

KNOW YOURSELF-JNANA YOGA

Irrespective of your position or your circumstances in this life, there is one thing, one fundamental thing which is immediate, direct and common to all. It is that I exist. Irrespective of all the variety that may come into this life in terms of experiences, interests and events, that fact that I exist remains fundamental.

There is an immensely strong drive in the human species to make sense of itself and to achieve some resolution of purpose. Throughout history this drive has fuelled discovery, adventure, and the urge to learn and seek. This is as true in the physicist, the artist, the priest and the yoga Sadhak. Today, as you sit here experiencing the individuality of your life, your actions are responding to the interests that drive you. Clearly these interests feel personalised and private to you, they feel self-created, but these choices and interests are manifestations of a common drive in the human mind. In simple terms we could describe this as the drive to find meaning, to reach the fruition of what's possible, to be safe, secure and happy or to know oneself.

Please accept, and with a little thought, you can accept, that this universe, this existence and this life you are living has spontaneously arisen – there is nothing you have done to bring it about. It is happening to you and it is like this for everyone.

I know you can make theoretical sense of it by applying the learning of biology, physics and evolution, but these are lines of thought which you experience as language in the mind and I am asking you to be more direct than that, more immediate.

You know you exist; you know the experiences and events that happen to you. This knowing is the *you* I mean when I say there is nothing *you* have done to bring your life about, it is happening to you, to that knowing itself.

Let us also point out that as a person you are entirely unique, and that in this spontaneously arisen life the participation you make in the whole is as much a part of nature expressing herself as the flight of the swifts, the urgency of the honey bees, the birthing of the lambs and the rising and setting of the sun. It is all automatic, it is all nature, it is all life in its fullness. You might find this hard to accept, because your experience feels more sophisticated than this, more full of choices and responsibilities. This leads you to feeling independent, individual and separate from nature. Well, consider it deeply and you will conclude that despite your impression of an independent free thinking life, actually the thoughts that move through this mind, the choices that are made, the actions that are undertaken and the interactions with the environment that arise are as much nature expressing herself as anything else.

Do you know what this means? It means that the you which knows this life can relax in the comfort that it is meant to be like this, can relax and watch the

choices as they arise and witness the actions as they take place. This does not mean doing nothing for that's impossible but it does mean recognising that the doing is taking place by itself, while the you which knows, witnesses it and is untouched by it.

The whole world is full of opportunities to derive comfort, pleasure, meaning and purpose. All of these are open to the actor in you, but whatever you do, whatever it is there will be a you that knows it, a you that is more intimate than the thing itself. You may find it tricky to make this distinction because life appears as a powerful entanglement of thoughts, feelings and ideas, but with some clarity of thought, with some persistence you will conclude that whatever you do, there is a you that knows it, and that this you is not another thought, it is a state of existence, the intimate first person, the subject of all that is seen, the self, the I.

To realise this you need a focus, a tangible route. This route is founded in Jnana yoga and articulated through the practice of Atma Vichara as surrendering into the presence of the feeling I am. This is not a feeling of sensation in the way you are used to experiencing an emotion or a mood. It is more a plane of familiarity and intimacy, that, without thinking about, you recognize as yourself. The feeling I exist, the feeling I am, find it, hold it, merge in it, and allow it to deepen and carry you.

To establish how to do this you will have to apply yourself. You will have to endure doubts and confusions. You will have to be patient, persistent and strong. You will have to have an interest in your practice, affection for it – you will have to want it.

Where these things are in place, then all you need is practice and the link with the point of reference of a teacher, the fellowship of sangha and the opportunity for satsang. There is a power in these things, you can put your questions, clear doubts and through your own adventuring know yourself.