

# Confusing the Apparent and the Real

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Marty:** Dear James, there is something I have been musing about vis à vis the *Mandukya Upanishad*. When I am in deep sleep this is the nearest I have to bliss – my own true self – but I am also in ignorance of this, as I am not self-aware.

**James:** Which “I” are you talking about?

**Marty:** But I don’t need the mind to be self-aware – and sleep is really only for the mind. I am self-luminous. However, when I die, by which I mean the body-mind, will I continue to be self-aware or will I be in ignorance of my nature, as I appear to be in deep sleep?

**James:** Again, which “I” are you talking about?

In your sentence you say, “I am self-luminous,” which is true, then in the very next sentence you associate the “I” with the body and mind.

The mind cannot be self-aware, whether you need it to be or not. The body-mind is neither aware nor self-aware even when you are alive. It only seems as if they are aware because awareness pervades every particle of these two sheaths. They are just inert matter-vestures that reflect awareness and illumine objects for you, awareness.

You are confusing *satya* and *mithya*, awareness and reflected awareness. Nothing belongs to the “I.”

The body does not die either, because it was never born. How can matter be born or die? Matter is just you appearing in different forms. First a carrot *vritti* or a potato *vritti*, then as some portion of the body. Likewise with the subtle body. They are just lifelike holograms manufactured by *maya* out of you, awareness. They have no self-nature.

Both the body and mind are *Isvara*’s projection. They have no actual reality, no substance. Whatever substantiality they enjoy is just the self as it appears in objects. The rope is an ophidian illusion. Whatever reality the snake enjoys completely belongs to the rope.

If you are aware now – which you are – you are the self and the self alone. There is no actual Marty. She is an abstraction from an interpretation done by the self in ignorance of its nature that is meant to solve the identity problem. She is not there in deep sleep and you are. She is an object of your perception, so she cannot be you. She is not aware.

You pervade the Marty *vritti*, and because of ignorance you believe that Marty is aware. It is an honest mistake because of the proximity of you, awareness, to the Marty *vritti*. To get free you have to separate awareness from the *vritti*. This is terribly difficult because the *vritti* is you but you are not the *vritti*. Confusing the two is what is meant by ignorance, or superimposition.

Discriminating them is *jnana*, the knowledge of *satya* and *mithya* which is liberation.

When you say, “When I die, will I continue to be self-aware?”: of course you will. If you knew that you were awareness now, you would not have to wait until you die to see if you will be self-aware. This misunderstanding shows that you do not know that you are the self. Otherwise you would not confuse the “I”s.

Examine yourself and see if you are capable of non-existence. To say that you die means that you would have to have knowledge of your death, but you would have to be there to observe your non-existence – which is impossible. There is no evidence that you die. It is merely a belief based on the idea that you are the body. You cannot be the body for the reasons mentioned.

This may take some contemplation. I hope it has been helpful.

~ Love, James