

# 99% Enlightened

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Adam:** A series of thoughts (below) hit me after watching the “obvious awareness” video on your website home page. Are they accurate?

**James:** They are mostly accurate, Adam. But there is a language issue that you need to understand. I explain it below.

**Adam:** Enlightenment is nothing more than what science calls meta-cognition. It's nothing special and we all have it though few think deeply enough about it. Meta-cognition – **the knowing that we know – that is the enlightenment we all have but fail to notice.** The knowing, without being told, of our existence. We know we exist without having to learn about existing. Nothing special – like our reflection in a window when we are staring at the scene outside. It's always there but we only notice the distractions, not who we really are.

**James:** This is a good statement about the nature of the self, Adam.

**Adam:** **The ability, the awareness, to know that you are feeling one way or another and are separate from it is enlightenment.** And you can become unattached to the feelings happening within the mind by just being aware.

**James:** This statement is correct and not correct. It is correct in that enlightenment is knowing that you are not your feelings, that you are always free of them.

But it is incorrect because enlightenment is knowledge: “I am awareness.” **Awareness is not an ability.** It is the nature of your self. The word “ability” implies that some people have it and others don't, that it exists in varying degrees in individuals, and that it only belongs to human beings. It is the nature of the self. It is what makes it possible for any sentient being – plant, animal, insect, human – to know what it knows. It is not something that happens, an event in time.

**Adam:** The knower is always satisfied with its (the) self because it is beyond (behind) the experience happening right now. It's the observer part of us that knows without having to be known. Just like we know we exist without having to be told we exist. Awareness can't be tainted. Awareness is our true nature. “What is consciousness?” so many philosophers ask... It's just that: awareness. Knowing that we know. Aware that “experience” is happening within our awareness. That is consciousness. That is awareness.

**James:** This paragraph is correct in every way, although the word “knower” needs to be explained a little more. The self is only a knower with reference to what is known, but from its

point of view there is nothing but the self – non-dual, limitless awareness – so there is nothing for it to know, except itself. **In the absence of objects it is self-knowing.**

**Adam:** That is enlightenment. The fact that we even have a subjective experience is our proof of existence – of awareness – of existence-awareness – of enlightenment.

**James:** Your understanding is pretty good, Adam, but your language is not very precise. “Enlightenment” is not a good word for the self. It implies time, an event. Awareness/consciousness is the knower of enlightenment, if by enlightenment you mean the “ability” to know or even the knowledge that an individual has about his or her nature.

To use your language, enlightenment is the knowledge, “I am enlightenment.” See how strange it sounds. Although we don’t like the word “enlightenment,” Vedanta says enlightenment is the hard and fast knowledge, “I am limitless, actionless, ordinary, non-dual, ever-present awareness.” Your statement, “That is enlightenment,” is indirect knowledge, assuming your meaning of enlightenment is ordinary awareness. Direct knowledge – which is “enlightenment” – is, “I am limitless, ordinary awareness.” Your statement leaves Adam out. It presupposes that “enlightenment” is an object known to you.

**Adam:** You may feel depressed. You still feel desire. You still feel joy and fear and emotion. That is the reality of your **brain [the word should be “mind” here, Adam. The brain is just an inert material instrument]** in this life. But you have the awareness of being able to see it from a step back.

**James:** Here is another language issue that is confusing. You say, “...you have the awareness of being able...” Awareness is not an ability. What you mean is that you can observe your emotions with your intellect. Awareness is the factor that lets you know that you are emotional in the first place. So it is not an ability. You can’t be emotional unless you are aware. So in your statement “awareness” is an action, a “stepping back.”

**Adam:** That step back, when understood beyond just intellection, is... enlightenment. You are existence itself. You are what the *gurus* call The Self. Untaintable, whole and perfect awareness.

**James:** I addressed this issue above, but I will express it in another way. You are already “stepped back” if you are awareness. You are the background of everything, so there is no other place that you can step back to. The stepping back you refer to is a practice of detachment of a doer “objectifying” emotions, etc.

**Adam:** Our subjective experience is our existence-awareness, not as an entity we identify with, but as... what is aware of our existence.

**James:** Awareness is existence, so what you mean here is that awareness – you – are aware of

the existence of Adam, the existent person. The confusion that comes by an analysis of your words is brought about by a failure to distinguish pure original awareness from its reflection in the subtle body, the person. This is a very interesting email because it shows that you are about 99% enlightened. However, the bad news is that the extra 1% is required for “enlightenment,” to use your word. “Enlightenment” is complete knowledge.

**Adam:** Our individual identification is a part of this existence, but we ultimately are not our identity. We are what is aware of the existence of identity... behind it all.

Identity is the clay pot or just the pot. Awareness is the clay. The pot can exist because of the clay, but not without it. The clay exists within and without the pot, but isn't defined by the pot. When the pot breaks the pot ceases to exist and the clay exists even after... also, before and during the pot's life.

**James:** Okay. These paragraphs are “enlightenment.”

**Adam:** When something someone says or some teaching you read borders on the magical or supernatural or mystical or mysterious it will confuse and hamper the truth and simplicity about enlightenment. It's nothing other than what can be known without having to go into the mystical and superstitious realms to comprehend. That was a big problem for me with most of all that I've read and listened to. It was always just outside my reach because it was “out there” and somewhat mysterious. It's clear now that it's right in front us. Always there. Always was.

**James:** Yes, indeed. This is an extremely important fact to comprehend, Adam. When you present liberation as “enlightenment,” i.e. some sort of experiential spiritual event, you objectify it. The self, which is the “light,” which is “I,” cannot be objectified. But almost all teachers and teachings present it as an object to be experienced. Hence it is never known to be the very self of the experiencer. I have a new book that will be in the ShiningWorld shop in a few weeks called *Inquiry into Existence* that you should read. It is the most advanced Vedanta text, and you should read it to get it clear about the distinction between original awareness and reflected awareness and direct and indirect knowledge. This is a very interesting email. I enjoyed it.

~ James