



*Satsang*  
*with Advaita Master*

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## **Knowledge and the I Am**

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When I first started practicing meditation back in the late 1960's, even before I went to Mt. Baldy, I had a job working in the library at Case Western Reserve University. My practice then was pretty intense. Every afternoon around 2 or 3 o'clock I would go into involuntary withdrawals where Consciousness sucked me lower and lower into myself, until I saw a great white light that I was falling towards. It scared the hell out of me because I knew it was the death of me.

Off and on over the years that state comes back. It still takes me deep inside, deep down, way beyond Consciousness. Today it took me very deep again, a tour of the beyond. I saw once again the truth that my real nature is entirely beyond Consciousness, that anything said or experienced in Consciousness can't possibly tell us anything about the prior-to-conscious state, the Absolute.

If you imagine that you are at the center of the wheel that is turning, in the absolute center there is almost no movement. You just change direction: 0 degrees to 90, to 180, to 270. But there is no motion; you just rotate from the calm center. Then you start following Consciousness outwards; the words, the experiences. Things go faster and faster, you become involved in it, the drama,

the machination, the hurt feelings, love, hate, desire, compassion. All of these happen in Consciousness and happen to your sense of self. But in the center there is no movement.

You know awareness comes and goes, Consciousness comes and goes. One year you are not born, then you're born. A few years later you become self-aware and the I am is born. But there is some principle to which all of this has occurred. There is some principle to which this knowingness and all these experiences have occurred. And the ultimate goal of traditional spirituality, Advaita, Zen, is to know this principle, the unborn Self, that part of the totality that is not part of this world but which observes the world.

Most of the time we have to go deep in meditation time after time after time to find this state. At first it is like a knowledge or conviction that you are there prior to Consciousness.

And then you have an experience of passing through Consciousness. The entire world out there and the world inside that you see, Nisargadatta's teacher called it the causal body, you pass through the causal body like Rajiv did a couple of years ago now. You realize in a way that which is beyond Consciousness, and apprehend that you are prior to Consciousness. You always were prior to Consciousness, and you always will be prior to Consciousness. And then Consciousness comes, and the I am is born. You realize you exist!

I am! I am! I am!

This overtakes us and we identify with the "I am," and the I am identifies with the body, and the feelings, and the emotions, but mostly with the body, and we lose our identity as the Absolute. As spiritual beings we struggle to get back to that identification, the principle beyond existence: another dimension entirely beyond existence, beyond Consciousness.

There are several ways to get to that absolute state. There is a man by the name of Douglas Harding who wrote a book on "Having No Head." It has lots of exercises that you can practice, that intuitively let you know a bit about that Absolute state. His exercises never worked for me. What worked for me was just to look within and find happiness resting in me.

You can practice Self-inquiry trying to find the location of the "I" and stare into the empty space, but then you think you are that empty space and that is a misidentification; that is only another phenomenon within Consciousness. Or you can identify with the "I am," that sense of Self, the sense that "I exist," that "I am sentient," that "I am perceiving," that "I am feeling," that "I am alive," and gradually that sense of I am gels, purifies, becomes lighter, becomes more powerful, becomes more all-knowing and the I am begins to reveal to you the nature of Consciousness, and of your true self, and you have to love the I am. I Am! I Am!

Many people find the I am through love; for in loving, they find I Am. In loving, they find I Am. In loving, they find I Am. You can, too.

But the I am is only a vessel, it is not the end. The involvement in the I am is not the end. Purification of the I am is not the end. The love the I am feels is not the end, and one day, Consciousness takes you deep – takes you to a place where you watch the comings and goings of all states of Consciousness, and you're there as a witness with no passion. No emotions. No love. You watch the comings and goings of the states of Consciousness, and the objects in Consciousness, totally beyond. And you realize that none of this has to do with me - the real me, that which is totally beyond Consciousness.

That's the beginning of freedom, real freedom; and to be able to rest in that state, the Absolute and to know that you're unborn, uncreated, you neither come nor go. The world comes and goes - you remain. The body dies, and you remain. All of Consciousness dies, and you remain. Can you feel this now in yourself? This

truth, that you are beyond the world, beyond Consciousness, beyond your body, beyond God, beyond love?

Know that you were there unborn, no attributes, no desires, complete.

Then you can stay here for a long time, absorbed in that which is beyond the world, your true self nature. Like Ramana, you do not move for a year. You sit on the floor of a cave and let insects eat your legs. You are glued to the floor with blood and pus, and you're totally beyond the world. They have to come and get your body and take it up to the temple and wash it, clean it, feed it, because you don't care. You don't care.

You have seen your true nature and you see that Consciousness is a mistake, Consciousness is hell. Consciousness is only sometimes bliss, for it contains all the horrors in this world. You do not want to come back. Why would I want to come back to that? Had I known when I was born, I would have refused Consciousness. I had no choice and I didn't know. Gradually we come back, slowly we rejoin the world. The I am becomes reborn, and our compassion is reborn, our love is reborn. And we are different. We no longer care about ourselves. Because we have known the truth that we are nothing, a mystery not to be known directly. We only know we exist because of movement within the I am, but what we are beyond that can never be known. With this we rest, and with this we tend to the hurt of the world.