

No Fourth State but a Fourth State - Ramana

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Seeker: Dear Ram, I trust you are well and enjoying the beautiful fall weather in Portland. I remember during your teaching in Tiruvannamalai this winter the question arose as to the existence or not of a “fourth state,” *turiya*, which some people attribute to one of Sri Ramana’s answers to a question put to him. You were emphatic that no such state existed. I came across this statement of Sri Ramana that confirms your point. It is from *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, May 1, 1946:

“When I entered the hall, Bhagavan was answering some question, saying, ‘There is no difference between dream and the waking state except that the dream is short and the waking long. Both are the result of the mind. Because the waking state is long, we imagine that it is our real state. But, as a matter of fact, our real state is what is sometimes called *turiya*, or the fourth state, which is always as it is and knows nothing of the three *avasthas*, viz. waking, dream or sleep. Because we call these three *avasthas*, we call the fourth state also *turiya avastha*. But it is not an *avastha*, but the real and natural state of the Self. When this is realised, we know it is not a *turiya*, or fourth state, for a fourth state is only relative, but *turiyatita*, the transcendent state called the fourth state.’”

Later I came across these statements by Ramana written in English by his own hand. What do you make of the obvious contradiction. Is the self a fourth state or not?

“Awareness of the Self, Deathlessness, and Silence and Fearlessness. The wise call this state, which is the Fourth and Highest (beyond the Three, namely waking, dream and sleep and called by various names.

“But the Self does not become an object of knowledge, and there is no Knower of objects in the Supreme State; the Self is the Sole Reality, without objects of knowledge and without anyone else who could become His Knower. There is neither speaker nor thinker in that state: so that Transcendental State is called Silence.”

James: This is why Vedanta says that Ramana was an enlightened person but not a qualified teacher. Ramana wasn’t confused but he was a victim of the language of the times. He was speaking knowledge in the language of experience. This was the biggest disservice that the enlightened people of the last century, including my *guru* Chinmayananda, Vivekananda, Atmananda and many many others did. Why is it a disservice? Because it is completely misleading. It makes the reader or listener think that the self is something to be accomplished and experienced. It is not. The self is not a state. It is non-dual awareness. Everything is only the self, so there is no possibility that there be actual states of awareness or other awarenesses.

Then how do we explain the three states? When *maya* operates, awareness appears as if it is three states and three experiencing entities – the waker (*viswa*), dreamer (*tajasa*) and deep sleeper (*prajna*). But the states and the experiencing entities are not real. They are just projections. If you call the self a “fourth state” you have to believe that reality is a duality. Doing so

allow allows you to limit it – make it an object of experience. But as *sruti* says – and Ramana concurs – the self cannot be objectified. Ramana was a great soul, and he reasoned out self-knowledge by his own experience with the help of scripture. But he was not a linguist and he was not trained in the Vedanta *sampradaya*, which is all about language, the meaning of words.