

# Liberation Is Not an Awakening

Ram (James Swartz)

2012-06-03

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/523>

**Ram:** Hi, Ravi. I read your email carefully with my red pencil sharpened, but could find nary a mistake. It shows that you have assimilated the words of Vedanta properly. You will make a good teacher one day, as your ability to express the truth is clear and eloquent. I will send you the Sri Ramji Enlightenment Certificate in the post shortly, refund your money for the India course and put your name before the next plenary session of The Galactic Congress of Saints and Sages as a *jivan mukta* of substance and potential sage. ☺

~ Much love, Ram

**Ravi:** Dear Ram, you explained two statements that clarified matters for me: “dropping of ignorance” and “apparent.”

First, *moksa* is not an awakening but merely the dropping of ignorance.

That statement made a huge difference. A simple phrase (dropping of ignorance) made such a change in perspective and understanding. Ravi does not and cannot awaken. Ravi is the name given to the human form, not to *atman* which is name-free. *Atman* in the human form with *avidya* simply drops *avidya* and continues as *atman* without *avidya*. *Atman* is who I am, not Ravi.

**James:** Good! Now you have it. Awakening implies an experience, something that happens to Ravi, something that changes him and his life. But there is no Ravi. There is just *atman* with apparent knowledge or ignorance of itself.

**Ravi:** Second, the meaning of the word “apparent.”

This took more analysis and contemplation.

As per ordinary usage in English, I took it to mean “not really existing, never existed, no inherent existence, only a pretence or appearance of existing, but not really present, virtual, no realness to it.” With this usage of apparent, it means *asat*. For example, an apparent change of heart means no true change of heart at all, just the appearance of change. An apparent gain means there was no gain really.

Now I understand that when used in Vedanta “apparent” means “existing, but only temporarily,” i.e. it does exist, it is present, not merely as an appearance or pretence of being present, but actually present for some time and then disappears, has a relative realness dependent on something else. Thus in Vedanta “apparent” means *mithya*. Take the sky: my perception is blue; my knowledge is colourless space. Blueness is present and cannot be denied. The knowledge of colourless space does not take blueness away. But blueness, although present, is dependent on colourless space and is temporary. When I go up in a spaceship, blueness disappears. Hence blueness is apparent, present, but temporary and dependent and has a relative realness. So is

the sky blue? Yes and no. Yes, from the perspective of perception and relative realness. No, from the perspective of knowledge and absolute realness.

In contrast to *mithya*, the real/*satyam* never ever ceases to exist; it is always present. In the above example, the absolute realness of colourless space continues unendingly and is unaffected by the perception of blueness. Colourless space never becomes blue, yet blueness continues to be perceived as a superimposition on colourless space.

Thus ignorance is apparent, i.e. *mithya*.

Gosh, the nuances of language can be confusing!!!

**James:** This is why a *guru* is necessary. Vedanta is all words, and words have both an ostensible and an implied meaning, and the inquirer is ignorant. Ignorance is hard at work interpreting the words.

**Ravi:** In the following reply, I will use the word “temporary” instead of “apparent.”

The following metaphor came to mind and helped me understand both statements.

Metaphor: I am awake and sighted. I close my eyelids, and so cannot see. Through temporary ignorance, and overcome by it, I forget I am sighted. The power/side effect of this ignorance is that I am convinced that I am blind and live a blinded life. The resulting tragedy is that I will now live my whole life like this, in blindness, without sight and the joy of seeing. The ultimate irony is that the reality of sightedness is still present, but because of ignorance I do not know this fact.

Fortunately, someone tells me, “Hey! You are sighted, not blind at all!! All you have to do is open your eyelids!!” I trust, accept the words and follow the instructions: I open my eyelids. I see!! I realise I am sighted. Sightedness is inherent in me. I am always sighted. I do not gain sightedness, because it is already and always present, just that I had my eyelids shut and believed I was blind because of the influence of temporary ignorance. So I merely drop my ignorance.

Throughout this experience I remain awake. There is no awakening to sightedness, because I am not asleep but just had my eyelids shut. I drop my ignorance and its resulting belief of blindness and open my eyelids. I am always awake, just that for a while I was awake plus ignorant. Now I am awake without ignorance and can enjoy sightedness and live my usual, everyday life in a different way. This is freedom from ignorance with the pleasure of sight. Analysis of the metaphor: I, awake = *atman*, always awake. Sight = my inherent nature, *sat chit ananda*, limitless, absolute, complete. Close my eyelids = taking human birth: *atman + upadhi + avidya* in the subtle body = *jiva*.

Temporary ignorance = *maya*, that which makes what is not appear to be present, through its clouding and projecting power.

Power/side effect of ignorance = forgetting who I really am (clouding), forming and identifying with mistaken thoughts and beliefs about myself, based on my human form, that I am limited and incomplete (projection).

I believe I am blind when I am really sighted = I believe I am only a limited and incomplete human being, *jiva*, when I am really *atman*.

Self under the spell of ignorance.

Even with ignorance, I am still inherently *atman* but now called *jiva* (a temporarily ignorant *atman*). Resulting tragedy of ignorance = *samsara*, suffering in life, here and now. Fortune = by the grace of *Isvara*. Someone tells me = *guru* and *guru vakya*, words of the *guru*. All I have to do = *sadhana*, preparing myself by developing the qualities of an *adhikari* (*Tattvabodha*). I trust, accept = *shraddha*, trust pending verification by following the instructions. Words = the means of knowledge. Vedanta *pramana*: *Tat tvam asi; brahman satyam, jagat mithya*. I open my eyelids = my part in the process. I see = I recognise I am *atman* by the dropping of ignorance and its side effects. Throughout this experience = my life now. I am always awake = I am always *atman*, just that for a while I was awake plus temporarily ignorant = just for a while (how many lifetimes??), I, *atman* under the spell of ignorance, mistook myself to be only *jiva*. Now I am awake = now I know I am *atman* in my *upadhi*, not *jiva* = *jivanmukti, jivatman*. Now I can enjoy sight = now I recognise I am limitless and complete, *atman*. Live my usual, everyday life = nothing externally changes, but with this internal paradigm shift I live as a true and full human being. In a different way = recognise I am *atman* and that everybody else is *atman* in that *upadhi*, every form is *brahman* manifesting as *Isvara*. This is freedom with the pleasure of sight = *moksa*. I am freedom, happiness, peace itself. This is my inherent nature of *sat chit ananda*. I am *atman*. So is everyone and everything else.

Application of the metaphor as *atman*: I am always aware of my nature of *sat chit ananda*, always complete and limitless. When I take human birth I take on a human form which has temporary ignorance in its subtle body. This ignorance, or *maya*, has the power to cloud and project. Through its power to cloud it makes me forget what I am, *atman*. Through its power of projection it makes what is not present to appear as present. That is, ignorance makes me define myself as a limited, incomplete and unhappy self, based on the qualities of my human form, when I am really the full and complete self. I have mistaken what is not applicable to me (limited, incomplete and unhappy self) to be the truth of myself. I have projected on to my self qualities that are not mine. I, *atman*, the self, have come under the spell of ignorance. Inevitably, I, *atman*, identify myself with my human form, and my name now is *jiva*.

The resulting tragedy is that I live my life thinking I am incomplete and limited, and seek ways to overcome these stifling limitations. They are not part of my nature. But nothing I do ever works, nothing truly satisfies. Even pleasant experiences are temporary and always tinged with sadness. It is a tragic life, called *samsara*, here and now and is the lot of every human being. It is the set, default condition which cannot be avoided when born into this world.

Only knowledge can overcome ignorance, not action nor experiences. By the grace of *Isvara*, I meet a *guru*, i.e. one who can dispel my darkness of ignorance. He continuously abides as *atman*, firmly established in the knowledge of his true nature as *atman*, and having learned through his own insight, knows how to use words wisely to communicate this reality. Thus words are the means of knowledge. He knows how to use them carefully, skilfully and with accuracy according to my needs. Thus my darkness of ignorance is overcome. Ignorance, which is beginningless, ends.

It is temporary, apparent.

What is required of me? For the interaction to work, I must initially trust his words. It is not blind faith. It is a trust pending verification, when I discover that what has been said and taught bears fruit and produces the predicted outcome. I have held onto my wrong beliefs for so long that they are ingrained in me. I need to develop certain qualities of mind so that I overcome the wrong ideas and tendencies and become receptive to the teaching. The teacher does not give me anything; he points out what is present but overlooked through ignorance.

At the appropriate time, again by the grace of *Isvara*, ignorance drops away and the clear insight into my reality is recognised. *Atman* is what I always am, limitless and complete, just that for a while I was ignorant of this fact and mistook myself to be what I am not. But now I know. I am named *jivanmukti*, or *jivatman*.

Since I am still in a human body, I continue to live as a human being in today's world. My human frame has its destiny and will die at the allotted time. Until then I live as *atman* in this human body with the clear vision that I am limitless and complete, *atman* in this limited and incomplete body. But now I know this human form is not me; it is a wonderful instrument I have, to live and experience life on this planet. Thus I live my usual, everyday life but now in a very different way, one of peace and fulfilment within, here and now. I am a true human being.

I extend my vision and see that everybody else is exactly the same. They too are *atman* with a human form. I see this fact clearly and relate to them as *atman*, the same *atman* which I am. I am at peace with myself and live in harmony with others.

Even more, I recognise that everything in creation is the same *atman* in different forms. The totality of *atman* is named *brahman* and it is from *brahman* that creation, or *Isvara*, arises. Yes, everything without exception is *brahman-Isvara*, from the smallest grains of sand to the mightiest mountains, from tiny plants to the biggest trees, from microscopic animals to huge mammals, every human being... every thing is sacred. All are the one, same, underlying, indivisible *brahman* with differences in form. There are differences in shape, structure, colour, movement; there are differences in dress, habits, food, personalities, language, cultures; there are differences in thoughts, ideas, concepts, philosophies, beliefs, religions. These differences are at the periphery of being, while at core of being it is the same *brahman-atman*. This is the expanded vision which is present when ignorance is dropped.

Such a life is a blest life, one of peace within and harmony around, all because ignorance was dropped. What a world when the ignorance of everyone is dropped and everyone realises this truth of *atman* themselves! Life would be very different from today's world.

Yet this is everyone's birthright... I am looking forward to your reply.

Thank you so much, James.

My wife Susan and I will be in Tiruvannamalai for your *Panchadasa* and the first two weeks of *Gita*. We will book today and also send a donation. We look forward to seeing you there.

~ Love, Ravi.