

# How Do You Know You Have a Brain?

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2014-12-30

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1973>

**Lukas:** Dear James, it's been a while since we met in Johannesburg three years or so ago. There is only one question that I would like your response to.

**Sundari:** Hello, Lukas, I will be answering on James' behalf.

**Lukas:** How can it be shown that everything covered in the Vedanta literature (yours as well in traditional texts) does not come to an end when the brain is no more? This is the age-old question of how to show that all we talked about, re absolute consciousness, is not a brain phenomenon.

**Sundari:** The short answer to your question is: How do you know that you have a brain? The brain doesn't know you but you know there is a brain even though you never saw it.

The long answer to your question is - first of all, we prefer not to use the term "absolute" to qualify consciousness, as it implies that there is a special consciousness "beyond" consciousness - since this is really a non-dual reality there is only consciousness seemingly appearing in form. Vedanta is the logic of existence and cannot be argued with because it confirms the unexamined logic of your own experience.

Although James is not a traditionalist "his" teachings are pure Vedanta and not his. He is a very clear voice for self-knowledge, or Vedanta, and a qualified lineage holder in the age-old tradition of Vedanta, or *sampradaya*.

The main aim in Vedanta is to discriminate the self from the objects that appear in it, meaning the real from the apparently real, *satya* and *mithya*. "Real" is defined as "that which is always present and never changing." Nothing in the apparent reality fits that definition.

How can the mind - or the brain (which is simply an instrument for perception and the mind is not confined to it), being a gross object - know something which is far subtler than it, awareness? Awareness, or consciousness, is not an object of perception and cannot be known by the mind, which is only capable of knowing objects.

Awareness is not a "brain phenomenon." As stated, the brain is just gross matter, it is inert. Without consciousness illuminating it, it is lifeless jelly. It appears to think and compute because the light of awareness shines on it - just like the moon appears to shine because the light of the sun shines on it. If you are identified with the body-mind the brain definitely comes to an end, so you believe you do. But there is no evidence that you die - and if there is then you would have to be there to know it, not so? Therefore all objects (the brain included) arise from awareness, are made up of awareness and are dependent on awareness to exist but you - awareness - are free of all objects. You are *adjata* - unborn - and you never die.

As awareness you do not need anything to know yourself, because you exist whether objects are present or not. When *maya* appears the creation manifests and the self apparently under the spell of ignorance appears as a subtle body, identifies with objects and believes that awareness is something it needs to gain. This is called ignorance.

This is why we need Vedanta, which is an impersonal means of knowledge for awareness. When the qualifications are present and the mind is faithfully subjected to the scripture self-knowledge removes the ignorance present in the mind, obscuring the true nature of the self. The person still remains but they are no longer identified with being a person. This is called *moksa*, freedom.

**Lukas:** If you wish to refer me to any of your material in response to the above question please do, as I have a copy of all the videos and writings on the hard drive you gave me.

~ Warm regards Lukas

**Sundari:** This teaching is the essence of Vedanta. The key to understanding it is the teaching on *maya* and the *Isvara-jiva* identity. All the teachings deal with it in some way or another. Read (or reread) James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment* carefully and slowly. His new book is soon to be available at the ShiningWorld website as well. The video on *Panchadasi* deals with the *Isvara-jiva* teaching, although it is a very advanced text. We have several renditions of it available on video. I recommend the Trout Lake 2015 version.

You need to persevere in self-inquiry, constantly subjecting the mind to the scripture. Your discrimination needs to develop, so make sure you understand all the qualifications required for *moksa*. I hope to hear from you.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari