

Who Is to Blame?

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Seeker: Dear Ramji, why is the current teaching, e.g. by Swami Chinmaya, Dayananda and many others, *swamis* and non-*swamis*, that (1) the *atman* can never be ignorant, that it is always shining, self-effulgent; (2) it is the subtle body which gets affected by ignorance; (3) removing ignorance from the subtle body by knowledge reveals *atman*.

The metaphor used is the sun and its reflection. They teach that the reflection gets affected by ignorance, forgets that the sun is its origin, takes itself to be the only reality and identifies with the water, e.g. if the water is choppy, the reflection thinks it is choppy, etc.

But isn't the real problem the fact that the sun forgets itself and mistakes itself to be the reflection? That is, I, *atman*, forget I am *atman* and mistake myself to be my human form?

The gross and subtle bodies are instruments which I/*atman* have as a human being. These instruments are inherently limited and can never "reach" *atman*, however purified of ignorance they may be. The subtlety is the distinction that I, *atman* in my human form, am ignorant of my own inherent nature, which is shining and self-effulgent. I am ignorant of myself.

So I, *atman*, have to "wake up" to what I always and already am. The subtle body, when primed with appropriate qualities and values, is an instrument I use to help me along the way to a certain point. Then it is left behind because it is limited while I, *atman*, directly recognise myself as *atman*.

Placing ignorance on the subtle body (which includes the "ego") and saying it is therefore the cause of subsequent suffering is a classic, perhaps even ultimate, example of "a bad workman blames his tools."

Conclusion: I, *atman* in my human form, am ignorant of myself. I, *atman*, have to "wake up" to myself. Let's not blame the subtle body. I am the problem. I am the solution. Who is this "I"? None else but *atman*. Pretty straightforward, don't you think?

I look forward to your comments.

Ramji: If you have to blame something you can as well blame the subtle body as anything. Ignorance is to blame. It shows up in the subtle body as wrong ideas about one's self and the nature of the world.

Waking up is not something you do. It happens - or not. But whether you are awakened or not, ignorance persists. So you need to be dedicated to removing it. But you are not necessarily qualified to remove it, because a lot of what you think is knowledge is actually ignorance. So you need an objective view - i.e. Vedanta. And you need to be taught. Just reading it as an awakened or unawakened person will not work owing to a lack of objectivity brought about by ignorance of the nature of

reality.

Awakening just means that you have had some experiences that convince you that you are not who you think you are. If you are the self – and there is only the self – then you never slept, so there is no question of awakening. If this is true, then only ignorance remains. To remove ignorance you need a means of knowledge. Your own instruments of knowledge are not capable of removing it, so you need an impersonal, complete, comprehensive means – ergo Vedanta.

~ Love, James