

Are People Conscious?

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Student: Dear Ramji, you have done a beautiful interview, where you say:

“The dream person appearing in a dream has dream problems may think, ‘I need to do this and that to solve my problems,’ but the dream person is not aware of the thoughts, because it is inert, insentient. The line between what is conscious and not conscious is so subtle and fine that it is easy to confuse it in both the dream and the waking state.”

Do you mean that the *viswa jiva* is not aware of the thoughts or anything else, for that matter? Do you mean that it is awareness that is aware of everything that the *jiva* seems to be aware of?

Ramji: Yes. There are two *jivas*, the eternal *Jiva (jivatman)* and the non-eternal *jiva*, which is three factors: (1) awareness (*paramatman*) plus (2) a reflecting medium, the subtle body (*sukshma sarira*), and (3) the reflection itself. The eternal *Jiva* is non-different from awareness, but the non-eternal *jiva* is insentient, so it doesn't know anything. But, as you rightly say, it “seems to be aware,” which means that it actually isn't aware. It is just an inert instrument that presents experience and knowledge to the Self, eternal awareness. It seems to be aware owing to deluding power of *Isvara/Maya*. There is only one knower, and it is awareness. In the absence of a non-eternal *jiva* (a person), it knows itself, meaning it exists without effort and without thoughts.

Student: Now, I get that the body-mind-sense complex is insentient, but doesn't it become conscious and aware with the blessing of awareness? Doesn't the *jiva* borrow its consciousness from awareness?

Ramji: It does and it doesn't. If you take *Maya* into account, the the body-mind-sense complex is aware because it reflects awareness, which animates it; it thinks, feels and acts. So you can say that it “borrows.”

But no, because how can anything be borrowed from awareness? Awareness is unchanging, unborn, non-dual existence. It can't gain anything, lose anything or loan anything. But it can “seemingly” lend awareness, with the help of *Maya*.

Furthermore, how can an inert material reflector “borrow” anything? Borrowing is an action, and actions don't do themselves; they require an agent, and an agent can't do anything without consciousness. The best doers can do is “seemingly” borrow, which means that they can't borrow. Nothing ever happened for non-eternal *jivas*, which is a very difficult concept for them to understand, because they are nothing but an endless process of happenings.

Awareness is completely independent of matter. If there was any connection there would be no liberation, because awareness would be affected by matter, i.e. change, experience, etc. Insofar as matter exists, it seemingly exists, which is as good as

non-existent. This is why the scripture says: “There is only existence/consciousness,” or, “Reality is unborn, non-dual, existence/consciousness.”

Student: If it does, then is it not the *jiva* that is aware of the thoughts?

Ramji: The eternal *Jiva* is aware of thoughts, but insofar as it exists, the non-eternal *jiva* isn't. So you are not conscious as a person, you are conscious as consciousness with the help of *Maya*. With *Maya* you are conscious, and without *Maya* you are consciousness.