Tantra, Vol 1"

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## **Beloved Osho, I don't know why I am here.**

Nobody knows. There is no way to know it, and there is no need to know it. This constant questioning - why am I here? why am I doing this? - this constant hankering for the why is a disease of the mind. No answer is going to satisfy you, because the why can be asked again. If I say something, "You are here because of this..." the why will be pushed back a little, that's all. You will again ask why. The why is nonending.

Once you understand it, you drop it. The why is ridiculous. Rather than asking, Why am I here? it is better to use the opportunity, it is better to flower, it is better to exist authentically. And this is the beauty of it, that once you start existing authentically, truly, once you stop all nonsense thinking and you start delighting in life, once you are no longer a philosopher, the why is answered. But it is not answered by anyone from the outside, it is answered by your own life energy.

The answer is possible, but it is not going to come like an answer, it is going to come like a lived experience. The answer is going to be existential, not intellectual. The question is intellectual. Drop it! Rather, be! Otherwise, you can go on asking... For centuries man has asked millions of questions; not a single question has been solved by speculation, thinking, logic, or reason. Not even a single question has been solved. On the contrary, whenever people have tried to answer a question, the answer has created a thousand and one more questions.

**Who created the world?** - and it has been answered: God created the world. And then immediately the question arises: Who created God? or, Why did he create the world? When did he create the world? And why did he create such a world? - so miserable, so helllike? The one who was answering you that God created the world must have been thinking that your question would drop; but out of one answer a thousand and one questions arise. Mind is a question-creating mechanism.

So the first thing to understand is: Drop why and immediately you become religious. Continue with the why, and you remain philosophical. Continue questioning, and you remain in the head. Drop questioning, and suddenly the energy moves in a new dimension: the dimension of the heart. Heart has no questions, and there hides the answer.

It will appear paradoxical, but still I would like to say to you: When your questioning stops, the answer comes. And if you go on questioning, the answer will become more and more elusive.

**Why are you here?** - who can answer it? And if it can be answered, you will no longer be a man, you will become a mechanism. This mike is here and there is a reason for it; the why can be answered. The car is there in the porch; the why can be answered. If your why also can be answered, you become a mechanism like a mike or a car; you become a utility, a commodity. But you are a man, not a machine.

Man means freedom. Why is there freedom? You can raise the question, but the question is foolish. The why about man cannot be answered. And if the why about man cannot be answered, how can it be answered when you put it for the ultimate, for God? Even about man the why cannot be answered. About God it is almost impossible even to raise the question in a right way.

My effort is not to answer your questions, but to make you aware that out of a hundred questions, ninety-nine are simply foolish. Drop them! And once you have dropped the foolish questions - they took very philosophical - the one question remains. And that question is no longer concerned about irrelevant, nonessential things. That one question is concerned about Existence, about you, your being. Not why you are here, not about the purpose of your being here, but about your being here - who you are: Who am I?

This can be known, because for it to be known there is no need to go to anybody else; you can go inside. For it to be known, there is no need to look in the scriptures, you can look withinwards. For it to be known, you have just to close your eyes and move into inner silence. And you can feel it: who you are. You can taste the flavor of who you are; you can smell it, you can touch it. This is existential questioning. But why you are here, I don't

know. And there is no need to know about it.

From 'The Search', part of chapter 2.

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### **From Self-Enquiry to Enlightenment**

I used to ask myself, "Who am I?" It is impossible to count how many days and nights I passed in this query. The intellect gave answers heard from others, or born of conditioning. All of them were borrowed, lifeless. They brought no contentment. They resonated a little at the surface, and then disappeared. The inner being was not touched by them. No echo of them was heard in the depths. There were many answers to the question, but none was correct. And I was untouched by them. They could not rise to the level of the question.

Then I saw that the question came from the center but the replies touched only the periphery. The question was mine, but the answers came from outside; the question arose from my innermost being, the replies were imposed from outside. This insight became a revolution. A new dimension was revealed. The responses of the intellect were meaningless. They had no relevance to the problem. An illusion had shattered. And what a relief it was!

It seemed as if a closed door had been flung open, filling the darkness with light. The intellect had been providing the answers - that was the mistake. Because of these false answers, the real answer could not arise. Some truth was struggling to surface. In the depths of consciousness some seed was seeking the way to break open the ground in order to reach the light. Intellect was the obstruction. When this was made plain, the answers began to subside. Knowledge acquired from outside began to evaporate. The question went ever deeper. I did not do anything, only kept on watching. Something novel was happening. I was speechless. What was there to do? I was, at the most, simply a witness. The reactions of the periphery were fading, perishing, becoming nonexistent. The center now began to resonate more fully.

"Who am I?" My entire being was throbbing with this thirst.

What a violent storm it was! Every breath quaked and trembled in it.

"Who am I?" - like an arrow, the question pierced through everything and moved within.

I remember - what an acute thirst it was! My very life had turned into thirst. Everything was burning. And like a flame of fire the question stood forth, "Who am I?"

The surprise was that the intellect was completely silent. The incessant flow of thoughts had stopped. What had happened? The periphery was absolutely still. There were no thoughts, no conditioning of the past.

Only I was there - and there was the question too. No, no - I myself was the question.

And then the explosion. In a moment, everything was transformed. The question had dropped. The answer had come from some unknown dimension.

Truth is attained through a sudden explosion, not gradually.

It cannot be compelled to appear. It comes.

Emptiness is the solution, not words. Becoming answer-less is the answer.

Someone asked yesterday - and someone or the other asks every day - "What is the answer?"

I say, "If I mention it, it is meaningless. Its meaning lies in realizing it oneself."

*(Osho - Seeds of Wisdom 13)*

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**Buddha Dhammapada Sutra** - *WE ARE WHAT WE THINK. ALL THAT WE ARE ARISES WITH OUR THOUGHTS. WITH OUR THOUGHTS WE MAKE THE WORLD.*

**Osho** - It has been said to you again and again that the Eastern mystics believe that the world is illusory. It is true: they not only believe that the world is untrue, illusory, maya -- they know that it is maya, it is an illusion, a dream. But when they use the word sansara -- the world -- they don't mean the objective world that science investigates; no, not at all. They don't mean the world of the trees and the mountains and the rivers; no, not at

all.

They mean the world that you create, spin and weave inside your mind, the wheel of the mind that goes on moving and spinning. Sansara has nothing to do with the outside world. There are three things to be remembered. One is the outside world, the objective world. Buddha will never say anything about it because that is not his concern; he is not an Albert Einstein.

Then there is a second world: the world of the mind, the world that the psychoanalysts, the psychiatrists, the psychologists investigate. Buddha will have a few things to say about it, not many, just a few -- in fact, one: that it is illusory, that it has no truth, either objective or subjective, that it is in between.

The first world is the objective world, which science investigates. The second world is the world of the mind, which the psychologist investigates. And the third world is your subjectivity, your interiority, your inner self.

Buddha's indication is towards the interiormost core of your being. But you are too much involved with the mind. Unless he helps you to become untrapped from the mind, you will never know the third, the real world: your inner substance. Hence he starts with the statement: WE ARE WHAT WE THINK. That's what everybody is: his mind. ALL THAT WE ARE ARISES WITH OUR THOUGHTS.

Just imagine for a single moment that all thoughts have ceased...then who are you? If all thoughts cease for a single moment, then who are you? No answer will be coming. You cannot say, "I am a Catholic," "I am a Protestant," "I am a Hindu," "I am a Mohammedan" -- you cannot say that. All thoughts have ceased. So the Koran has disappeared, the Bible, the Gita...all words have ceased! You cannot even utter your name. All language has disappeared so you cannot say to which country you belong, to which race. When thoughts cease, who are you? An utter emptiness, nothingness, no-thingness.

It is because of this that Buddha has used a strange word; nobody has ever done such a thing before, or since. The mystics have always used the word 'self' for the interior most core of your being -- Buddha uses the word 'no-self'. And I perfectly agree with him; he is far more accurate, closer to truth. To use the word 'self' -- even if you use the word 'Self' with a capital 'S', does not make much difference. It continues to give you the sense of the ego, and with a capital 'S' it may give you an even bigger ego.

Buddha does not use the words atma, 'self', atta. He uses just the opposite word: 'no-self', anatma, anatta. He says when mind ceases, there is no self left -- you have become universal, you have overflowed the boundaries of the ego, you are a pure space, uncontaminated by anything. You are just a mirror reflecting nothing. WE ARE WHAT WE THINK. ALL THAT WE ARE ARISES WITH OUR THOUGHTS. WITH OUR THOUGHTS WE MAKE THE WORLD.

If you really want to know who, in reality, you are, you will have to learn how to cease as a mind, how to stop thinking. That's what meditation is all about. Meditation means going out of the mind, dropping the mind and moving in the space called no-mind. And in no-mind you will know the ultimate truth, dhamma. And moving from mind to no-mind is the step, pada. And this is the whole secret of THE DHAMMAPADA.

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## **Meditating on No-Self**

A Dhamma Talk by Sister Khema

In Buddhism we use the words "self" and "no-self," and so it is important to understand just what this "no-self," *anatta*, is all about, even if it is first just an idea, because the essence of the Buddha's teaching hinges on this concept. And in this teaching Buddhism is unique. No one, no other spiritual teacher, has formulated no-self in just this way. And because it has been formulated by him in this way, there is also the possibility of speaking about it. Much has been written about no-self, but in order to know it, one has to experience it. And that is what the teaching aims at, the experience of no-self.

Yet in order to experience no-self, one has first to fully know self. Actually know it. But unless we do know what this self is, this self called "me," it is impossible to know what is meant by "there is no self there." In

order to give something away, we have to first fully have it in hand.

We are constantly trying to reaffirm self. Which already shows that this "self" is a very fragile and rather wispy sort of affair, because if it weren't why would we constantly have to reaffirm it? Why are we constantly afraid of the "self" being threatened of its being insecure, of its not getting what it needs for survival? If it were such a solid entity as we believe it to be, we would not feel threatened so often.

We affirm "self" again and again through identification. We identify with a certain name, an age, a sex, an ability, an occupation. "I am a lawyer, I am a doctor. I am an accountant, I am a student." And we identify with the people we are attached to. "I am a husband, I am a wife, I am a mother, I am a daughter, I am a son." Now, in the manner of speech, we have to use "self" in that way — but it isn't only in speech. We really think that that "self" is who we are. We really believe it. There is no doubt in our mind that that "self" is who we are. When any of these factors is threatened, if being a wife is threatened, if being a mother is threatened, if being a lawyer is threatened, if being a teacher is threatened — or if we lose the people who enable us to retain that "self" — what a tragedy!

The self-identification becomes insecure, and "me" finds it hard to say "look at me," "this is me." Praise and blame are included. Praise reaffirms "me." Blame threatens "me." So we like the praise and we dislike the blame. The ego is threatened. Fame and infamy — same thing. Loss and gain. If we gain, the ego gets bigger; if we lose, it gets a bit smaller. So we are constantly in a quandary, and in constant fear. The ego might lose a little bit of its grandeur. It might be made a bit smaller by someone. And it happens to all of us. Somebody is undoubtedly going to blame us for something eventually. Even the Buddha was blamed.

Now the blame that is levied at us is not the problem. The problem is our reaction. The problem is that we feel smaller. The ego has a hard time reasserting itself. So what we usually do is we blame back, making the other's ego a bit smaller too.

Identification with whatever it is that we do and whatever it is that we have, be it possessions or people, is, so we believe, needed for our survival. "Self" survival. If we don't identify with this or that, we feel as if we are in limbo. This is the reason why it is difficult to stop thinking in meditation. Because without thinking there would be no identification. If I don't think, what do I identify with? It is difficult to come to a stage in meditation in which there is actually nothing to identify with any more.

Happiness, too, may be an identification. "I am happy." "I am unhappy." Because we are so keen on survival, we have got to keep on identifying. When this identification becomes a matter of the life or death of the ego, which it usually is, then the fear of loss becomes so great that we can be in a constant state of fear. Constantly afraid to lose either the possessions that make us what we are, or the people that make us what we are. If we have no children, or if they all die, we are no longer a mother. So fear is paramount. The same goes for all other identifications. Not a very peaceful state of living and what is it due to? Only one thing: ego, the craving to be.

This identification results, of course, in craving for possessing. And this possessing results in attachment. What we have, what we identify with, we are attached to. That attachment, that clinging, makes it extremely difficult to have a free and open viewpoint. This kind of clinging, whatever it may be that we cling to — it may not be clinging to motor cars and houses, it may not even be clinging to people — but we certainly cling to views and opinions. We cling to our world view. We cling to the view of how we are going to be happy. Maybe we cling to a view of who created this universe. Whatever it is we cling to, even how the government should run the country, all of that makes it extremely difficult to see things as they really are. To be open-minded. And it is only an open mind which can take in new ideas and understanding.

Lord Buddha compared listeners to four different kinds of clay vessels. The first clay vessel is one that has holes at the bottom. If you pour water into it, it runs right out. In other words, whatever you teach that person is useless. The second clay vessel he compared to one that had cracks in it. If you pour water into it, the water seeps out. These people cannot remember. Cannot put two and two together. Cracks in the understanding. The third listener he compared to a vessel that was completely full. Water cannot be poured in for it's full to the brim. Such a person, so full of views he can't learn anything new! But hopefully, we are the fourth kind.

The empty vessels without any holes or cracks. Completely empty.

I dare say we are not. But may be empty enough to take in enough. To be empty like that, of views and opinions, means a lack of clinging. Even a lack of clinging to what we think is reality. Whatever we think reality is, it surely is not, because if it were, we would never be unhappy for a single moment. We would never feel a lack of anything. We would never feel a lack of companionship, of ownership. We would never feel frustrated, bored. If we ever do, whatever we think is real, is not. What is truly reality is completely fulfilling. If we aren't completely fulfilled, we aren't seeing complete reality. So, any view that we may have is either wrong or it is partial.

Because it is wrong or partial, and bounded by the ego, we must look at it with suspicion. Anything we cling to keeps us bound to it. If I cling to a table-leg, I can't possibly get out the door. There is no way I can move. I am stuck. Not until I let go will I have the opportunity to get out. Any identification, any possession that is clung to, is what stops us from reaching transcendental reality. Now we can easily see this clinging when we cling to things and people, but we cannot easily see why the five *khandhas* are called the five clung-to aggregates. That is their name, and they are, in fact, what we cling to most. That is an entire clinging. We don't even stop to consider when we look at our body, and when we look at our mind, or when we look at feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness — *vedana, sañña, sankhara,* and *viññana*. We look at this mind-and-body, *nama-rupa*, and we don't even doubt the fact that this is *my* feeling, *my* perception, *my* memory, *my* thoughts, and *my* awareness of *my* consciousness. And no one starts doubting until they start seeing. And for that seeing we need a fair bit of empty space apart from views and opinions.

Clinging is the greatest possessiveness and attachment we have. As long as we cling we cannot see reality. We cannot see reality because clinging is in the way. Clinging colors whatever we believe to be true. Now it is not possible to say "all right, I'll stop clinging." We can't do that. The process of taking the "me" apart, of not believing any more that this is one whole, is a gradual one. But if meditation has any benefit and success, it must show that first of all there is mind and there is body. There isn't one single thing acting in accord all the time. There is mind which is thinking and making the body act. Now that is the first step in knowing oneself a little clearer. And then we can note "this is a feeling" and "I am giving this feeling a name" which means memory and perception. "This is the thought that I am having about this feeling. The feeling has come about because the mind-consciousness has connected with the feeling that has arisen."

Take the four parts of the *khandhas* that belong to the mind apart. When we do that while it is happening — not now when we are thinking about at-but while it is happening, then we get an inkling that this isn't really *me*, that these are phenomena that are arising, which stay a moment, and then cease. How long does mind-consciousness stay on one object? And how long do thoughts last? And have we really invited them?

The clinging, the clung-to, are what make the ego arise. Because of clinging the notion of "me" arises and then there is me, and *me* having all the problems. Without *me* would there be problems? If there weren't anyone sitting inside me — as we think there is — who is called I or me or John, Claire, then who is having the problem? The *khandhas* do not have any problems. The *khandhas* are just processes. They are phenomena, and that is all. They are just going on and on and on. But because I am grasping at them, and trying to hold on to them, and saying: "it's *me*, it's *me* feeling, it's *me* wanting,." then problems arise.

If we really want to get rid of suffering, completely and totally, then clinging has to go. The spiritual path is never one of achievement; it is always one of letting go. The more we let go, the more there is empty and open space for us to see reality. Because what we let go of is no longer there, there is the possibility of just moving without clinging to the results of the movement. As long as we cling to the results of what we do, as long as we cling to the results of what we think, we are bound, we are hemmed in.

Now there is a third thing that we do: we are interested in becoming something or somebody. Interested in becoming an excellent meditator. Interested in becoming a graduate. Interested in becoming something which we are not. And becoming something stops us from being. When we are stopped from being, we cannot pay attention to what there really is. All this becoming business is, of course, in the future. Since whatever there is in the future is conjecture, it is a dream world we live in. The only reality we can be sure of is this particular moment right now; and this particular moment as you must be able to be aware of — has already passed and

this one has passed and the next one has also passed. See how they are all passing! That is the impermanence of it all. Each moment passes, but we cling, trying to hold on to them. Trying to make them a reality. Trying to make them a security. Trying to make them be something which they are not. See how they are all passing. We cannot even say it as quickly as they are doing it.

There is nothing that is secure. Nothing to hold on to, nothing that is stable. The whole universe is constantly falling apart and coming back together. And that includes the mind and the body which we call "I." You may believe it or not, it makes no difference. In order to know it, you must experience it; when you experience it, it's perfectly clear. What one experiences is totally clear. No one can say it is not. They may try, but their objections make no sense because you have experienced it. It's the same thing as biting into the mango to know its taste.

To experience it, one needs meditation. An ordinary mind can only know ordinary concepts and ideas. If one wants to understand and experience extraordinary experiences and ideas, one has to have an extraordinary mind. An extraordinary mind comes about through concentration. Most meditators have experienced some stage that is different than the one they are used to. So it is not ordinary any more. But we have to fortify that far more than just the beginning stage. To the point where the mind is truly extraordinary. Extraordinary in the sense that it can direct itself to where it wants to go. Extraordinary in the sense that it no longer gets perturbed by everyday events. And when the mind can concentrate, then it experiences states which it has never known before. To realize that your universe constantly falls apart and comes back together again is a meditative experience. It takes practice, perseverance and patience. And when the mind is unperturbed and still, equanimity, evenmindedness, peacefulness arise.

At that time the mind understands the idea of impermanence to such an extent that it sees itself as totally impermanent. And when one sees one's own mind as being totally impermanent, there is a shift in one's viewpoint. That shift I like to compare with a kaleidoscope that children play with. A slight touch and you get a different picture. The whole thing looks quite different with just a slight shift.

Non-self is experienced through the aspect of impermanence, through the aspect of unsatisfactoriness, and through the aspect of emptiness. Empty of what? The word "emptiness" is so often misunderstood because when one only thinks of it as a concept, one says "what do you mean by empty?" Everything is there: there are the people, and there are their insides, guts and their bones and blood and everything is full of stuff — and the mind is not empty either. It's got ideas, thoughts and feelings. And even when it doesn't have those, what do you mean by emptiness? The only thing that is empty is the emptiness of an entity.

There is no specific entity in anything. That is emptiness. That is the nothingness. That nothingness is also experienced in meditation. It is empty, it is devoid of a specific person, devoid of a specific thing, devoid of anything which makes it permanent, devoid of anything which even makes it important. The whole thing is in flux. So the emptiness is that. And the emptiness is to be seen everywhere; to be seen in oneself. And that is what is called *anatta*, non-self. Empty of an entity. There is nobody there. It is all imagination. At first that feels very insecure.

That person that I've been regarding with so much concern, that person trying to do this or that, that person who will be my security, will be my insurance for a happy life — once I find that person — that person does not really exist. What a frightening and insecure idea that is! What a feeling of fear arises! But as a matter of fact, it's just the reverse. If one accepts and bears that fright and goes through it, one comes to complete and utter relief and release.

I'll give you a simile: Imagine you own a very valuable jewel which is so valuable that you place your trust in it so that should you fall upon hard times, it will look after you. It's so valuable that you can have it as your security. You don't trust anybody. So you have a safe inside your house and that is where you put your jewel. Now you have been working hard for a number of years and you think you deserve a holiday. So now, what to do with the jewel? Obviously you cannot take it with you on your seaside holiday. So you buy new locks for the doors to your house and you bar your windows and you alert your neighbors. You tell them about the proposed holiday and ask them to look after your house — and the safe in it. And they say they will, of course.

You should be quite at ease and so you go off on your holiday.

You go to the beach, and it's wonderful. Marvelous. The palm trees are swaying in the wind, and the spot you've chosen on the beach is nice and clean. The waves are warm and it's all lovely. The first day you really enjoy yourself. But on the second day you begin to wonder; the neighbors are very nice people, but they do go and visit their children. They are not always at home, and lately there has been a rash of burglaries in the neighborhood. And on the third day you've convinced yourself that something dreadful is going to happen, and you go back home. You walk in and open the safe. Everything is all right. You go over to the neighbors and they ask, "Why did you come back? We were looking after your place. You didn't have to come back. Everything is fine."

The next year, the same thing. Again you tell the neighbors, "Now this time I am really going to stay away for a month. I need this holiday as I've been working hard." So they say, "Absolutely no need to worry, just take off. Go to the beach." So once more you bar the windows, lock the doors, get everything shipshape, and take off for the beach. Again, it's wonderful, beautiful. This time you last for five days. On the fifth day you are convinced that something dreadful must have happened. And you go home. You go home, and by golly, it has. The jewel is gone. You are in a state of complete collapse. Total desperation. Depressed. So you go to the neighbors, but they have no idea what has happened. They've been around all the time. Then you sit and consider the matter and you realize that since the jewel is gone, you might as well go back to the beach and enjoy yourself!

That jewel is *self*. Once it is gone, all the burden of looking after it, all the fears about it, all the barring of doors and windows and heart and mind is no longer necessary. You can just go and enjoy yourself while you're still in this body. After proper investigation, the frightening aspect of losing this thing that seemed so precious turns out to be the only relief and release from worry that there is.

There are three doors to liberation: the signless, the desireless, and emptiness. If we understand impermanence, *anicca*, fully, it is called the signless liberation. If we understand suffering, *dukkha*, fully, it is the desireless liberation. If we understand no-self, *anatta*, fully, then it is the emptiness liberation. Which means we can go through any of these three doors. And to be liberated means never to have to experience an unhappy moment again. It also means something else: it means we are no longer creating kamma. A person who has been completely liberated still acts, still thinks, still speaks and still looks to all intents and purposes like anybody else, but that person has lost the idea that *I am* thinking, *I am* speaking, *I am* acting. Kamma is no longer being made because there is just the thought, just the speech, just the action. There is the experience but no experiencer. And because no kamma is being made any longer, there is no rebirth. That is full enlightenment.

In this tradition, three stages of enlightenment have been classified before one comes to the fourth stage, full enlightenment. The first stage, the one we can concern ourselves with — at least theoretically — is called *sotapanna*, stream-enterer. It means a person who has seen Nibbana once and has thereby entered the stream. That person cannot be deterred from the Path any more. If the insight is strong, there may be only one more life-time. If the insight is weak, it can be seven more life-times. Having seen Nibbana for oneself once, one loses some of the difficulties one had before. The most drastic hindrance that one loses is the idea that this person we call "I" is a separate entity. The wrong view of self is lost. But that doesn't mean that a *sotapanna* is constantly aware of no-self. The wrong view is lost. But the right view has to be reinforced again and again and experienced again and again through that reinforcement.

Such a person no longer has any great interest, and certainly no belief, in rites and rituals. They may still be performed because they are traditional or that are customary, but such a person no longer believes they can bring about any kind of liberation (if they ever believed that before). And then a very interesting thing is lost: skeptical doubt. Skeptical doubt is lost because one has seen for oneself that what the Buddha taught was actually so. Until that time skeptical doubt will have to arise again and again because one can easily think: "Well, maybe. Maybe it's so, but how can I be sure?" One can only be sure through one's own experience. Then, of course, there is no skeptical doubt left because one has seen exactly that which has been described, and having seen it, one's own heart and mind gives an understanding which makes it possible to see

everything else.

Dhamma must have as its base the understanding that there is no special entity. There is continuity, but there is no special entity. And that continuity is what makes it so difficult for us to see that there really isn't anybody inside the body making things happen. Things are happening anyway. So the first instance of having seen a glimpse of freedom, called stream-entry, makes changes within us. It certainly does not uproot greed and hate — in fact, they are not even mentioned. But through the greater understanding such a person has, the greed and the hate lessen. They are not as strong anymore, and they do not manifest in gross ways, but do remain in subtle ways.

The next stages are the once-returner, then the non-returner, then the arahant. Once-returner, one more life in the five-sense world. Non-returner, no human life necessary, and arahant, fully enlightened. Sensual desire and hate only go with non-returners, and complete conceit of self, only with arahant.

So we can be quite accepting of the fact that since we are not arahants, we still have greed and hate. It isn't a matter of blaming oneself for having them: it's a matter of understanding where these come from. They come from the delusion of *me*. I want to protect this jewel which is *me*. That is how they arise. But with the continued practice of meditation, the mind can become clearer and clearer. It finally understands. And when it does understand, it can see transcendental reality. Even if seen for one thought-moment, the experience is of great impact and makes a marked change in our lives.

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#### **From the Isha Upanishad:**

1. At the heart of this phenomenal world,  
within all its changing forms,  
dwells the unchanging One.  
So, go beyond the changing,  
and, enjoying the inner,  
cease to take for yourself  
what to others are riches.

2. Unilluminated indeed are those worlds clouded  
by the blinding darkness of ignorance.  
Into this death sink all those who slay the Self.

3. The One Self never moves,  
Yet is too swift for the mind.  
The senses cannot reach it,  
Yet is ever beyond their grasp.  
Remaining still, it outstrips all activity,  
Yet in it rests the breath of all that moves.

4. It moves, yet moves not.  
It is far, yet it is near.  
It is within all this,  
And yet without all this.

5. He who sees everything as nothing but the Self,  
And the Self in everything he sees,  
Such a seer withdraws from nothing.

6. For the enlightened, all that exists  
Is nothing but the Self,  
So how could any suffering or delusion  
Continue for those who know this oneness?

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