

Just Awareness and Objects

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Tom: Dear James, let me run this by you, please.

“All thoughts and emotions (and decisions) arise in me and are generated by *Isvara*. I (awareness) am actionless, effortless, invisible and unconcerned... or said another way... I (awareness) am passive and indifferent. Awareness is like a light bulb in a room – essential for knowing what is going on but not involved in any action, thought or emotion. It is steady, always on.

The teaching of Vedanta is to make life as *sattvic* as possible. This is obviously a teaching from *Isvara* to the *jiva* and the response to this teaching can only be by *Isvara* (not awareness).

A *sattvic* life is a happy life, for the *jiva*, not for awareness (which doesn't need that). It is for *Isvara*. Awareness isn't "leading a life" anyway.

So here's my question:

When I "stand in awareness," aren't I, the *jiva*, opting to do this, taking the awareness's standpoint as if I were awareness, without really being awareness?

James: Yes.

Tom: The thought "I am awareness" is a thought from *Isvara*, the thought itself is not awareness.

James: Yes, because the *jiva* is not sure that it is limitless. It knows it exists and is conscious but it doesn't know that it is limitless. Awareness is limitless.

Tom: It looks as though there is no "I" at all, just awareness and the objects (*Isvara*), which include thoughts of all varieties, including "I am awareness"!

James: Yes, indeed! Good. The issue here is the word "there." It implies the existence of a knower. Who is that knower and what is its nature? Is the knower "awareness" or is it me? If it is awareness your self-knowledge is indirect and you are situated at the fourth stage of enlightenment. If it is "me" and there is a direct, constant experience of limitlessness and bliss, and all the *vasanas* have been rendered non-binding, then you are a self-actualized person and there is nothing more to accomplish. If the answer is "awareness" and you mean "me" then you are in fifth stage unless the qualifications listed in the last sentence are true.

There is one seeming issue in the first section. You say, "The teaching of Vedanta is to make life as *sattvic* as possible." It is and it isn't. The teaching itself only removes ignorance about the nature of the self, the ever-experienced "I." If the knowledge "I am awareness" is doubt-free but

the experience of limitless bliss is not constant and the *vasanas* have not been rendered non-binding by the knowledge, it's up to the *jiva* to remove whatever obstacles stand in the way unless the *jiva* is content with any suffering brought on by the remaining obstacles – in which case they are not obstacles.

For more on this topic see “The Stages of Enlightenment” in *Inquiry into Existence*.