

Friday, 18 October 2024

Journey to the Self

Yesterday, we discussed differentiating between the mind and yourself. So, tell me, what did you understand from yesterday's talk? We discussed staying away from the ego, that we are not our body, and we are not our mind. Consciousness is equal to the soul or the Higher Self. The one who knows what is true is the consciousness.

So, what is consciousness? It's the one who knows. Finally, where does knowledge reach? It reaches the seer.

When we speak about the conscious and subconscious, we are talking about the mind—different states of the mind. But today, we are speaking about consciousness itself. It's simple, so let's avoid using too many terminologies. Often, we think we know the meaning of certain words, but when we ask ourselves what they really mean, we may not know. For example, everyone uses the word "Vata," but when I ask, "What is Vata?" I get different answers from everyone.

Let me use this as an analogy: When you see me, you aren't really seeing me. You are seeing the shape, size, color of my body, and hearing my voice. People who know me may recognize my hairstyle or how I dress. Based on these external properties and actions, you assume you are seeing me. But what if it's not me? What if it's my twin brother? (I do have a brother; he's in Texas.)

The point is, when you see an object, there is a process. There is a sense organ (your eyes), a sensory center, and the brainstem, or higher mental faculties, that observe the sensory center. For example, your brain has an optic center that receives the image transmitted from your retina. There's a part of your brain that observes this optic center, and from there, your mind observes the senses. All of this—the senses, the sensory center, and the mind—are your apparatus or tools of knowing.

When you say, "I," where do you point? Usually, you point toward your chest, not your head. Children do this too. When I ask them, "Where are you?" they point to their chest. But when your mind troubles you, you hit your head, indicating you know where your mind is and where you are.

Today, in meditation, we practiced traveling from the head (the mind) to the heart (the soul). It's possible to move from the senses to the mind and then to the soul. It's not very difficult, but it requires practice.

Perception follows a sequence of steps:

1. The object outside makes contact with the sense organ (like when a smell stimulates the nerve endings in your nose).
2. The sense organ sends the stimulus to the sensory center in the brain.
3. The mind contacts the sensory center in the brain and perceives the sensation.
4. Finally, the mind makes contact with the soul.

For example, when you smell something, your brain is connecting to the olfactory center, and at that moment, you are not perceiving anything else. Your mind can only focus on one sensation at a time.

Let's do a simple exercise. Look at this plant in front of you. Observe its shape, the color of the pot, the ridges, the white lines on the leaves. Now, close your eyes and try to visualize the plant. Picture the shape, the color, the leaves, the lines. Could you do it? This is not just visualization; you are recalling a visual memory and focusing on it with your mind.

This process is similar to what happens in dreams. The mind recreates an image based on past experiences. It's the same process, but in dreams, the visualization is more imaginative. What you just did was bring back a real impression created by your senses.

Now, you see how you can observe your mind. From where you observe, that's your mind. The sensation exists in your brain, but it comes to you—your consciousness. If the mind doesn't connect with the sensory center, you won't be aware of the sensation. That's why there's a contact between the mind and the soul.

There are four levels of contact:

1. Contact between the sense organ and the object.
2. Contact between the sense organ and the sensory center in the brain.
3. Contact between the mind and the sensory center.
4. Contact between the mind and the soul.

If there's a blockage at any of these levels, perception is lost. But perception happens so fast that it feels like one continuous process. This is why people often get lost in the complexity of perception and forget their true identity.

Now, about consciousness: Most of what we do—over 70%—is for the mind. Some of it is for the body. But how much do we do for our consciousness? Not much.

The only thing the soul can consume is knowledge—experiential knowledge, not just intellectual knowledge. You can read about a plant, watch a video, and talk to people about it, but none of that can replace the experience of seeing the plant in person. This is what makes experiential knowledge invaluable.

Experience is divided into two categories: pain and pleasure. Your consciousness responds to experiences either as joyful or painful, and it has a tendency to seek joy and avoid pain. This is the basic nature of consciousness.

Ultimately, we are all seeking the highest state of joy, but unfortunately, we often seek it in the wrong places. For instance, when I do consultations in France, people say, “We are French, don’t ask us to stop eating cheese!” The Dutch say the same about cheese. Everyone is seeking joy but in different forms.

At the core, you are a consciousness whose function is to experience. The experiences you have lead to either joy or pain. Your mind, body, emotions—none of these are the true “you.” The mind is an organ, just like your hands or legs, and it should be given the same importance—not more.

Yesterday, I told you not to be confused that you are your mind. Today, I explained what you are—your consciousness—and how its nature is to seek joy. And in this process the mind creates a big drama around it. I know it is not so easy to experience what I’m trying to tell you. It is the subtleties of your experience.

It’s fine, you can try to think over what I have spoken about, what is the Self, the Soul or Consciousness, and what is its nature, and what is it trying to do to this life?

