

Tricked by an *Upadhi*

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Jennifer: Dear James, I am reading *The Essence of Enlightenment*, Chapter 1, "Vedanta, the Science of Consciousness," page 8, paragraph 7, and have a question.

You write: "You may feel a little silly when you realize that you were tricked by duality and that you are actually awareness, the non-experiencing witness. Don't berate yourself for taking yourself to be the experiencing awareness for so long. Everyone is fooled by duality."

In my understanding, I would have thought the sentence should read, "Don't berate yourself for taking yourself to be the experiencing entity for so long."

Could you explain the meaning of "experiencing awareness" as it pertains to this teaching?
Thank you.

James: Hi, Jennifer. Lovely to hear from you. I trust you and Frank are well. Things are fine here.

Experiencing awareness is an experiencing witness. Witness and awareness mean the same thing. Let me explain it.

There is only one awareness, but when we take *maya* into consideration three bodies appear in it. Awareness is non-experiencing. It has no instruments for experience and sees no world to experience. By when *maya* generates the three bodies, it sets up a situation where awareness "becomes" an experiencer. This experiencing awareness is called a *jiva*, an individual, a sentient being. The joke, however, is that this sentient being is not actually sentient as it seems to be. "Its" awareness is not its awareness. You probably think that Jennifer is aware. But Jennifer is not aware. You, awareness, are aware. However, it looks like the experiencing entity is aware because the light of awareness reflected on the subtle body is basically indistinguishable from non-experiencing awareness. The *upadhi*, Jennifer, brought about by *maya*, seemingly adds qualities to pure awareness. The action of the *upadhi* is not known to the Jennifer it creates – she is gross, an experience whose awareness is turned outward, so she doesn't see how *maya* is tricking her, making her think she is a limited entity when actually she is ever-free, non-experiencing awareness.

I hope that is helpful and I hope our paths cross again.

~ Much love, Ramji