

No One Knows Anything

Ram (James Swartz)

2003-02-24

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1439>

Frank: Dear Ram, thanks for your email. I had to smile at all the things you encountered in England and the USA. You're a great writer. I presume you don't mind me sending some of your emails to certain friends of mine. They react with enthusiasm.

Ramji: Not at all. Send them on. I'm not invested in them at all. I like the topic of the self and nobody owns it, so what I have to say is for whomever wants it – free of charge.

Frank: Isn't it funny that some seekers are allergic to an intellectual exposé on Vedanta? I guess it's mainly because they feel threatened at the level of their cherished and "sacred" concepts of God, world and self.

Ramji: Yes, indeed. Most take spirituality like religious people take religion; they are believers. Without any experience, logic or common sense they hold onto the silliest notions. I positively hate the smug anti-intellectualism that passes for spiritual wisdom these days – all these superior "feeling" types that have long since put their brains on the shelf and believe that anyone capable of thought is incapable of enlightenment.

Frank: By the way, Ram, I came across a nice saying of Krishna Menon (Atmananda) from South India in his *Atma Nirvriti*, on which I would like to hear your view. Here it is:

I. Knowledge has nothing to know. The insentient can never know, being insentient.

II. Therefore no one knows anything. All beings stand established as pure consciousness.

Ram: Vedanta establishes two factors in the creation, the self and the self as matter. They are called the sentient and the insentient, respectively. The insentient, the bodies, do not have *chit*, consciousness, although they have *sat*, they exist. Therefore they exist, but they do not know. Even the subtle body – the mind and intellect – which seems to know, doesn't actually know, according to Vedanta. It is just an insentient mirror that reflects objects which then are illumined by the self and therefore known. There's a beautiful verse in *Atma Bodh* that says, "When the self illumines a thought wave in the mind, knowledge is produced."

But knowledge in this statement means the self, I think. It can mean there are no objects in a non-dual reality. If there are no objects, there is no subject. Without a subject and an object knowledge cannot take place.

Another way to see it is that the self doesn't need to know anything, because knowing will not change who it is. It knows itself without the aid of instruments and this is enough for it. And since it is self-satisfied, self-fulfilled, it doesn't need to function in a dual reality and therefore has no

need for knowledge.

This is not to say that it is incapable of knowing objects. If it finds itself in its creation as an individual, it is certainly capable of wielding the means of knowledge, the senses, mind and intellect. But it has no need to do so. Limited beings – doers – need knowledge to function.

The statement “Therefore no one knows anything” is probably not the best way to express what I think he means. The problem with the statement are the words “no one.” If there is someone (I think he is referring to the *jivas*, the individuals) then they do have knowledge. In fact Vedanta says that every *jiva* is nothing but a certain kind of “special knowledge.” A tree, for example, has knowledge specific to its *dharma*. A bird has knowledge specific to its nature. Likewise with humans. So on the face of it the statement is not correct. But what I think he means is that this knowledge doesn’t “mean” anything – from the self’s point of view. It doesn’t mean anything, because the creation doesn’t mean anything. It just is. Knowledge doesn’t change what is. It only changes what seems to be, i.e. *maya*.

Frank: I hope your health is fine.

Ram: I got a nasty viral infection, but I also got a tremendous blast of *shakti* that pretty much did it in. It only lasted about three-and-a-half days and wasn’t nearly as bad as it could have been. It was a reaction to the trip – all the changes. I hear what you’re saying about the body. I’m glad I don’t have to work like you do.

~ Love, Ram