

## To have or to be?

How we speak often reflects how we think. Notice how we tend to think in a certain language, usually our “mother tongue.” Hence, our thinking is likely to be coloured by our culture. We think in words, and so are at their mercy; for, words do not always reflect our true feelings. Hence, we often quarrel over words, unaware or disregarding the true feelings behind the words.

Furthermore, we tend to use words as we understand them. Often the other person does not share the same understanding of our words, simple as they may be. On an even more difficult level, the measure of our words is often dictated by our past (our experiences) and our present (the way we think).

Understandably, we often get into embarrassing situations when we judge someone else merely by their words. We are looking at only one side of the mountain, and take it to be the whole mountain. On a deeper level, we might not even realize that none of the words and thoughts is even really ours. We learned them from somewhere.

Hence, it is meaningful to say we HAVE a store of words (vocabulary), ideas and opinions, which like lenses, allow us to understand or perceive what is being expressed here (or anywhere else).

And words are what we make of them. When words are put together, they can muster ideas that move us or hurt us depending on what we really ARE. If we are observant enough, we might notice that over the years how the views we HAD, tend to change or grow. This is our inner evolution.

We think we have understood life better now, and we might take a stand about religion or non-religion or science or whatever. It would be interesting if our ideas were photos that we could sequentially store in an album. As the years pass, if we look back at our album of the ideas we HAVE HAD, we can notice how we have changed (or not).

These could be ideas about ourselves, about people, about culture, about demons, about God, about Buddhas, about paradise or hell, about Vipassana, about Zen, about religion, about humanism, etc. It is highly unlikely that we would hold on to such views in the same unchanging way all our life.

The cunning wizard (or, some say, a witch) in our head might keep us as a Rapunzel imprisoned in our tall ivory tower. But as our hair grows, we need to climb down from such dangerous heights to the firm ground of reality. If our minds do not grow, we are stuck in a subhuman plane, or in a heavenly little prison on high.

Animals, pretas, asuras and hell-beings generally have fixed ideas all their lives. By nature, they all have different bodies but the same minds. Wild animals (often even domesticated ones) mostly have fear. Pretas have insatiable hunger for something, having them but never enjoying them. Asuras have a relentless thirst for power and pleasure, and would do anything to have them, but that's about all they are capable of. Hell-beings have nothing but violence and painful sufferings.

Wise humans, on the other hand, can discern between what we HAVE and what we ARE. For then we are more open to the Dharma, and to better understand what it means both to have and to be. It is a great blessing to have power, and be morally strong, too; to have money, and be spiritually rich, too; to have knowledge, and be emotionally mature, too; to have religion, and be emotionally independent, too.

This kind of reflection helps us to better understand the nature of true peace and wisdom. In other words, we see meditation as a true renunciation, of “letting go.” We each have a body, we need to let it go by sitting comfortably and peacefully as we start our meditation.

We have thoughts, ideas, and views: we need to set them free so that can look directly into our minds. We may have feelings, yet we have not really learned to feel. To truly feel is see and hear beyond words and thoughts, to taste the true nature of people and things. We have a self, but we need to lose it before we can feel this at-one-ment with the beautiful breath.

To truly feel is to be free of words and thoughts, so that we directly experience our heart’s bliss. In meditation, we progress from outer silence into inner stillness. To speak or to think is to allow words and thoughts to intervene, to stand, between our heart and bliss.

Meditation, in other words, is where we progressively and effectively let go of what we HAVE. For, what we have are not really ours: they are at best stepping stones for us to ascend to the heights of joy, wisdom and liberation. It would be such a burden to carry these stones along our inner journey.

What we have is not really ours. When we have fully let go of what we HAVE, then we are ready to BE one with our heart, to be blissful and wise. We are then moving towards higher BEING, towards awakening, so that we truly ARE.

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