

Man in search of an identity

Who or what are we? The answer we give will depend on our level of evolution. In fact this question, the search for our identity, is the power that drives evolution.

Evolution does not so much favour the 'survival of the fittest', but survival – or development - of the most intelligent; by intelligent we mean most aware or having higher levels of consciousness, rather than good at solving crossword puzzles. We imagine that animals do not have language and are therefore unable to formulate concepts; so is it just a coincidence that humans developed this intellectual power to see beyond the illusions of our physical incarnation (and solve crossword puzzles) or does it serve some evolutionary purpose?

Ramana Mahārshi, the great 20th century Tamil saint, advised His followers to keep enquiring 'Who am I?' This He believed led one to the Ultimate Truth.

The Inner System of Chakras is arranged with the elements becoming more subtle as they ascend, representing higher or deeper levels of consciousness. At Mūlādhāra we have Earth, the grossest physical element, up to the subtlest elements of Spirit at Sahasrāra and above. As we ascend we identify with higher aspects of ourselves. A strange phenomenon in the west is people identifying themselves with their sexuality – being gay, bisexual, transgender, etc. which must be one of the lowest possible identifications.

Earth (Mūlādhāra Chakra) – physical body.

Ego, our sense of separate identity, comes from identification with the body. Our self-perception is largely based on physical appearance, tall, short, thin, fat, dark-skinned, light-skinned, handsome, not. There is some rationale in believing that the physical form reflects the Spirit which inhabits the body, that someone who is 'good-looking' must be good; except that most people's idea of 'good-looking' tends to mean 'sexually

attractive’ – which is all about upgrading the gene pool. The choice of mates by women is a significant factor in evolution- apparently qualities like intelligence, musical ability and sense of humour rate higher than mere good looks (although not so much in men’s choices!) – are these signs of being more evolved?

A very large section of the human race believe that what is most real - in fact the only reality - is what can be experienced through the senses; and would think it crazy to hold that the physical world is all illusion and Consciousness the only reality.

Water (Nābhi) – *emotions, memory, pre-rational responses to sense information.*

Memories give rise to conditioning, so if we identify with our conditioning, we have not begun to question what is presented to us as reality. You may have experienced conversations with people who, on having their conditionings challenged, argue that it’s ‘just natural’ or ‘obviously right’. Travel broadens the mind, and especially living in a foreign country can bring one’s conditionings into stark relief. An Englishman working at the Dharamshala school was tearing his hair out about the school management saying ‘Couldn’t we have some rules and principles and stick to them!’ – it seemed a natural way to run things to him, but the Indians have managed very nicely without it for millennia, just responding to situations in whatever way seems appropriate at the time.

Fire (Swadhishtana) – *thought, anger, action expressing the mind.*

What we do, our job, our education, our social position, what we have achieved, is used by the ego to create our self-image. Human beings have an amazing capacity to be proud of almost anything – they can be proud of having long fingernails or being allergic to gluten (‘I’m a very sensitive person’).

If we can act while keeping our attention in Sahasrāra above the head, at the Lotus Feet of the Divine, then we find that our actions are more

effective, as we are being instruments of the Divine. No doubt we are being instruments of the Divine Purpose at all times, but being consciously connected allows us to truly feel that we are not doing it. This is easier in non-intellectual activities such as playing music or gardening.

Air (Heart Chakra). Identifying with those we love or are attached to, our family, community, religion or country, allows us to escape from a completely selfish identity. The Heart is the meeting point of the lower and higher characters, where the instinctive, base nature overlaps with the higher spiritual, or at least rational, nature.

Every nation on earth considers themselves superior, whether it is the English, Japanese, Arabs, Russians – you name it! My (English) mother could list you the faults of every nation on Earth, including the Welsh, Irish and Scottish (or particularly those!) but if asked for a similar critique of the English was less forthcoming. ‘The whole world’s mad except me and thee – and I’m not always sure about thee’.

Ether (Vishuddhi). *Quality of Janah – ‘people’.*

Identifying ourselves as a member of the human race – a part and parcel of the whole – is getting closer to the truth. We have transcended the limitations of ‘me and mine’ and can laugh at the stupidity of ourselves, our country and the human race in general. There are some great souls who dedicate their lives to uplifting their fellow men.

Agnya – Tapas – ‘renunciation’.

Once we become convinced of the ultimate importance of the Spirit and the need to shed our attachment to the things of the senses, our view shifts towards renouncing the world and devoting ourselves to seeking the spiritual realm. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) commented ‘We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.’ (presumably said in French)

Identifying ourselves as Yogis, as souls who have experienced the ‘Kingdom of Heaven,’ we are attempting to find a sustainable lifestyle for the whole

of humanity through Sahaj Culture. Complete withdrawal from normal life would not be sustainable; so we have families, jobs, houses, cars, eat pizza, watch TV and appear normal from the outside, but inside we are not identified with any of it. A sense of our own insignificance in the Universe is helpful, as humility and honesty are required to enter the Gates of Heaven.

Sahasrāra – Satyam –‘reality, truth’. And above.

With Self-realisation – the experience of losing the sense of separate identity - we know our true nature as Spirit, the Eternal Consciousness that witnesses all our states of being; waking, dreaming or deep sleep.

Knowing the oneness of our consciousness with the All-pervading Spirit, the Param Chaitanya –‘*Supreme Consciousness*’, leads us to identify ourselves as just a tiny droplet of the Supreme Being.

A very few souls achieve the state where they have become purely the Ultimate Reality witnessing through the eyes of a human being. Such souls are known as God-realised Saints.

Ādi Shañkarāchārya replied to a great sage who asked Him ‘Who are you?’ by reciting the poem known as the **Nirvāna Shatkam** (or **Tad Nishkala**) which starts ‘**Mano buddhy’ahamkāra chittāni n’āham**’ – ‘I am not the mind, intellect, ego or thoughts’ and concludes each verse ‘**Chid-ānanda rūpam, Shivo-‘ham, Shivo-‘ham**’ – ‘I am Consciousness and Bliss, I am Shiva, the Eternal Spirit’. This was truly His identity and the state for which we aspire.

'That's what you are. You are Eternal Bliss and Awareness; Consciousness: the Pure Consciousness. Everyone must learn it by heart and must say it in all the ashrams. That's a very good way of remembering what you are!' **HSH Shri Mataji. Guru Puja, Austria, 06-07-86**

‘They're glad to sing songs, music, everything in Sahaja Yoga because they want somewhere to fit in, because they want an identity, they

call themselves Sahaja Yogis. But this identity is a false identity. You have to be identified with your Spirit.' - ***Buddha Puja, U.S.A, 23-07-88.***

'Once Brahmarandhra is closed, many types of illusory ideas become a part of your mind. False thoughts like 'it is mine or they are mine,' identify with outside objects! Besides, man-made bindings such as "My body should be healthy and beautiful" are inculcated. Then unreal relationships like, 'He is my father, he is my brother, she is my mother', are on your head. As ego develops, foolish ideas, such as, 'I am rich', 'I am poor', 'I am helpless', or 'I belong to high family' etc. come in your head. Many officials and politicians become egoists (Donkeys). Then, there are anger, hatred, forbearance, separation, sorrow, attachment under the cover of love and temptations in the guise of social status. Man with great affection keeps clinging to this unreal way of life.

But all unreal does not fall off with Self-Realization. It can be broken off gradually. If, with firm conviction, you deny from your heart all that is unreal (Mithya), you will have the realization of the Self (Atman) in its pure form. Thereafter it is established within you. Albeit, the same mortal human Chitta is drenched in that which is of the nature of love and truth, having no beginning and end, verily the Shiva. Human Chitta is meant for realizing that reality. This Chitta must become one with that Atman. Only that Chitta, which progresses renouncing all unreal (Mithya), breaks all known and unknown bindings and becomes verily the Self. Atma is never disturbed or destroyed. Only human attention (Chitta), in pursuit of desires, leaves its inner path. This is Maya (illusion). She has been intentionally created. Without Her the attention (Chitta) would not have developed.'

Mithya- Marathi letter, 05-05-75.