

# Concerning the Possibility of an Experiential Affirmation of Non-duality

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**Tracy:** Hi, Ted. This is just a note of appreciation for teaching the *Bhagavad Gita* and the methods of Vedanta to our class in India. In addition to the jokes and head transplant updates, you really did a fantastically thorough job with the text, and it was awesome to meet you.

When I got back, I realized that I was very much struggling with an overlay of *tamas* pretty much the whole time I was in India and beyond. It was hard to get my brain to work most days. Perhaps an indicator of my dedication and the powers that be was that knowledge and understanding still seeped in there. One thing I realized was that managing the *tamas* with lifestyle changes, specifically a moderate amount of exercise, is very much part of prep work for self-inquiry, specifically *vasana* work, and this is something I can do because I understand its value within a useful context. Your thorough unfolding of the *gunas*, specifically with regards to *tamas* and *avarana shakti*, were very helpful to start to understand this energy as it appears in me. I'm continuing with everyday Vedanta, listening to the audios and watching the videos, and just finished reading *The Yoga of Love* a few weeks ago. Also, I had the privilege of meeting James in person in Connecticut, and that kind of turned up the gas for me on the whole thing.

So here's my question: I had a powerful realization of no other in India and that seems like a bit of a page marker for me to keep going back to. It's a strange feeling that the penny has dropped but it hasn't quite dropped yet, because it's a mental reference point. I think in some ways I'm still waiting for some sort of an ongoing experience to affirm it and the habit of doing that is really ingrained. From what I've learned from Vedanta so far I know that the longing for experiential affirmation is pointless and yet I still do it. Anyway, I'm sure this is a very common issue and your input is very much appreciated.

~ Love, Tracy

**Ted:** Hi, Tracy. It's great to hear from you, and I'm glad that the teachings have been helpful. There really is nothing to compare with the profundity of Vedanta.

Regarding your desire for an experiential confirmation of the non-dual nature of reality, I'm sorry to say that there is no such thing. Experience, by definition, is dualistic. That is, experience takes place between a knowing subject and a known object. The "arena" of awareness in which that relative knowledge occurs or relational experience takes place is altogether beyond any limiting parameters. It is limitless conscious existence.

Actually, the fact that you exist and know you exist is the experiential confirmation of your non-dual nature – though, admittedly, from the perspective of the mind this circumstance does not seem non-dual.

Existence is only verified by consciousness and consciousness undeniably exists. That much is obvious. To recognize the fact that conscious existence is limitless, and thus non-dual, however, requires further inquiry. If objects can only exist within a "field" of consciousness, then

consciousness itself must be limitless, for every possible form of limitation – i.e. boundary, edge, outline, attribute, characteristic, quality, etc. – is a known object appearing within a greater expanse of consciousness. Moreover, there cannot be an object outside of consciousness, for such a circumstance would preclude the possibility of the object being recognized as existent, which renders the whole matter absurd. The fact that no object can exist outside of consciousness also means that consciousness itself must be not only the “field” of existence, but also the illumining factor that makes it known and the material of which it is made, for there can be no other source to draw upon. Therefore limitless conscious existence must be the baseline, the essential substrate, the fundamental nature of reality.

And since there can only be one fundamental reality, the fundamental reality of the whole must be the fundamental reality of you. Thus you must be limitless conscious existence.

Due to the apparent limitation imposed upon the portion of limitless conscious existence that is associated with the body-mind-sense complex of person you appear to be, the mind – which is itself an object in limitless conscious existence – is only able to experience those objects that fall within its scope of perception. Because the mind is afflicted with self-ignorance, the ego, or I-sense, arises within it and claims the erroneous identity of individual personhood that is associated with the limited body-mind-sense complex. Consequently the mind thinks that the limitations imposed by the body-mind-sense complex are real and actually separate the portion of consciousness that is its essential identity from the consciousness that pervades and whose self-luminous existence transcends the entire manifestation. The truth, however, is that consciousness is consciousness. And that consciousness is you. Thus the consciousness you now experience is the same consciousness that is the fundamental nature of reality.

The closest the mind can come to an experiential affirmation of non-duality is a unique thought-form referred to as *akhandakara vritti*, the “thought without limitation,” which can arise spontaneously in a state of meditation or can be triggered by an unfoldment of the intended meaning of the words of scripture.

Perception normally involves two aspects: *vyapti vritti* and *chidabhasa vritti*. The perceptive organ “reaches out,” as it were, and pervades an object, and *vyapti vritti* neutralizes *avaruna shakti*, or the cloud of ignorance regarding the object, and thus reveals the presence of the object. The mind, which itself is formless, then modifies to or assumes the form of the object, and *chidabhasa vritti* conforms to the projection of *vikshepa shakti* and reveals the identity of the object (e.g. *vritti vyapti* reveals that there is an object before us, and *chidabhasa vritti* enables us to see that it is a tree). Consciousness, however, is not an object. So while the intended meaning of the words of scripture or a *sattvic* state of mind in meditation trigger *vritti vyapti*, no *chidabhasa vritti* occurs. Instead *akhandakara vritti* arises and there is an “intuitive” recognition (that is, an inner certainty, which is not to be confused with the usual connotation of intuition as merely a hunch or gut feeling) of one’s true nature as limitless conscious existence. The *akhandakara vritti* is only a reflection of consciousness, but because the mind is pure the “reflection” of the nature of consciousness “appearing” within it is accurate. Just as the reflection of a face appearing in a mirror that is clean and smooth looks exactly like the face of the person looking into the mirror, so the reflection of consciousness “appearing” in a pure mind is as good as the original. As does any thought, the *akhandakara vritti* eventually subsides and object *vrittis* arise again. However, the self-knowledge revealed by the experience remains. Thereafter the essential substance of all thought forms is known as consciousness. And consciousness is known as the fundamental nature of reality. And the fundamental nature of reality is known as the self.

Hence the self is known to be *ekam eva advitiam*, one without a second.

I hope that helps.

~ All the best, Ted