

## God, Not Awareness, Controls

Dear James,

I've been reading your book *How to Attain Enlightenment* and I have some questions about it. I don't know if you're still replying to emails or have grown too busy, but I thought I'd write and see. Sorry for the long email, but I wanted to put my questions in context.

By way of background, let me explain a little about myself. I've been doing Buddhist practice for a number of years, including practicing morality and meditation. Through this practice, it has become clear that I am not objects of any sort (physical, mental, emotional), that none of these is permanent and none of these is satisfying. Overall, I have experienced a sense of peace although my habits tend to remain. For example when I am upset now, 1) I know I am upset; 2) the feelings are less intense; 3) I don't get fully caught up in it.

Since I was a child, I have always felt a sense of myself. I sometimes felt as though I was something else looking through the body of a child. I also had a strong sense of presence, and growing up Catholic, called this God. When I was a young man, I had an intense mystical experience of God. Later through my Buddhist practice, it seems to me that this presence of God is not separate from my awareness, e.g. the sense of God is really the sense of myself.

Last year, when I was on a retreat, I had many experiences from seeing thoughts arise one-by-one to seeing everything blink in and out of existence. Through it all, the awareness remained. I came to the realization, what am I looking for, if what I am looking for is always already here?

James: Yes, indeed. Now, the last step, which you seem to have taken, although I do not know how confident you are in this knowledge, is to say "I am awareness" and mean it. Awareness is not something to be experienced. You are experiencing it all the time because it is you. To think that it is not here is to think that you are not here, which is ridiculous. In the Neo-Advaita world they like to impress each other by saying they are 'not here,' meaning that they are awareness. It is true but it is a stupid way to say you are awareness because it implies that there is someone who can either be here or not be here, i.e. a doer. But there is no one other than awareness so there is no question of it being experienced at some point in time or in some other dimension. And awareness does not depend on the absence of a doer. The doer/experiencer and you...awareness...do not share the same degree of reality. So there is no conflict between them.

The only issue is whether or not you know you are awareness and what that means in terms of the totality of existence, in other words how the apparent you lives in the world. If you have full self knowledge you will not be interested in letting the world know that you are not here because the reality is that you are always 'here' as awareness. So you are never not here.

Douglas: I also came to the firm realization that this awareness is beyond any thought, feeling, sensation, intuition, sense, etc. There are a lot of subtle thoughts and feelings that I tend to take as a self, but on closer examination, these things turn out to be not me, unsatisfying, and

impermanent.

So this awareness has no attributes, and even so it is aware. In Buddhist language, we might say it is luminous, because there it is lighting up the world, but also empty, because it really has no attributes like an object. It also seems more and more that the world is in me, rather than I am in the world. Over time through investigation, objects have lost their solidity and sense of independence. For example, the solid table is a visual of a table, and a sensation of hardness, but these are nothing without awareness.

James: This is as close to enlightenment as you can get without actually saying that you are awareness. The most important realization in this paragraph is the that world is you, not the other way around. This can only be true if you are awareness.

Douglas: So that's my background.

My questions are: if I am limitless awareness, why is my knowing limited? Why am I not aware of what is going on outside the range of my senses? Why don't I know what is going on in the mountains where no one else is? If you and I are the same limitless awareness, how come I see what I see, and you see what you see, but I don't see what you see, and you don't see what I see? Why do I only see one side off the table from the angle of my eyes? In other words, if I am limitless awareness, why is my range of knowing so limited?

Thanks for your time and attention.

Great question, Douglas. Thanks for the background. The issue is born out of a confusion of awareness with the instruments through which it functions. In Vedanta we call it a confusion between the individual (*jiva*) and God (*Isvara*), field of existence that contains the instruments of experience.

Awareness is beyond both. Basically the problem is that awareness is not a knower, a doer, a controller. It is the 'light' in which knowledge takes place. Please read the *satsang* below. It is coming at the problem from a slightly different point of view but it is the same problem. This person wants to know...more or less... why if she is awareness she can't control her thoughts, or know what others know, etc. Read it, particularly the bit about 'remote' viewing, and if it does not answer your question, get back to me and I will tailor the response to you specifically. I italicized the most important issue.

This email is important to me and if you don't get it be sure to write back. I can't imagine that you will have many more doubts as you seem to know everything that you need to know about who you are. But if you do, feel free to write.

This is my friend's doubt:

*Marianne: I still have some confusion about apparent reality - why awareness, for example, seems*

to be reflected through, say, the idea of me - and then how others fit in with this. (It seems like we are all walking around and awareness is experiencing say, America through you and Spain through me - like it is somehow fragmented- as if the self is experiencing through the many. But that doesn't accord with the teachings - so there is some confusion for me on this.

Here is my reply:

James: It does make sense and it does matter if you want your understanding to be perfect. Awareness functioning through all the instruments of experience is called *Ishvara*. It is essential that you know *Ishvara* if you are going to be happy here. The *jiva*, Marianne, has limited knowledge but *Ishvara* has all knowledge. These are the two basic *upadhis*, limiting adjuncts, that apparently condition awareness. As long as you think you are a *jiva* you had better know *Ishvara* because It makes up the whole field in which the *jiva* sports. And it governs and regulates all the objects in the field, including the *jiva's* body and mind.

This is a very subtle point and may be a bit difficult to grasp but it is important for resolving the doubt that you have. The self can't do anything or know anything because it is non-dual awareness. The body/mind can't do anything either because it is inert and insentient. So neither of them has control of anything. So how does creation happen? It 'happens'...there is no doer/knower/controller...because awareness illumines the *vasanas*. When this happens objects appear. In your example you wondered why you didn't have control of *maya*, in this case why you don't know what others know, if you are awareness.

But awareness does not control. It shines. It shines without a sense of agency, doership. It is like fire. Fire burns but it does not jump out and burn your finger. It is its nature to burn. It is your nature to shine. You have no control of the things you shine on. It is like the sun. It shines on the quick and the dead; it illumines the activities of the saint and the sinner alike without without knowing, without comment. It has nothing to do with the objects appearing in its light. The things you shine on appear in you when the *vasanas* are active. When they are dormant there is no creation, as in deep sleep. So who or what is the controller? In fact there is no controller.

But if we take *maya*, the creation, into account there is an apparent controller and this apparent controller is *Ishvara*, the self illumining the macrocosmic causal body. Let's say you have a tumor in your body. Did you, Marianne, grow, that tumor? Did you, awareness, grow that tumor? No. *Ishvara*, the field of existence, grew it, for reasons only known to *Ishvara*. *Ishvara's* mind is inscrutable. It has all powers, including the power to make the self appear as a doer/controller. The idea that if you get enlightened you will have control of your *maya* or know the *maya* of others is a belief. Many people think that because there is one self illumining all the bodies the self associated with a particular body, the *jivatman*, should be able to know what the self in other bodies is thinking, for example; that it is a 'remote' viewer.

But this power only resides in *Ishvara*, not in *jiva*. *Jiva* has limited knowledge, desire and power but *Ishvara* has unlimited knowledge, power, and desire. This is why knowledge of *Ishvara* is

necessary for liberation. As long as you confuse *upadhis* (limiting adjuncts i.e. *Isvara* and *jiva*) you will not be free.

You are in the ballpark, actually, when you say that 'somehow' the dream of existence was done by the self. It seems to be, because if there is a creation and there is a cause for it, then one would think that the self somehow is responsible. But when you take *Isvara*, Macrocosmic Ignorance, into account you can see that Ignorance is responsible for the appearance of a creation, not the self.

You verify this by investigating any object. You see that every object is made out of thought and thought is made out of energy and energy is made out of awareness and is non-separate from awareness. So the whole creation is always resolved. If it seems to be something other than awareness, then you need to resolve it. Once you have resolved it, you can let it be...not that you have any other option...because you understand that it is just an appearance in you, that it has no actual substance, apart from you. It is like the spider's web. It is non-separate from the spider in the sense that it is made out of the spider's body and it is shaped by the spider's intelligence. It appears to be something else but it is just the spider. When the spider is done using it for its purposes it sucks the silk back into its body, dissolves (resolves) it and can use it again. Your whole life is a mental creation born out of you and devoured by you. The fear that you have about going under anesthesia or riding on an airplane is manufactured out of your own mind and one day it will dissolve back into it. You have nothing to do with it. When the lights go out, you do not go out. You continue to shine on the absence of perception."

Sincerely,

James