

Why Do I Shift from Non-Duality to Duality?

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Kenneth: Hi, Ram. You write about *Paramatman*: “Scripture is very clear on this point. It is self-knowing, self-luminous, self-aware.” It seems you take the *Vedas* as a higher authority than yourself. Like many other old writings, they may be distorted.

Ram: Scripture is the testimony of enlightened people, Kenneth. My experience confirms the words of scripture and scripture confirms my words.

Kenneth: Who is knowing? To know there must be a subject-object relation, but self is non-duality.

Ram: As I said, the self is self-knowing. It is conscious. It knows itself without the aid of any other. And if we take the apparent reality into account, it has the power to appear as a knowing subject and the objects and to know itself in this way also – because it is limitless. If it could not know itself in this way, it would be limited. But experience and scripture shows that awareness is limitless.

Kenneth: Who recognises the duality disappearing?

Ram: The self, awareness. No action is possible without awareness.

Kenneth: And if there is an observer, there cannot be Oneness.

Ram: Not true. If the observed and the observer are made of the same substance, i.e. awareness, they are one. Something can be one, but appear to be many. Duality is apparent, not real.

Kenneth: Who is self-aware? Maybe this is the point: the self is neither one nor two.

Ram: There is only one self and it is self-aware. We have covered this before, Kenneth. It is something you have to experience to know. On the intellectual level, what you say is apparently true, but in a non-dual reality an apparent thing and its opposite can both be true. Why? Because the difference between things is apparent, not real. I think you are assuming that what is apparent is actually real.

You mentioned before that you shifted back to duality from non-duality. What do you think it will take for shift back to stop happening?

Kenneth: Good question! Dis-identification with the mind? Can you answer it?

Ram: Yes. The problem is that you see enlightenment in experiential terms. If you see that you are the self, there will be no shift, because you will be both what you are shifting to and what you are shifting back to. This is non-dual realization. You are the awareness of the shift and the one who is making the shift, the apparent shifter. If you think you are limited, then you can shift from one state to another. But you are not limited. You are limitless, non-dual, ordinary awareness. It does not shift, because there is no place other than it to shift to.

You are partly right when you say “dis-identification with the mind.” You can’t dis-identify without re-identifying with something. As long as you identify yourself as the mind, the experiencing entity, you will not identify yourself as awareness, the self. So when this “shift” in understanding takes place, you will not shift back, because you can never forget who you are once you actually know it. Why? You can forget something that is not present or you can lose an experience because experiences are impermanent, but you can never forget or unexperience yourself, because you are always present and you never cease to exist.

At one point you also seemed to believe that the words of an enlightened person are always the truth. But this is not so.

Kenneth: Shouldn’t she/he have the capacity to *sruti*? A man can say, “I am a man.” A mentally fit woman can say, “I am a woman.” So why should a sane *jnani* be deluded while describing her/his nature?

Ram: *Sruti* is not a capacity. It is simply self-knowledge. A person can be very clear in their own mind about who they are, but the way they express that knowledge may be difficult for others to understand. Even the *sruti*, which is just the refined essence of the knowledge of hundreds of thousands of self-realized beings, is difficult to understand, particularly if you are not qualified to understand it and if you do not have a teacher. A person who does not understand that he or she is ordinary, non-dual, actionless awareness can easily misunderstand the meaning of the words of enlightened people and the words of scripture. Scripture is superior to the words of enlightened individuals because it has been purified of personal views over the centuries. Even then, a teacher is required to help contextualize the knowledge. Simply reading scripture or listening to the words of enlightened people without a qualified teacher (and most enlightened people are not qualified teachers) is usually not fruitful, although there are very rare exceptions, because you would not be reading scripture or going to *gurus* if you knew who you were, in which case your self-ignorance would be interpreting the words and you would not take them as they are meant to be understood.

Kenneth: Here is a quote from Nisargadatta. What do you think of it?

“When the child knows itself, its knowingness has started. Prior to that is ignorance, although it is no-knowingness, it is ignorance. Then the knowledge ‘I am’ is attained. It does not know WHO it is, but it knows it is something... Technically, you can call deep sleep no-knowingness. But this is not that no-knowingness, beyond which the Absolute lies. You have to transcend light and darkness to abide in space. Similarly, one has to transcend the knowingness and no-knowingness – the aspects of bodily consciousness. If you have reached that

state, you are watching consciousness and no-consciousness. That is called natural *samadhi*, or *sahaja samadhi*. You know you are, but you forget that you are and that forgetfulness is no-knowingness, which is the highest state. You can never describe it by words, that state is never captured by words. If you close your eyes and almost forget yourself, half-sleep, that is exactly what you are.” (Transcribed by Jean Dunn.)

Ram: If you want to discuss this issue, please read my interview with Premananda about Ramana’s teaching in *Arunachala Siva* or go to the home page of my website and click on the Ramana picture on the left and read it there, then get back to me if it is not clear. Or you can find the whole issue discussed in great detail in Chapter II of my book *How to Attain Enlightenment*. It will explain what is right and what is wrong with this statement in great detail.

Kenneth: He is clear, even if he may not speak in a Vedantic context.

Ram: If it is the truth and it is clear, it is Vedanta, irrespective of the type of words used.

Kenneth: My favourite saying of Robert Adams is: “If it is not paradox, it is not the truth.”

Ram: This is true if you take duality into account. But if this is a non-dual reality, there are no paradoxes, only apparent paradoxes.

~ Yours sincerely, Ram