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The Knower and the Known are One, not Two

There's something I wanted to talk about and I think it would be helpful. It's the whole crux of the matter so to speak... critical... critical... in this unraveling. In the Bhagavad Gita, we're told to 'know the knower' — **know the knower** — and I'd like to look at that because it can clarify a lot of the illusion — ALL of the illusion if one is amenable to it.

The knower and the known arise as one solid holographic projection within the Absolute — in dream-like form — as though two mirrors were facing one another without there really being such a thing as mirrors, two reflected surfaces.

And on one side there are pictures being displayed, on the other side there's a 'knower' of the pictures being displayed that has no 'person'.

And it's flashing on and off, at lightening speed. And between the two there's a so called 'mind' which is just a stream of language with something called 'I' that gets identified with by the 'knower'.

And behind all that is what we call the ‘witness’, made of the same stuff!

Knower and the known, perceiver and the perceived, behind which stands a witness that does not arise and fall — it’s ever present, never moves — and nowhere a ‘person’... only Oneness.

When you hear, when one hears, ‘know the knower’, immediately the mind says “OK *I want to know the knower*”. That’s the ‘knower’ — who’s false! — saying “OK *I’m going to go find the knower*”... and it looks and looks and looks and looks.

There’s the knower and the known, the whole universe that we call the universe — and there’s infinite universes, there is not one universe that exists somewhere.

Now if I call it ‘your’ universe I’m really going way off... now I’m leading you down the garden path so I won’t say that... but there’s a knower and a known that creates the ‘apparent’ universe — instantaneously in a no-time Absolute.

There’s the knower-observer-feeler — feeling arises — and there’s a noticer of the feeling. A thought comes up in Mind, “*I hate myself*”, there’s a noticer of the thought. There is a knower and the thought.

The knower and the thought arise as ONE.

There’s a huge assumption being made that this ‘I’ that knows the thought, is separate from the thought, and they’re arising together and they fall together back into Silence.

“*I want to go to Hawaii*” comes up. It’s assumed there’s an ‘I’ that has the thought that it wants to go to Hawaii when the ‘I’ and the Hawaii thought arise as one solid holographic event. What notices THAT? There’s something witnessing THAT which is what is always called the ‘witness’.

So, Nisargadatta put it this way, very beautifully... I’m going to paraphrase...

“...as long as the knower and the known are seen as separate, or believed to be separate, the witness stands apart. When the knower

and the known are seen to be one, the witness is one with them and witnessing happens.”

This belief — in the fiction — in the assumed separation of these thoughts, feelings... ‘I’ have these... someone will say “*I have this feeling, this feeling comes up, and I have it.*” That’s all one solid thing coming up and going down back into the nothingness.

And it belongs to no one because if you’re not the thought... if obviously the thought is an object... let’s just take it from the point of view of the fiction — fictionally say I have a thought, “*I hate myself.*” Now I could say to someone, that thought “*I hate myself.*” ... you noticed it, something noticed that thought, so you can’t be the thought.

When it’s realized that all this arises instantaneously like we’ve always talked about, and the knower and the thought are one, then YOU can’t be the knower of the thought — if it’s one. Like the Bhagavad Gita says, ‘*know the knower*’.

Once it’s known that this is one imaginary illusion of a knower and an object — that’s the illusion — but something still has to be witnessing that.

Again, like I always say, for something to be perceived as transitional, the thought comes and the thought goes. Arises and subsides. One solid unit. “*I like ice cream.*” It’s assumed that there’s an ‘I’ that’s real, that likes ice cream. But what witnesses that? The witness itself which is pure consciousness — the I AM without thoughts, memories, associations, perceptions — *I-amness*.

And this assumption creates all the pain, creates all the suffering, because if it’s assumed there’s an ‘I’ that has these feelings, these pains, these disturbing thoughts... or wonderful thoughts... whatever it is, as long as there’s an ‘I’ that has a wonderful thought, then that same ‘I’ could have the opposite and claim that.

There’s a claimer that’s not real... absolutely not real, it’s language.

A one year old does not have a thought “*I hate myself.*” It doesn’t even know that it ‘is’ yet, but it is, it has *I-amness*. It’s witnessing. Now this has been going on for a long, quote/unquote ‘time’ for a lot of us, so this is a very, very entrenched belief and assumption. Trust me, it’s not true.

Now, you could have a thought right now, “*I’m not so sure he knows what he’s talking about.*” That ‘I’ and the thought about ‘*he... not so sure what he’s talking about*’ is just the Mind. Just language coming up in space. No entity has that thought, it doesn’t point anywhere. **No one had that thought.** The witness didn’t have it. The witness doesn’t think.

Now, once, as Maharaj said... the witness stands apart as long as there’s a knower separate from the known, as long as there’s a belief that there’s a world out there and an ‘I’ seeing it, a knower of the world, as being separate, the witness stands apart.

It cannot be experienced, even though it’s there because the belief is so strong in this false entity, this false ‘I’ that is one with the thought itself... or feeling... emotion... a claimer of it... as separate, as long as that’s there you’re lost in the wilderness of this illusionary world and you’re bound to suffer — you may have some joys — but they’ll certainly follow with suffering.

There’ll never be a fulfillment because the witness is gone, it’s veiled, the veil has dropped, very hard... for everybody. Quote, ‘every’ quote ‘body’. There is no everybody.

And, once — the knower and the known — as the Bhagavad Gita says, ‘*know the knower*’... there’s no one to know the knower, but when it’s seen that the knower and the known are one, then the witness unites, then it’s all one. Witnessing happens, to no one, but then ‘witnessing’ happens. That’s what happens upon so-called ‘awakening’ and yet the witness, the conscious witness, still has a sense of ‘presence’.

This *I-amness* is the first concept, it itself is part of the illusion.

Even the witness. You have many people who get to that point where they’re witnessing and it’s... “*I am witnessing...*”

Like I always say, you hear a lot of the Neo-Advaitan’s... “*find that presence*”... that’s very important, that’s step one. That’s what Maharaj always said (paraphrasing), “*the knowledge must come, but then the knowledge has to go.*”

The knowledge that he’s talking about is not... it’s certainly not that fictitious ‘I’ that feels separate having knowledge ‘of something’... it’s Knowledge with a

capital K, it's unspeakable knowledge of the witness. But many — 'up there' — thinking there's no longer an urge to go any further and the 'I' comes back in and they're awakened... there's 'someone' who's enlightened, there's 'someone' who's found something. Even the thought... RESIST the thought that 'I' want to be awakened. The thought 'I' and 'want to be awakened' arise as one in the Mind. It's the Mind saying "*I want to be awakened.*" Every step moving into that, is a step away from what you ARE.

'WHAT IS' does not need to be awakened, it is 'THAT', we are 'THAT'.

But this idea of a separate knower from the known is the strongest part of this illusion. It wasn't there when we were very, very young. And when I say when we were very, very young, that body-mind organism is made of dream stuff, this is a DREAM of this! And then within the dream of quote "Big Mind", within Parabrahman's display saying "*look what I can do*". Maharaj said once — (paraphrasing) "*All this manifestation appears to be is an advertisement for Parabrahman.*"

This *unknown, unmanifest* consciousness, the substratum of ALL... ONENESS... prior to the word oneness, because you can only say it's oneness as long as the dream is being expressed — we're talking from the expression itself looking back — from that it's just love, **IT** is love. Pure, perfect... prior to the word perfect because that implies something could be imperfect... LOVE!

And it loves to do this, like I always say, this is its **expression** of love. The 'I' will come up and go... "*well, there's a lot of things not going on right here!*" That's just fine, it never happened, there's no 'sting' once it's seen from ITS perspective; from Reality's perspective nothing ever happened. It's only this fictitious 'I' that believes its in a world that's claiming a problem with it.

So, anytime ANY thought comes up, any and EVERY thought, because in order to untangle this there is a certain amount of diligence that has to be applied, just has to be. Eventually everyone's going to be enlightened... at some point... no one's going to get lost.

But how much do you want to know Reality?

How much is your heart willing to extend itself to know Reality?

This 'I'... this fictitious 'I'... is so willing to continue in this fictitious ownership of something, it'll do it right up to the last moment when this body is laying on its death bed and then it's going to go "*Holy Shit! I don't know... what?... I'm sorry, now I'm scared! Now I'm frightened! Because I don't know who I am... I don't know this!*" This fear will come in, that's why everyone is so fearful of quote/unquote 'death'.

If one finds reality **before that passing**, there's no death, because you die while you're IN the dream. That's what Parabraham is extending to us, that's the invitation, its inviting us: "*Come on, I'm right here, come on in.*"

**But everyone is addicted to this thinking.
They just CAN'T stop thinking and believing.**

That's why it takes... for many... to reach a full point of pain. You should pity all the ones in the world — quote/unquote 'dreamworld' — who have it so damn good life is just 'A'... you know, they've got the fast cars, they've got the big house, lots of money... 'they' think — they, their fictitious 'I' — thinks everything is fine when in reality the only purpose of 'coming' into this dream is to become free of death.

We all can watch and see all the media... all these famous people who, boy, they've got world by the you-know-what and they, when they start getting later in life, will start injecting plastics into this body that its identified with to make it look like it's going to go on forever.

This 'I', this fictitious 'I', wants to go on forever, when it's so obvious, even on a relative level, that it's not.

"Ahhh, there's always going to be a tomorrow"... REALLY? There's no such thing but even — I'm speaking relatively — this is how deluded this 'I'-sense has become: "*Ah, it's alway going to be... yeah... yeah... tomorrow...*" All of a sudden, and we don't know, we could drop dead of a heart attack, this body could just drop — Hari Om Tat Sat — oh, oh, back in again... in diapers!

Now once this is seen though, once the witness moves forward — that's why I always say it's like a moving forward — because this knower and known, as long as they are separate — or perceived to be separate — the witness stands apart.

When it's understood — if you can contemplate, just openly contemplate, really accept — that the thought 'I' and anything else or, even a thought - *'this sucks'* there doesn't have to be an 'I'-thought with it, the thought comes up *'this suck's'*, there's an assumed knower who we identify with that's saying *'this sucks'* when it's just this 'thought'... *'this sucks'*.

To me, if I have a thought *'this sucks'*, there's no attachment to it. I'm not the mind, I know that. It doesn't mean anything — it's silly, it's laughable. But when one is in the trance of being that fictitious entity that owns that thought, it's just a world of pain and it's just going to continue until a certain diligence is applied.

What is the diligence? Be aware of the thoughts.

When a thought comes up, any thought, say to yourself, *"Who's the knower of that thought?"*

And once it's been contemplated and accepted that they arise together, and the thought'll arise and you say *"Who's the knower of that thought?"* to yourself, the mind will get quiet. It's been uncovered. It's been seen. There'll be silence.

And here's the kicker — there's always just this flashing of images and when a thought arises with the knower and the known, that's just ONE KNOWER. That particular knower only knows that thought and then it's gone.

There's not a knower from last week that knows the thought that just arose now. There's infinite knowers and knowns. We've all experienced infinite knowers and knowns of thoughts, feelings, emotions, associations, perceptions — we as this body-mind organism.

It's memory that creates the illusion that the knower of the thought yesterday that arose, is the same knower of the thought this moment.

But that memory that comes up happens where? Now! There is no then! There is only this now with these passing, flashing pictures that contain memory also. This is how strong the illusion is. I'm not describing a bad illusion. I'm describing the illusion that Parabraham plays in. **This is a play!**

Again, there is probably a thought somewhere amongst here (i.e., the group that's listening to this talk): *'Oh man, why did this go wrong?'* That's the 'I' saying something went wrong... *'I don't like this'...* well if you don't like it, find Reality! And then you realize there's no one doing it, except Consciousness playing with itself.

Memory is the thread that sews ALL this together.

This 'I' is identified not only with the thought and the feelings that arise, but also the body in the picture that's flashing, and I just described people are injecting their bodies — their so called bodies — to last longer even though the inevitable is known. But science will tell us that skin cells are dying constantly, this body every moment is different. I don't look like I did when I was twenty, I certainly don't look like I did when I was two. How could I be the body? It's never static, it's always changing.

How could 'I' be something that changes all the time? This is so obvious and yet this illusion is so strong that it's reinforced and reinforced and reinforced.

Once the witnessing occurs, there'll still be a sense of presence which is also part of the illusion, that's part of the Consciousness. That eventually dissolves, on it's own if one is amenable, and the big Nothingness is revealed. There's no other way to describe it. **Nothingness is revealed.** There's just THAT. Oneness prior to the word oneness. It's like Maharaj would say to people sometimes *"now you know the nothing, now you know the nothing, now you can go"*. The no-thing.

There is no such thing as ancient. How's that! I took a piece of legal writing paper, you know - I papered the walls here right afterwards (*note: this was after John's first major awakening*), I was so into and overwhelmed with all this 'shift'... that I wrote out and it was on the door so that every time I would go out 'there is not such thing as ancient' as a reminder, diligence. Not an 'I' doing it, there was an 'I', it hadn't unravelled to that point yet, so there was still a sense of 'I' being diligent, so I threw myself into it, I had quotes everywhere. Yellow paper everywhere.

There is no such thing as ancient because there is no past or future, there's just this no-time now that everything is flashing in.

Like I've said *'well, we could go to Ramana Maharshi's sacred mountain and say that's been there a long time'*... well... not really... it's just appearing right now, **it's a perception**. It's flashing on and off.

Memory tells us... memory tells the story... time tells the story... that it's ancient. Nothing is ancient. If we find the witness, and as that sense of presence, there's still as sense that witness itself is... we're not Consciousness and we're not the witness.

We're neither Consciousness or its witness, **we're prior to** — that's why Maharaj said we're prior to consciousness. And that's called awareness, the sense of awareness during deep sleep, but it's really unawareness, words again, it's a nothingness — no-thingness. An intangible thing to describe and it's attempted to that way. It's freedom prior to the word freedom. There's no knower to be free anymore. The veils are pulled away.

It takes a certain amount of diligence like I said, or will, to watch these thoughts come up and I've had people ask me *"Well who is this thinker? What is this thought?"* The knower of the thought and the thought are just one solid, illusory part of the veil. Thoughts arise and subside, they come and they go, but it's assumed there's a separate one who had the thought. That's why I always say the 'I-thought' is just a thought.

Robert Adams used to say that... whenever you think 'I' say: *"Who's that?"* Remember he'd always say *"Who's this I?"* and then he said maybe the thought will come up *"Well me."* — Who's me? — and he would always say if you watch, it goes into nothing!

The body is a perception.

You don't have a body in deep sleep do you? We all run to deep sleep because we crave nothing more than our own absence. But we can have our own absence even in the so-called 'waking state'. That's what 'this' is about.

And then it is seen that the one who thought it was living a life, has died.

So when the dropping away of the body finally comes later on in the dream, there's no fear. You are already THAT. Where will I go, right? Ramana Maharshi, "*Where can I go? I am always here.*" ...when he was dying, remember that?

There's no coming and going there's just this one solid block of Reality that's formless, colorless and the forms and colors **appear in and on it**, in dream-like form in the so-called waking state. IT dreams this, it advertises... it's an advertisement of Parabrahman saying "*look what I can do!*"

We're using words, but it's saying look at this, because it's LOVE, it's love, all love comes from the love to be. That's the initial love. Whose love is that? Parabrahman!

It's only when this 'I' gets believed in that there's a problem with Parabrahman's love. And why does Parabrahman do it? We can only say that it just loves to expand its love. Pure love.

Has no attachment to good, bad or indifferent. It loves the expression itself and we're part of it, we as these body-mind organisms are part of it. It's been going on a long, long, long time! There's no way out, the only thing that wants a way out is this fictitious 'I'. It wants OUT! It even wants to be enlightened — it thinks, 'it' thinks enlightenment will be a way OUT.

There's no 'I' that needs to be out. There is no individual that needs to be enlightened because there is no individual! That's what enlightenment is, realizing there's no such thing as enlightenment.

But everyone should want to know who they are, nothing's more important. All the experiences that come up in so-called spiritual seeking — they're wonderful — and the world is seen as being not solid... I took delight for a long time after this, and the delight is still there but it's not an attachment, but I took delight in seeing how diaphanous this thing is — how what a beautiful expression. Until it turned enough where I still didn't know who I was — because there was still somebody clinging to 'I'. There was still a belief of an 'I' now perceiving the change. Again a perception... a beautiful perception!

But really, what quote/unquote 'really' is going on here is not solid, it's a dream. But the dreamer was still there thinking that... there was a dreaming 'I' 'still there saying... "*oh, now, now I see... now 'I' see!*" And it took awhile.

**No one will know Oneness. No one will know the Self.
No one's ever known Nirvana because that one that knows,
that knower — in the knower-known dyad — has to go.**

That's why Buddha said after awakening you might not even be aware of your own enlightenment — because he called enlightenment the final step or Nirvana — because there'll be no one there to know it! It might not be recognized so immediately. The knower of it's gone, there's just nothingness — which to the mind is — *"I don't know if I like nothingness"*.

It's everythingness at the same time, prior to both words. It's 'what is', it's reality, it's the only reality, all the rest is just nonsense. A wonderful game of nonsense, again, nothing went wrong. But if you look at that knower-known dyad, **really contemplate that** — and that's something you can do all the time during the day, it's not just in sitting.

Or if you're sitting in meditation and a thought comes up *"Oh, I can't sit still."* Let's say you have the thought *"Aw Shit, I can't sit still!"* immediately follow that with *"Who's the knower of that?"* and think... *"Well wait a minute, the knower and thought are one, there's not a separate knower of it."* — and it immediately loses its power that way. And eventually it gets to a certain point in this destruction where once it's seen, it doesn't matter what thoughts come up because they're not yours so there's no battle any longer.

There's none of this *"Well 'I don't want to have thoughts, I want to be in a thought-free state."* You know — because again, there's a battle going on — at a certain point it doesn't matter what comes up and it gets very quiet, and it gets very whispery but it doesn't matter. Any thought that arises here, it's not mine. It's just 'thought'.

Here's a Maharaj quote — Chapter 83, page 424 of I AM THAT:

"As long as you believe that only the outer world is real, you remain its slave. To become free, your attention must be drawn to the 'I am', the witness. Of course, the knower and the known are one not two, but to break the spell of the known, the knower must be brought to the forefront. Neither is primary, both are reflections in memory of the ineffable experience, ever new and ever now, untranslatable, quicker than the mind."

Exactly what I was saying.

I hope someone could hear what I said — I hope no one heard!

Actually I'm speaking to the consciousness as Maharaj would always say — because as long as we speak to that person we're nurturing it, we're nursing that person. But we all know when we use the words 'I' and 'you' just know that I'm really trying to reach **what's listening**. That 'I', that person isn't listening. There's no person sitting here listening, that person's like "*I don't want to listen*".

It doesn't have any interest in this because it means it's going away.

I'm done... *John laughing*... I have nothing else to say... that was a lot.

This is an edited transcription of a 2012 talk on Advaita by John Grenafefe. To listen to this talk, or to hear some of John's other talks, please visit our [website](#).