

Awareness Has No Center

Ram (James Swartz)

2010-12-04

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1783>

Raja: Dear Ram, my beloved Guruji!

I like to keep you busy writing *satsangs*, so I want you to speak about the verse in Chapter III of the *Gita* that says something like “a *vritti* in awareness is like a whiff of cloud hanging in space.” Does it mean (1) there is no I separate as ego, (2) the centre of awareness one could call the “I,” the thinker, feeler, enjoyer, (3) since there is no centre “in” limitless awareness, there is no thinker, feeler, enjoyer, (4) can there be even a feeling or a thought since a thing-ness needs a centre to be recognised and (5) what remains?

~ *Namaste*, Raja

Ram: You asked, “Does it mean there is no I separate as ego?”

No, if you interpret the “whiff of cloud in space” as a *vritti* and take the ego to be a *vritti*, which it is according to Vedanta, then it is saying that there is an ego, a *vritti*. But it is saying that this ego is transient and insubstantial. Clouds are symbols of change. So this “I” thought appears for a bit and then dissolves into the “sky” of awareness. When you go to sleep at night, what happens to your ego? It dissolves into the state of deep sleep where there is no differentiation. At moments of intense pleasure or fear the ego dissolves leaving only you, awareness. This teaching is meant to point out that the ego and all its thoughts and feelings are insubstantial.

Raja: Does it mean the centre of awareness could be called the “I,” the thinker, feeler, enjoyer?

Ram: Awareness has no center. It is all-pervasive. It pervades any and all centers. It is like the sky. What is the center of the sky? There is no center. When you use the word “center” you imply duality – in this case something other than a center, a periphery (get out your dictionary for this word). So it is not correct to say “the center of awareness.” However, in awareness there are zillions of small, temporary dots (called *bindus*, or spots) where awareness seems to be concentrated. These “dots” are the *jivas*, the living beings. They are “egos” in the sense that they are embodied awareness. They are like clouds in the sky or bubbles coming up in a pan of boiling water. They break upon the surface, exist for fraction of a second (with reference to awareness, which is eternal) and then dissolve.

Raja: Since there is no centre, no “I,” in limitless awareness, there is no thinker, feeler, enjoyer.

Ram: Your logic is not good, but yes, from awareness’s point of view there are no *jivas*. This is called *ajatavada*, non-creation. But from the *jivas*’ point of view there are *jivas*. They are thinker-feeler-enjoyer entities, but they are only “apparent” entities. They can be experienced but they are not real, meaning they do not last. This is called *vasisthadwaita*, qualified non-dualism. They

exist in awareness, which is eternal. Does an apparent entity exist? Yes, but it does not exist for all time like the self. These entities are neither real nor unreal. They are *mithya*, apparent realities.

Raja: Can there be even feelings and thoughts, since a thing-ness needs a centre to be recognised?

Ram: From the self's point of view, no. From *maya*'s point of view, yes. The incorrect idea here is that things need a "center" to be recognized. The self is not a center. This is bad language. Things need awareness to be recognized and awareness is omnipresent and all- pervasive; it has no center. Because it is everywhere, anything that is known anywhere is known by virtue of awareness. When you say "center" you have to define it with reference to something other than a "center" – as I mentioned above in the answer to the second question. What is that other thing? Usually when people say the self is the center they are using the body as a reference point. But how can the self be centered "in" or "on" the body? It cannot. However, if you are trying to get someone to experience "the self" then they would be understandably caught in *maya*, take the body to be the self and not have a clear understanding (for if they did they would know that whatever is being experienced is the self) of the self, so then you tell them that the self is "in the center of their being" or "in the heart" or something like that. Ramana often said that the self was on the "right side" of the chest for people who had this need to experience something. But Ramana also said that this was not correct, that the self was all-pervasive. What is actually meant by center is "essence." It means "that without which a form cannot exist." So the essence of every thing is the self, awareness. When you use the word "center" to refer to the self you give a misleading understanding of the self. It is an experiential term, actually, one that is supposed to direct the mind to the self in some experiential sense. But you can't direct the mind to the self. Whatever the mind is paying attention to is the self already. So the self can only be understood as it is. Words are very useful for this understanding, but "center" is not one of them. "All-pervasive" is much better.

Raja: What remains?

Ram: I'm not sure if this is real or a rhetorical question (one to which you already know the answer). If it's real, then the answer is awareness. If it's rhetorical, then the answer is awareness.

~ Your beloved *guru*, Ramji