

# Awareness Is Ever Unaffected and Can Never Be Forgotten

Ted Schmidt

2015-09-02

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2298>

**Orion:** Ted, I have been contemplating your writings. I have these last few questions:

Referring back to your analogy, does the “power supply” get affected in any way if the “computer” becomes realized/awakened/enlightened?

**Ted:** No. Limitless conscious existence (i.e. the “power supply” within the context of the analogy of the relationship between the computer and its power source) is totally unaffected by the objective phenomena (i.e. objects, events, experiences, etc.) that appear within the scope of its being.

First, limitless non-dual awareness is *nirguna*, formless and attributeless. Therefore it is not an object – not even a subtle object, such as a thought or emotion, which does have a character or quality that renders it distinguishable from other thoughts and emotions – that possesses any aspect that can be affected.

Second, due to its impersonal nature, limitless non-dual awareness does not possess a mind. Therefore it has no feeling or thoughts that could be impacted by any experience.

Third – and most important – is the fact that awareness is of an entirely different ontological order than the apparent reality inhabited by the apparent individual inhabits. Limitless awareness is *sat* (real), it is the fundamental “is-ness” that supports the entire manifest universe in both its gross and subtle aspects. The manifestation itself is nothing more than *mithya* (apparent) due to the fact that it has no independent self-nature and its existence is entirely dependent on awareness in the same way that a wave is entirely dependent on water. And just as water-as-such is entirely unaffected by the nature of the waves arising within it, so awareness remains ever unaffected by the objective phenomena of the apparent reality.

The entire manifestation is essentially a cosmic mechanism comprised of subtle and gross matter. The intelligence that informs its structure as well as imbues all living beings with sentiency is awareness. In the absence of awareness (though such a circumstance is not possible), no objects – including time and space, which are subtle conceptual objects – would have a “field” of being in which to exist nor would the subtle body of any sentient entity be “illuminated” by the “light” of consciousness that allows the mind to perform the function of knowing within the relative subject-object context of the apparent reality. Moreover, while the entire manifestation depends on awareness for its existence, awareness-as-such is ever free of the manifestation. That is, whether objects and experiences appear or do not appear within the scope of awareness, awareness itself always is.

We get a taste of this every night during the deep sleep state. Though the mind is entirely dormant during dreamless sleep and we neither think nor feel anything, we don’t cease to exist. If we did, we would neither wake up nor remember that we slept soundly (for you can only remember something that you’ve experienced). Thoughtful analysis of this commonly experienced yet rarely contemplated occurrence reveals that the limitlessness we experience is

our very own nature, for it is that which obtains when all the projected apparent objects cease to captivate our attention and distract us from noticing the “light” of awareness in which they are appearing, which must be our true nature given the fact that all other possible sources have left the building, so to speak.

To be clear, the limitlessness we experience during deep sleep is not pure awareness itself, but rather the reflection of awareness in a pure mind – that is, a mind sufficiently still to “catch” an accurate reflection of awareness. Due to the unmodified nature of the mind and the accuracy of the reflection it renders, however, the reflection is as good as awareness itself.

The problem with the deep sleep state in terms of gaining self-knowledge is that the mind is for all intents and purposes completely dormant during deep sleep. The discriminating intellect is not functioning, and therefore we fail to glean any knowledge from the experience, which is why we are as ignorant as ever when we wake up. The trick is to “see” or recognize the limitlessness that underlies all apparent forms while we are conscious and the intellect is in full swing. This is why we need Vedanta.

Which leads us to your second question –

**Orion:** Is this non-dual realization not another conditioning of the apparent person (albeit a “good” type of conditioning) and therefore a function of memory?

**Ted:** In one way, you might say that Vedanta is a means of reconditioning the mind. But the truth it reveals is not a conditioned belief. Once revealed, the limitless nature of the self is recognized as an already-existent fact.

Vedanta is the means of knowledge for the self, limitless awareness. Since the self is not an object available for perception or perception-based inference, it cannot be positively apprehended. That is, we can never comprehensively define it in terms of attributes, because it doesn’t have any. Moreover, our ticket in the door to the grand dance of the apparent reality is *avidya*, self-ignorance, which utilizes two powers to delude us. By means of *avaruna shakti* (i.e. veiling power), it conceals, as it were, our true nature, and by means of *vikshepa shakti* (i.e. projecting power), it throws up an irresistible array of apparent objects, both gross and subtle, that attract our attention and distract us from “seeing” what actually is. By analogy, this is similar to the way we are so fascinated by the images appearing on the movie screen that we tend to forget they are nothing but modifications of light.

Given this predicament, scripture (i.e. the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Brahma Sutras* and countless other supplementary texts written by sages) is our only means of gaining knowledge of our true nature. While the scriptures do wax poetic at times concerning the nature of the self, the true value of the scriptures resides in the implied meaning of its words. This is why a qualified teacher is also necessary. If one tries to read scripture on one’s own, 99.99999% of the time one’s self-ignorance will cause one to misinterpret its intended meaning, for one will invariably view reality from the perspective of being a person rather than the awareness in the scope of which the apparent person is appearing.

A qualified teacher is one who knows how to unfold the intended or implied meaning of the words of scripture so that they remove all the erroneous notions one has about the nature of

reality. In this way scripture doesn't impart information about the self, but rather strips away all the erroneous notions "hiding" the self until the self stands revealed in all its naked glory.

Thus self-knowledge is not a mere intellectual knowing. That is, it is not an assemblage of information that one has to remember. Vedanta simply removes one's erroneous ideas and reveals that which always is, that which is ever-present even in the presence of objects, just as light is always present as the essence of the apparent forms interacting on the movie screen. Once one has recognized the true nature of reality, one is no longer deluded by the apparent forms arising within it. What once seemed to cover it is now recognized as nothing other than it. Such being the case, there is no need to remember anything. You can forget something in its absence, but you can't forget the ever-present self.

**Orion:** Could anybody tell the difference between a "realized" and "non-realized" person after they lose their memory (as in, say, Alzheimer's)?

**Ted:** No. But nobody can tell the difference when the person is in full command of his or her faculties. Self-knowledge is an "internal affair." Only you know if you know your limitless nature. And while there are some behavioral indications that one knows the self – chief among them is the fact that the person doesn't transgress *dharma* (i.e. universal ethical norms) due to the fact that he or she abides in his or her perfect fullness, and thus has nothing to gain by breaking the rules to fulfill a desire – there are no hard and fast rules concerning how an "enlightened being" must behave. Once one knows the self, one will simply allow the *prarabdha karma* yet to be exhausted in this lifetime to play out as it will, all the while remaining completely unattached to the results of his or her actions.

This doesn't mean he or she will be apathetic, irresponsible or try to justify immoral behavior in the name of non-doership. It simply means that the person will play his role and make his contribution to the cosmic drama of the universe, but he will all the while abide in the peace and happiness that is his true nature.

As for losing one's memory, such a condition is merely a malfunction of the instrument of the mind. It has nothing to do with the self. Again, as an apparent object (i.e. anything perceivable, conceivable or experienceable), it is not essentially real. What is real is the "light" which illumines the mind whether it is in good working condition or a state of distress.

**Orion:** Thanks.

**Ted:** My pleasure.