

# Self-Evident Consciousness

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2015-03-29

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2100>

**Niyan:** *Namo Guru... Namaste, Sundari.* My name is Niyan, and I study the “Group Study Course” by Swami Dayananda with a group in Amsterdam. Currently I’m reading *Thathvabodha* by Swami Dayananda in addition to that. Could you please clear the terms “self-evident” and “self-consciousness” in the context of “consciousness”? I have attached the page for your reference.

~ Kind regards, Niyan

**Sundari:** Hello, Niyan. The terms “self-evident” and “self-consciousness” with reference to awareness (*atma*) means that the self (or consciousness) requires nothing to reveal itself or know itself because it is self-revealing, self-knowing. It is that by which everything is known and without which nothing exists. It is the knowing principle. Consciousness, being the subject and not the object, cannot be known by an object, because an object is not conscious.

Awareness therefore cannot be known by the mind, which is an object known to it. This is because awareness, the subject, is subtler than all objects. Awareness is simply that which knows all objects; it is the “transparent,” or non-experiencing, witness.

But awareness is a witness only with reference to whatever is seen. By itself it sees only pure consciousness. The self is a seer, that never began or ceases, and is the all-seeing eye, or “I,” that sees only itself because there are no objects for it to see; there is nothing but itself. Remember that “non-dual” means just that: there is only awareness for awareness to see – not that awareness is a seer in the way the *jiva* understands seeing.

It would be more appropriate to say that the self, seeing only itself, is that which knows the seer with reference to the seen only when *maya* is operating. The self-aware self appears as a seer; but it never actually is a seer, unless seeing refers to its own self. When ignorance is operating the *jiva* thinks that the seer is different from the seen; in other words, that the subject and object are different. They are not different, although they exist in a different order of reality, or category of existence.

There are only two categories in existence, you (awareness) and what you see/experience (objects). If you can see something, it is not you. You see your thoughts. In fact all you actually see is thoughts. So they cannot be you. Now look at the one that sees the thoughts. When you understand that one, you will see that the objects are you also. All objects are apparently real, meaning not always present and always changing. Awareness is that which is real, that which is always present and never changing.

The mind (subtle body, or *jiva*) is inert; it is not conscious. Although the mind arises in and is made up of awareness, it is merely a reflection, *pratibimba*. The mind is not capable of thinking, but thinking takes place in the mind because the light of awareness shines on it. It is the lens through which awareness apparently has contact with objects, but seeing as all objects are reflected awareness and thus have

a dependent existence on awareness, there are no objects for awareness to see.

Strictly speaking, it is not correct to refer to *atma* as consciousness or awareness, because both words have the implied meaning of unconscious and unaware. *Atma* is always aware, always conscious – but not in the way we usually use the terms. We are restrained by the use of words, but we use them advisedly with reference to self-knowledge. There is only one *atma*, one self. It is you. You have to be conscious to observe your doubts/thoughts and to write these words. Look and see if you can find an origin for you. You will not be able to find a beginning to you.

Awareness/consciousness is not an attribute of the mind. It is the knower of attributes, the knower of the mind. It has no form, so it has no attributes. Being the knowing principle, consciousness can know anything because it knows everything. It cannot do this if it is an attribute of something else. It can only do this because it is free of all attributes. Attributes limit things, and attributes are not conscious. They do not know anything. They are objects (ideas) appearing in you, awareness – but you, awareness/consciousness, are conscious of yourself whether or not objects are present.

This brings us to the question: What is the nature of objects?

All *jivas* experience all objects (whether subtle or gross) “in” the mind, meaning “in” consciousness, and interpret them according to their *guna*-generated conditioning, i.e. *vasanas*. All objects, the body-mind, including intuition, thoughts and feelings of the individual, are made up of awareness and have a dependent existence on awareness. They also have an apparent existence apart from the individual *jiva*’s perception and interpretation of them. A “physical” object is just the thought of a physical object and no different from a subtle object. This is because a physical object has no meaning apart from the knowledge of the object; and the knowledge of the object is conditioned by the *jiva*’s interpretation of the object. This interpretation in turn is conditioned by the *jiva*’s self-knowledge or lack thereof.

Any knowledge is object-based, not subject-based. You will not see a cat if you are looking at a dog, assuming your eyes and mind are functioning correctly. It is not knowledge unless it is true to the object. If it is “my” knowledge, whether this knowledge is immediate or based on memory, then it is my interpretation of an object, which is not necessarily knowledge. Ignorance (or my point of view) is causing me to see or experience whatever it is as though it is actually there. People believe that ignorance is knowledge because they believe that knowledge is subject-based, i.e. they believe that what they experience is knowledge. It may be knowledge, but it may not be.

Self-knowledge depends on the nature of the self, not on knowledge gained through personal experience. Self-knowledge is not memory-based, because it is always good; in other words, you can always rely on it. On the basis of self-knowledge the individual can retain or reject the knowledge gained through his or her personal experience.

The most important reason that objects can be known to be objects is because they are not the subject. The very fact that you can know something means it is an object. This applies to everything other than you, awareness. Awareness is the subject and the one that knows the object. Without awareness, no knowledge can take place; without awareness, no objects, which include knowledge and ignorance, exist.

I hope this helps.

~ *Namaste*, Sundari