

Lack of Self-Knowledge: Root of Mental Issues and Dissatisfactions

Ignoring Self-Knowledge, the Greatest Obstacle to Happiness

How many of us know our true '**self**' and are well acquainted with it?

How many of us know the true meaning of **self-knowledge**?

How much time do we spend a day thinking about our '**self**'?

How many of our problems, do we believe, are related to our **lack of self-knowledge** and an improper understanding of the '**self**'?

The truth is that all our problems and worries are rooted in not knowing our **true self**. As long as we do not know our **true self**, we are unable to improve our own life or that of others, even if our deeds look religious or benevolent. It might seem a little strange, but if we take a close look at our lifestyle, we will see that our '**true self**' has no place in our lives; that is why we have problems in **love, happiness** and **peace**.

In this article, we are going to address the main problems resulting from lack of self-knowledge; however, the harms caused by **lack of self-knowledge** go beyond this list. We all have experienced and continue to experience these harms throughout our lives. Perhaps, you can provide many examples from your own life or that of others too.

Wrong Choices

The important point is with which part of our existence we decide. Is it the true self which makes our decisions or the **'false self'**?

When the **false self**, and not the true self, takes control, we make mistakes in all areas of life and waste our talents. For example, we may madly fall in love with someone, but after getting married, we get sick of her. We might try for years to major in a particular subject, but after graduation and learning the necessary skills, we do not enjoy working in that field. We might wish to immigrate to another country, but after leaving our country, we regret our decision.

Why is it so? Is it normal to be dissatisfied with the past and our past decisions, or does it have another reason?

If we had come to a true definition of our **'self,'** and made decisions based on that, we must be satisfied with our past. However, due to **lack of self-knowledge**, our definition of the **'self'** constantly goes through significant changes over time. We neither know our **'true self'** nor its needs. All of us love ourselves and want to do good to ourselves, but since our attempts focus on our **'false self,'** all of them would fail.

We have already explained the meaning of **'true self'** and its difference from the **'false self'** in the article "What Is Self-Knowledge?" We stated that our **'true self'** has nothing to do with our character traits or talents, but rather it is an independent concept which is the same in all of us.

Rootless Worship

Despite a great amount of worship, most of us do not enjoy the **peace** and **happiness** promised in the Quran. We even worship God with our **'false self'** not our **'true self.'** It might seem a little complicated, so let us make

it clear. Our existence is made up of different parts. Each part has a specific duty and its structure is defined based on that duty. The importance we give to each of these different parts stems from our knowledge of the '**self**.' Therefore, if this knowledge is wrong, none of our actions will produce the right and perfect result, just like a child who jumps from height, fearing a cat.

Our relationship with all other phenomena, even with religion, is based on the same rule. As we have followed religion without completely knowing it, after years of worshipping God, we are still reluctant to pray. We perform religious rituals without knowing their purpose; we fast and may get nothing from it but thirst and hunger; we may help others and do lots of charity work, and yet feel empty deep down. This is the case in our religious matters, while in intellectual, social, or family matters, the situation is even worse and more complicated, unfortunately.

If our religious activities are done without knowledge, they will result in our negligence and self-forgetting. We will do them out of habit, and we will not achieve any spiritual growth. In fact, all our deeds, even the good ones done with good intentions, are like beautiful cut flowers which wither due to having no roots. Self-knowledge is like the root which keeps these flowers fresh and guarantees their survival.

If we do not know our **true self**, we are still sad even if we are religious scholars. That is because the scholarship which is not the fruit of **self-knowledge** is nothing but some worthless, mental information which creates the illusion of wisdom.

Ignorant Learning

Most of us spend years at the university, institutes, and laboratories; publish papers; write books; and invent and explore different things. We know the answer to many complicated scientific questions, but we do not know the answers to simple questions about ourselves! We know neither who we are, nor where we came from. We do not even care to know these things.

All these contradictions are rooted in the fact that the part of our existence which learns things is not our '**true self**,' but rather our '**false self**.' That is why education does not bring about inner purity; instead, it makes us restless and arrogant. Learning without self-knowledge is like a thick veil which covers our eyes and does not let us see self-evident truths.

Impatience

Our impatience when facing problems is the result of **lack of self-knowledge**. In fact, life challenges are not related to our '**true self**'; it is our '**false self**' that undergoes these pressures. The more our **false self** is under pressure, the more our **true self** grows. However, since we do not know the dimensions of our being, we cannot distinguish between these two parts.

Lack of Enthusiasm for Eternal Life

When we hear about the beauties of the different parts of the Earth, we feel extremely pleased and happy, but when we hear about the blessings of Heaven in the Quran, we show no enthusiasm for them. That is while the beauties of this world compared with those of Heaven are like a childish painting.

Why does our heart not desire Heaven? The answer is simple: even if we believe in life after death, it is not a deep-seated belief. We do not really believe that

we are eternal beings as we have imprisoned our **'true self'** within the borders of the **'false self.'** Our tendencies and desires will remain small and childish until we put our **'false self'** under the control of our **'true self.'**

Personality Instability

Our value depends on the kind of our demands and desires. Some of us are worth as much as an expensive cellphone, a luxury car, or even a PhD; however, the value of some people is immeasurable. The value we give to ourselves is directly dependent on how we define ourselves. Those who do not know their true value will lose the stability of their personality; their value goes up and down just like a stock market.

Escaping the True Self

How much can you bear being alone?

How do you spend your time when you are alone?

What do you think about when you are by yourself?

Most of us do not have the courage to face our **'self'**! We are afraid of being alone with our **'self,'** or even of being reminded by someone of that! That is why we try to keep ourselves busy with TV, social media, our cell-phones, and books as soon as we are alone. Even if we do not spend time on these things, we will sit and think about our past failures or future problems. The person who cannot be alone with her truth and always escapes her **'true self'** is still a child even if she is seventy years old. The truth is that there is no way to achieve eternal happiness except by spending time knowing and improving ourselves.

These were just a few harms caused by lack of self-knowledge. Of course, you can add many other items to this list.

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