

# *Expanding the I* RETREAT DAY

WITH SWAMINI VINAYANANDA



Two birds bound to each other in friendship sit on the self-same tree. One of them eats the fruits of the tree with relish, while the other just looks on, without eating.

MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

We have seen the wonderful teaching given in the analogy of the two birds on the one tree. Two “I”s; one the witnessing Consciousness that just IS and the other, a mind-made self. One the I AM, the other the I am BMI, the PFT. One experienced as unity and the other as a duality of an individual “me” and the a separate and other “world”.

The real I, the scriptures say is the Witnessing Consciousness that just IS, pure Being -Consciousness.



Let us have a look at another analogy or metaphor, that of a single **lamp illuminating a theatre**.

Here the lamp represents the witnessing Consciousness that illumines both the stage and the actors who perform the drama on it. It even illumines their absence when the play is finished. The lamp is just the silent, changeless, motionless light that illumines everything.

Of course, our attention is focused on the drama, the actors on the stage and never on the light. In the same way, all our attention in life is focused on the mind, senses, objects and my “me”, the actor (doer) and the narrative of the story of “my life” and we are unaware of the awareness which knows it all, my true Self! I take myself as the actor (doer) and I am completely unaware of the Consciousness that I AM which knows it all and does nothing whatsoever.

We have seen now, that every experience we have can be summarised as follows:

**Experience = Awareness + Mind**

and on enquiry of which one is I, the awareness or the mind? We have concluded that I am not the transient mind but the ever-present awareness that just IS. I am the seer, not the seen. In our new analogy, I am the light illumining the theatre and the mind is the theatre with its actors and actions taking place on the stage etc.

We have also seen over our last classes, the nature of mind as a **triputi** which gives us the experience of **duality**. Let us just revisit this briefly.

### **TRIPUTI; THE EXPERIENCE OF DUALITY**

Mind functions in what is called a **triputi**.

Triputi means mind creates a **threefold experience** of **subject, object and an activity linking them** ie: an experiencer, experiencing, an experienced thing/object.

It creates a **duality** of **subject and object**. The subject is **other than** the object.

#### **Subject Action Object**

Seer, seeing, seen

Knower, knowing, known.

Hearer, hearing, heard (sound).

Driver, driving, driven (car)

Cook, cooking, cooked (food)

This **mental subject** is the **ego**! In our analogy this is the actor on the stage.

When we take ourselves as a particular BMI, we become the **triputi subject**, we are the limited doer (karta), identified and conditioned by the object and activity. We experience **otherness, separation, duality and limitation**. This is the ego.

So, the question is, **Who knows all three aspects of mind?**

I do, the witnessing consciousness that just watches, our lamp in the theatre!

So, when we say with every experience there is **Awareness + mind**

We mean **Awareness + Mind (doer, doing, done to: knower, knowing known: enjoyer, enjoying, enjoyed ie: triputi of subject object duality)**

“The word “I” contains the deepest truth or the greatest error, depending on its use!!”

ECKHART TOLLE

There are two “I”s. One is the **real Self** and the other **mind born “I”** is illusory, not true.

Awareness is the real “I” and the doer subject in the mind (the mental triputi) is the false “I”

My mind withdrew its thoughts from experience, extracting itself from the contrary throng of sensory images, that it might find out what that light was wherein it was bathed.... And thus, with a flash of one hurried glance, it attained to the vision of That which IS.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

Just like Saint Augustine we have to practise meditation. We have to practise Atma-anatma viveka.

I am not anything seen, I am the seer, the Witness (**Sakshi**).

I am the seer **of the whole** triputi, the experiencer, experiencing, the experienced! And not the seer **in** the triputi!

I am the **watcher** of the **whole play of mind**, the me-actor, acting on the stage of the world!!

The way out is to see the “me”, the mental subject **as an object!**

Watch the driver driving the car!

Watch the cooker cooking the dinner.

**EXERCISE:** Whatever your body is doing keep some of your attention **watching** it  
When we learn to watch the body acting, rather than be the body,  
watch the mouth speaking, rather than being the speaker,  
watch the mind thinking rather than being the thoughts and the thinker etc  
we will observe that we see the body as an **object!** Not as the **subject** !!!!  
We have moved out of the identification to mind to the **Witnessing Consciousness!**  
I will know what **I am not** and **what I am!**

### KENA UPANISHAD

In the Kena Upanishad it says

**Pratibodha-viditam matam amruta-tattvam hi vindate**  
He indeed attains Immortality, who intuits it (Consciousness)  
in and through every modification of the mind (thought).

KENA UPANISHAD 2:4

This method to know the Self is called upalabdhi dvaaram, a **“doorway”** to realize Brahman.  
It means the Self can be clearly seen with every thought.

Let us understand.

T: Now tell me, what is there on my hand? (Shows a watch)

S: A watch!

T: Now what is there on my hand? (Shows a book)

S: A book.

T: Now what is on my hand? (Shows an empty hand)

S: Nothing!

T: Now suppose it is pitch dark and I went through the same exercise and asked you what is on my hand. What would you know?

S: You can't know what would be on your hand as there is no light!

T: But just now you could positively say, “There is a watch, there is a book, there is nothing!” But if it is pitch dark you cannot say so positively. How is it you can say so positively just now?

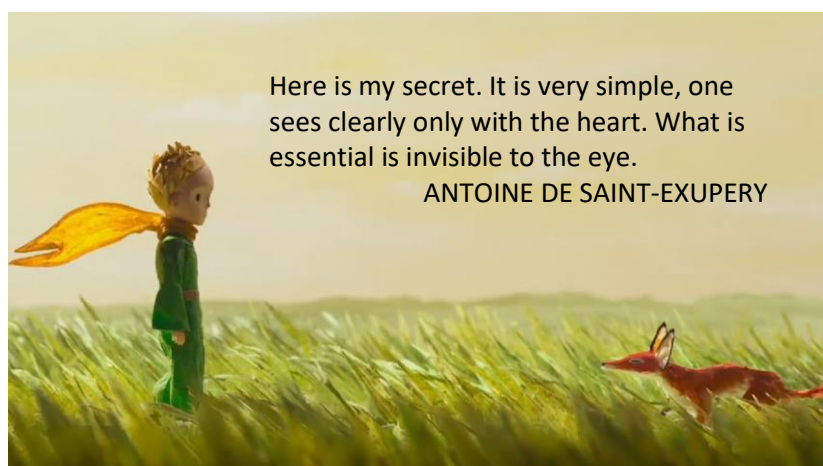
S: Because there is light present!

T: In every perception light is there!

You saw light + watch, light + book, light + hand! Let us call it the illumined watch, the illumined book, the illumined hand. But the light being the common thing and invisible, your attention never goes there. In the perception of every object and even its absence was not the light there? With every knowledge of something, I AM there and Awareness is there!! Turn your attention away from the thought/object to the awareness! Shift your focus from mind to the field of Consciousness!

Every experience = Awareness + mind

### PUTTING THE MIND IN THE HEART



The practise of witnessing lays down a strong practical foundation for making the transition from a **NARRATIVE** sense of self to the **UNITIVE** self.

“Put the mind **in** the Heart”

SAINT SIMEON

Witnessing, in the Orthodox Monastic tradition is the “attention of the Heart”, a shift from mind, polarized by the subject object thought forms to attention or awareness as a **unified field of knowingness**. This is the real meaning of “putting the mind in the Heart.” It is not so much a place you pay attention “**to**” but a place you pay attention “**from**”. As you dwell there, life becomes seamlessly whole.

Attention is not only a carbon arc shooting from subject to object as in the mind’s triputi. It is also a **field of awareness** in which the whole mind triputi is known. This is the Unitive Self, the Witnessing Consciousness that just IS.

**MEDITATION:** We are always putting our attention “**on**” something (the mind), now place it **in** the Heart. Place it “**in**” the field of Awareness! In our meditation practise, when your attention goes to thoughts, gently shift it to the attention! It is being aware of the awareness. Use these words in your mind, “on” and “in” to direct your attention.

Meditation is a shift from thought to attention!

Practise. What do you find?

**EXERCISE:**

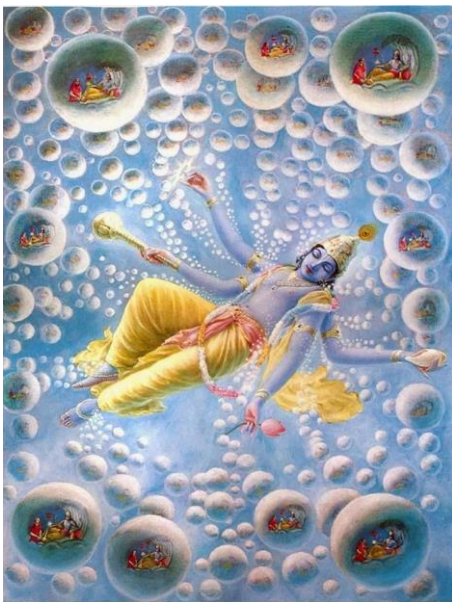
“Lift up a stone and I AM there.”

GOSPEL OF ST THOMAS

The “Lift up a stone” could have been “have a cup of coffee” or “read a book” or any activity of the mind triputi of subject, activity, object narrative. No matter what the story on the stage of the mind, I AM there, the witnessing Consciousness in which it all takes place.

Go outside for a walk. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, describe it as a sentence and add “**and I am there.**” Think of I AM as a **field of awareness**.

What did you find?



Like bubbles in water, the worlds arise, exist and dissolve in the Supreme Self, which is the material cause and support of everything.

ATMA BODHA VERSE 8

The God state of Consciousness is not something you can experience through the mind, because the mind can only experience that which has form or quality. But what are we searching for? Consciousness! All experiences of the mind are shining in the Light of Consciousness.

SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA

**REFLECTION:** How do you understand this picture?

Gurudev used to roar **“They are in Me, I am not in them!!”**

Thoughts arise in Me, the Infinite Consciousness-Being, I am not limited to those bubbles, those insubstantial ephemeral thought forms. I am Brahman! I am the Infinite expanse of Awareness-Being!

**EXERCISE:** Use this sentence continuously with understanding! Especially in meditation.

#### EXPANDING THE I:

#### **Brahma satyam jagan mithya jivo brahmaiva na para**

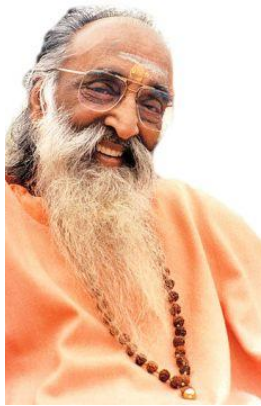
This is a summary of the teachings of the Upanishads.

Brahman is the Reality (truth, Sat) and the creation is mithya (appearance). Brahman and the individual are one and not other.

**I am Brahman**, is the truth. Aham Brahma- asmi  
I Brahman am  
I AM Brahman

**Aham Brahmaasmi** is indeed a great mantra from the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10 called a Maha Vakya, a Great Statement of Truth.

Let us look at some of the words of wisdom from Swami Chinmayananda



The objects of the world are not merely objects, but objects in the medium of Brahman, objects playing in the Ocean of Brahman. Meditation consists in identifying not with the object but with Brahman, in which the object is playing, through the use of the vritti (thought) “I am Brahman.” The first hand subjective experience of Brahman comes when the seeker ends the vritti (thought) that he is Brahman and lives as Brahman Itself.

One has to expand the mind into embracing Infinity. When one tries to expand the “I” into an unbroken, one-flow thought, the attempt to do so makes the “I” turn around and land in its own true Self.

The I AM, existence, is the Reality. It is Brahman, “big”, without limits.

#### **EXERCISE:**

Go for a walk outside and see if you can find anything that **is not**.

- What did you find?
- Meditation is shifting one’s attention from a focus on objects to existence. What did you find out about existence?
- What does the first sentence of the quote mean to you now?

The real I AM is Infinite, not confined to this small Body-Mind “me”. Practise this understanding, using the words “I am Brahman” as a support to practise this knowledge. It is a simultaneous understanding of who I am and renunciation of what I am not.

The world appears to be true so long as the Brahman, the substratum, the basis of all this creation, is not realised.

ATMA BODHA VERSE 7

My Grandmother, towards the close of her life, reflecting on her lifetime with my mother, said to her, “Well, what was all that about?” Shakespeare lets us know over and over again the insubstantiality of the play of mind. “Much ado about Nothing” being a very telling title to one of his plays!!!

**PERSONAL REFLECTION:**

By the Heart God can be gotten, by the mind never.  
THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

How do you understand this with the meaning of "heart" as the all-pervading Consciousness-Being?

Try and find the heart and abide there.  
SAINT SIMEON

God is not external to anyone, but is present  
within all things, though they are ignorant  
that He is so.

PLOTINUS

Know That by which everything is known.  
UPANISHADS

And ye shall seek me and find me when ye  
shall search for me with all your heart.

JEREMIAH

Reflect deeply on these words of wisdom. What understandings arises in your mind?