

Swami Chinmayananda

Article : Who am I?

Description

If I am not the body, the merciless destinies through which it is being dragged are also not mine. The endless changes that come to me—birth, growth, decay disease and death, all belong to the physical body, because 'I' the self am unborn. When there is no birth for Me there can be no death either, and, therefore no other changes such as growth, senility etc. can ever come to me. If I mistake any of these to be mine, it is unfortunately the tragic error of the limited ego in me suffering from the body consciousness. Being other than the body, I am unattached to the sense-objects as well. If I am not the physical body or the sense organs, what then am I? A zero? A non-entity?

Am I then the mind? The mind is that substantial hallucination of terrific force and irresistible might that we feel in ourselves when our thoughts flow. It is ever changing in its moods. The idiosyncrasies of the mind are its own creation. The mind flourishes on thoughts, and thoughts gurgle from my own desire, acquired from my perception and experience of objects extraneous to myself. When I am thus really something other than the mind, and when I realize that it is the illumination of my Self that gives the power of awareness to this inert matter, the mind, I cannot but remain perfectly unaffected by the eruption in that aspect of any physical structure. When I have awakened from my dream I no longer can mourn for the dream-child that died in my dream. I have ceased to identify myself with the mental emotions and so how can I, be any longer a victim of the onslaught of sorrow, fear etc., which are but the modifications of my mind? I am without a mind.

In all conditions good, bad or indifferent, this "some-thing" in our life—within us—has remained unchanged, and this is generally indicated by the word 'I'. The

subject 'I' remains a changeless entity, common in all changes, experiencing them all. In each one of us it takes up different attitudes, at different places and at different times, such as child-hood, youth and old-age; waking, dream and deep-sleep; happy, unhappy, etc. In all such conditions, behind the very subject I, there is a common changeless factor, the Consciousness. This factor is, by its own nature, formless and changeless, depending upon which

we have the constant experience of I.....I.....I.....our individuality. This subject in each one of us is a mere witness of the three states of Consciousness the waking, dream and deep-sleep states. In the waking state, it is 'I the waker'; in dream it is again 'I the dreamer'; and when fast asleep too, it is 'I the deep-sleeper'. In these states of Con-sciousness the T remains a mere witness. It neither undergoes any changes characteristic of these states, nor does it have any share in them. This I-ness gains vivid experiences of all the three different states. Let me give you an example to clarify the idea.

I, the individual going to Surat, Ahmedabad and Bombay, gather to myself three different experiences at the three different places. Let us say, at Surat I was loved, at Ahmedabad I was honored and at Bombay I was insult-ed, Surat is not Ahmedabad. Surat and Ahmedabad are not Bombay. It was not at Surat, Ahmedabad and Bombay at one and the same time. The experiences of three different places, at the three different times are different, yet all these experiences are mine, because I was the common factor in all the three places and all the three times. This is so in the waking, dream and deep-sleep states also. The waker himself becomes the dreamer and the deep-sleeper and gains the experience of the dream and the deep-sleep. But during these changes in the states of consciousness, he himself never undergoes any change, but remains as a mere witness.

Atman being the witness of the three states of conscious-ness, It is indeed, something other than the five-sheaths— the food-sheath, the vital-air-sheath, the mental-sheath, the intellectual-sheath, and the bliss-sheath. The Atman is not identified with, and therefore is never limited by, any of these sheaths. It is something other than them, know-ing them and their individual involvements in the world around and within.

That faculty in me because of which I am able to know, constantly, all my experiences of waking, dream and deep-sleep is called the Atman or Self. By this faculty I am not only aware of the world of objects around me, but I am also equally aware of the equipments of knowledge within me and their main functions.

I know my intellect, the instrument with which I know other things. All my inner equipments (antah karana), are also objects of my experience from the stand-point of the Self. In my mind and intellect, where all activities are disturbances (vrittis), I am aware of them all. When there are no mental disturbances, I am equally aware of the absence of all (vrittis), as in deep-

sleep. The agitations are known. I am aware of not only my intellect and the thoughts in it, but also of the absence of thoughts. This knower, I, is "This"—the great Consciousness to be realized as the subjective Essence.

In each one of us it is this Consciousness alone which knows constantly the world of objects around us, as well as the intellect and its thoughts, nay, even the absence of thoughts. Remember the intellect can investigate only the presence of things; Consciousness can illumine their absence as well. This grand knowing Principle constantly enlivens us. It is the Self we talk of as "This", the subject.

I am then that consciousness which illumines all this dead world of matter in and around me—the Absolute One; the Immutable Spirit that revels everywhere, which remains ever unattached. I am Pure Intelligence itself: I am that Higher and Imperishable Truth which is beyond all explanations and beyond the concept of time but within the experience of everyone when there is Self realization.