

YOUR EXPERIENCE

What is your experience like?

There is no identification of a “your” or “my” in it. I don’t see a gap between me and my experience. I don’t see myself as “having” experience. Being and experience are inseparable.

No, I mean is it nondual? Is it happy? Is it better than mine?

Many people ask this. They look for a teacher who they feel has more blissful experiences than they do. Then they hang around, trying to get the same for themselves. They interpret experience in a personal way, and they are interested mainly in the emotional or affective component.

Sometimes the teacher encourages this message. But this comes from arrogance and a sense of separation on the

teacher's part, from thinking that he or she is different from or better than the student. The age-old message of self inquiry is not about emotions or feelings or interpersonal comparisons, but about knowing yourself. When one knows one's self as awareness, the basis for interpersonal comparison has evaporated.

Yes, I've heard this...

But if you, seeing yourself as a person, desire more pleasant feelings, there are many ways to proceed. Eat healthy foods, get plenty of sleep and exercise, think good thoughts, and treat people well. These are the things that grandmothers tell their grand kids. It's common sense that still holds true.

Meditation helps as well. Two quick examples. There is an emotional high and an expanded feeling from doing chanting meditation. The feeling is even greater if the chanting is in a tradition where you feel attracted to the symbols and images. Also, there is a heart-opening feeling from the Buddhist *metta* meditation, where you direct the wish for happiness and well being first to yourself, and then to wider and wider groups of people and beings, including all the sentient beings in all universes everywhere. The benefits from these meditations are tangible and immediate. You always feel better, lighter, more open and more loving afterwards. And the more you do them, the less you do them for your own benefit, and the longer the benefits last.

But what the ancient wisdom teachings talk about is something else.

Yes, but I want my experience to be lastingly blissful and nondual. Like yours and like the satsang teachers I hear, and Ramana's and Nisargadatta's experience.

Part of the reason you have this requirement is that you imagine others being separate but in this same state. But this isn't what they say about themselves. It isn't even what they're talking about. Ramana and Nisargadatta – not only are they not talking about emotional, phenomenal feelings states, but they are also not personalizing experience. The pointer given by all these teachings is not personal. The pointer directs you to see through the presumption of the separate person. The person cannot withstand inquiry. So it is not the person's experience they are talking about.

*Then what **are** they talking about? I thought Ramana and Nisargadatta were talking about themselves.*

Nisargadatta did speak later in his life of the pain. This is a clue that he wasn't speaking about blissful feeling states....

Yeah, what about an experience of pain? Isn't that a case of suffering in experience?

Experience is the vast, edgeless clarity in which things seem to arise. It possesses no point of view or stake in things. Maybe it seems like experience is "yours" – but actually everything you can point to that feels like "you" is arising in experience.

What do you mean?

Look at your hand. ... Now close your eyes and allow your hand to rest on your knee. ... It probably seems like it's your hand. But everything you can say about it is based on a thought, or image, a kinesthetic feeling, or a belief. These thoughts and feelings aren't tied down to an owner. They are not located or centered, but float free in awareness. There is nothing about these feelings, and nothing in awareness, that makes any of it "yours." There is no tie to a person. The person is not the experiencer; the person is experienced.

How can I know that? It seems like I have a definite stake in things. Because I want, what did you say? – The "edge..."

Edgeless clarity?

Yes! Once I hear something like this, it feels natural to want it for myself.

Yes it does. This is natural as long as you take yourself to be a container of experience. It seems to you that experience is something that happens inside you, and that other people have their own experiences inside them. But it is the other way around. Your body, your mind, and everything identifiable about you are experiencED, witnessED. Body, mind, thoughts, values and memories are all objects. The clarity is the light within which they arise.

Wow! It's like backwards. But is this something I can see?

You're seeing it now! Actually, all seeing **is** it. You can't possess it, because it is the space within which you appear. It's like the airline passenger wanting to hold up the plane, when the plane is holding up the passenger.

Ah, I felt a shift there.... But a moment later, when I think about it a little, it doesn't seem like that to me.

Don't try to reason it out. Stand farther back for a moment and be open.... The person is something you seem to observe as if from a small distance. You aren't actually the skull, mind, body or memories of the person – those are objects that are observed. You are what they appear to – that global experience, that openness, within which things seem to arise. The body, the mind, even the entire person seems to arise within this openness. The openness is you, which is why it seems that “you” notice things arising.

*But why aren't **all** my experiences like these close, direct ones you mention?*

These seemingly close, direct experiences are teaching metaphors for what is now and always the case. All experience is always direct – there is no partition or mediation, no veil, and no subject/object split.