

Awareness, One Principle

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2016-04-25

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2673>

Prema: *Namaste*, Sundari!

Thanks for your detailed response to my first letter. Kindly feel free to point to any information at the website in case you feel it has been expressed well by any of the teachers here.

I have been reading both the book and the site. However, I am still quite new, so my ability to grasp is limited. Fortunately, I found Ramji early in my search and found it very logical to me.

1. I am now convinced that I am awareness – I have gone through the exercise of figuring out that I am not the mind, the body or even the ego, as it keeps changing itself, e.g. gender, nationality, etc. So I have to be the only constant factor – awareness. This process has been intellectual.

Sundari: Negating the objects is one of the most important qualifications for *moksa*. For most inquirers the process of negation starts as an intellectual process, producing a cognitive shift. Ignorance is hardwired; it takes dedicated commitment to self-inquiry for self-knowledge to obtain in the mind – and most important, to translate into the day-to-day life of the person. A cognitive shift alone is not *moksa*. I am pretty sure I sent you the *satsang* on the eight steps of self-inquiry in our last exchange. Make sure you understand all the steps.

Prema: I cannot understand why my awareness is different from others. Am I the awareness caught inside this body or outside it? I know that ultimately even the body is awareness; then how am I different than it?

Sundari: Whose awareness are you referring to? Who is the “my” that is claiming ownership of awareness? And how can awareness be “caught in the body” when the body is just another object known to you, awareness? The body arises from and depends on awareness to exist, but awareness is free of the body. The body is inert but appears to be alive and conscious only because the light of awareness shines on it enlivening it.

There is only one awareness, which is self-knowing, requiring nothing to know itself. When *maya* appears, awareness manifests as a subtle body (mind/emotions/ego/gross body), i.e. the person identified with objects, also called the self under the (apparent) spell of ignorance. The person identified as a person thinks it is something other than awareness and that awareness is something it has to gain. It chases objects (experience) because it believes it is incomplete, and suffers.

How could “your” awareness be unique to you, the person, if there is only one awareness? Only the ego would talk about “my” awareness. Awareness would never talk about “my” awareness, because it sees only itself; there is only awareness for awareness to see. Everyone experiences the same awareness, all the time, which is why we call awareness ordinary. What makes awareness seem personal is the conditioning in the mind – our likes and dislikes – which makes

the person feel like their awareness is different and unique to them. This identification with the body-mind is what we call ignorance. If you have two or more “awarenesses” they could be different from the other. But there is not two, because reality is non dual. This original awareness does not change. It is called *bimba chaitanya*, pure consciousness.

The problem comes because *maya* creates a subtle body, which reflects awareness onto objects, like sounds, forms, etc. It is called *pratibimbachaitanya*, reflected consciousness. The subtle body, being in *maya*, is subject to change. It modifies when sound and light stimuli reflect on it. The reflected awareness is the original ordinary awareness, reflecting on the subtle body. But because the subtle body changes owing to the action of the *gunas*, awareness seems to change. When you identify with the subtle body, you say you are going through “changes.” At the same time that the subtle body is changing it is known by original ordinary awareness, which does not change. You know that the subtle body is experiencing things. Original awareness doesn’t experience. It witnesses. It always remains the same. It is unaffected by what the subtle body experiences.

Prema: 2. How come awareness does not have any qualities but is called blissful? Is it the same as the other two attributes, i.e. ever-present and aware?

Sundari: The self is described as ever-present, whole and complete, non-dual, actionless, ordinary, unchanging and limitless awareness, which are not qualities. These terms describe the nature of the self. There is no contradiction in describing the nature of the self as blissful. The problem arises with the misapprehension of the different meanings of the word “bliss.” There are two kinds of bliss: *ananda*, which is experiential bliss, and *anantum*, which is the bliss of the self. The bliss of the self – that which is always present, unlimited and unchanging – is not an experience, because it is your true nature, *anantum*. Awareness is present whether or not *ananda* is present. The bliss of self-knowledge (*anatum*), however, can be experienced as a feeling, such as the bliss of deep sleep, which is inferred when you wake up, or as *parabhakti* where love is known to be you, your true nature – meaning consciousness, the self. *Parabhakti* is having all you could ever want and knowing that it will never leave you. It is love loving itself. It is experienced as limitless satisfaction.

The nature of the self is *parama prema svarupa*. *Parama* means limitless; *svarupa* means nature, and *prema* is the love that makes love possible. In its presence even spiritual love comes alive; however, spiritual love no matter how pure is dualistic. It is a transaction between a subject and an object, a feeling of love, for example. When I know I am awareness, I am *prema*, limitless love. This love is knowledge because awareness is intelligent. *Prema* is only known when the doer has been negated by self-knowledge.

When *moksa* has obtained in the mind, one may and usually does feel experiential bliss regularly, but one does not depend on it, because one knows one is the bliss. In fact you could be sick, in pain and half-dead, broke, jobless or stuck in a situation you do not enjoy but cannot change – and feel blissful regardless of what is going on in the mind or around it. That is not to say that experiential bliss disappears when self-knowledge is firm. It just does not matter whether the experience of bliss is present or not, because the bliss of self-knowledge is always present and known to be your true nature, keeping the mind steady, dispassionate and confident.

Paramartha-nanda, on the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, takes up this question of *anantum* versus

ananda, the “two kinds of blisses”:

“In the scriptures both *ananda* and *anantam* are used to describe the indescribable *Brahman*. ‘*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*’ is one of these definitions, ‘*Sat Cit Ananda*,’ referring to *Atma*, another one.”

Sathyam means time-wise limitlessness, *anantam* means space-wise limitlessness, so he translates “*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahman*” into “*Brahman* is the eternal, all-pervading consciousness.” *Anantam* as a term to describe limitlessness is not sufficient, as it does not include time.

Ananda in “*Sat Cit Ananda*” again means limitlessness.

There are two kinds of *ananda*: *bimbaananda* and *pratibimbaananda*. *Bimbaananda* is the original *ananda*, also called *atmaananda*. It is my nature, always present but not experienceable. It cannot be gained; it is to be claimed and owned.

Pratibimbaananda is reflected *ananda*; it can be experienced in a *sattvic* mind. Translating *ananda* into “bliss” is reducing *ananda* into *pratibimbaananda*, experiential bliss. In the spiritual world you find this mistranslation and misunderstanding all over, especially in *yoga*.

Prema: 3. Greg Goode – I know that Ramji has mentioned somewhere that Greg is one of the approved teachers – but after writing the book *Standing as Awareness* he goes on to write on emptiness ([link](#)). But are these not two opposite sides? How can you say that the finality is awareness and then voidness... this is difficult to reconcile.

Sundari: This logic cannot be reconciled, because of the way Greg Goode uses these terms. “Voidness” or emptiness are objects known to awareness, so they cannot be equated with awareness. Awareness is not “the finality,” because that term implies a beginning and an end. Awareness is beginningless and endless; it is *adjata* – unborn – so it never ends. Ramji has respect for Greg Goode, although in some areas he does not agree with his teachings, because there are inconsistencies in his use of terminology which create confusion regarding experience and knowledge. The problem with the Direct Path teachers in general is that they have in essence tried to find a shortcut to self-realisation. This can lead to self-realisation, but it does not teach how to live as free beings in the apparent reality. It is all very well to know that your true nature is awareness; however, it is only indirect experiential knowledge. Indirect knowledge means that the self is only known as an object of experience, not as self-knowledge. The self as a “direct” experience is not what you might think. You, the person, cannot gain it, because the self is not an object. It can only be “gained” by removing ignorance about one’s true nature. For this kind of knowledge you need a means like Vedanta. To know what the self is and to live as the self in the apparent reality are two different things. We call living as the awareness, with the ability to discriminate between *satya* and *mithya* at all times, self-actualisation.

Prema: 4. Is there any meditation technique that I should follow? I have done Transcendental Meditation and am following it.

Sundari: Any meditation technique helps to purify the mind. However, meditation is a tool to aid self-inquiry but it does not equal self-inquiry. Unless one has realised that one is not the meditator but the one who knows the meditator, meditation can keep one stuck for years trying to have an experience of the self, which many meditators do have, but the problem is the identification with the experiencer/meditator is still there. Unless the knowledge that meditation is designed to impart is fully assimilated – i.e. “I am whole and complete non-dual awareness” and not the meditator – the experience ends because it was just that, an experience. All experiences happen in time, and so they are subject to change and will end. Only self-knowledge will permanently set one free of the meditator/experiencer because you – awareness/consciousness – are already free.

In this way, the experience of self-realisation does not necessarily lead to freedom, *moksa*, which is why there are so many frustrated meditators around, trying to get the experience back. Even if they succeed, they will most likely “lose” the self-realisation once again because the knowledge that they are that which makes all experience possible, i.e. awareness, escapes them. Meditation is no different from any other activity done to achieve a specific result – unless it is practiced with *karma yoga*.

The knowledge that the meditation points to is that you are the knower of the one who meditates, the one who thinks it is the doer/meditator. Meditation is just another object appearing in you, allowing the reflection of the self to appear in a still mind. However, seeing as no experience can take place without you, awareness, and because as awareness you are actionless, no special experience is required to experience the self. You are always experiencing the self, whether you are meditating or not. You just don’t know this. And no action the doer takes can produce self-knowledge. This is because as the doer you are limited, and no action taken by a limited being can produce a limitless result, i.e. freedom/*moksa*. Although we can have an experience of the reflection of the self in a pure, *sattvic* mind in meditation, this is not enough to set us free of the doer. For this we need to expose the mind to self-inquiry and allow self-knowledge to remove our ignorance (*avidya*). Although self-inquiry is also an action, the result of self-inquiry is self-knowledge, which does produce a limitless result, meaning freedom from identification with the doer, or person.

Self-inquiry is the application of knowledge. Self-inquiry states that awareness is our true nature and both knowledge and ignorance are objects appearing in you, awareness. Keeping this knowledge in mind and continually contemplating on it is self-inquiry. This is why self-inquiry is different from meditation, because the knowledge is maintained by an act of will, whereas in meditation the knowledge appears during a particular experience.

Self-inquiry is superior to meditation because the doer does not need to maintain a particular state and wait for the knowledge. He or she has the knowledge already and applies it continually. Meditators do not know the value of knowledge, whereas inquirers do. That is why the meditators are meditating. Knowledge may arise in meditation or it may not. If it does, we say meditation is a “leading error.” But even if meditation does lead to knowledge of the “unbroken I-thought” (*akandakara vritti*), the knowledge does not always stick, as I point out above.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari