

# Understanding Non-Duality Is Love

Ram (James Swartz)

2015-10-28

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2398>

**Tom:** Dear James, I imagine you may be busy, so I don't expect a speedy reply. Many people want to be free, you are in the freedom business. Although *Isvara's* Grace does in a bizarre way filter out the *jivas* that aren't ready to do the hard yards.

**James:** Yes, I am quite busy. Vedanta really works, so I am quite popular. But I want to reply to this letter, just to tidy up a few points. Yes, it is all a matter of qualifications. If you are qualified or willing to do the hard yards to qualify and you understand the value of Vedanta it does not take very long to get free.

**Tom:** A few years ago I understood that Ramana was sitting in those caves for one reason: he wasn't at the final stage of his development at 16 years old... cooking into maturity deep within still needed to happen. So when I read a interview the other week where you expressed a similar idea, I agreed.

**James:** The Ramana *bhaktas* do not like this idea. They think enlightenment is a one-off experience. It's sad to see them imitating the life of Ramana, waiting for their *moksa*, as if *moksa* could be induced by a lifestyle. Magical thinking is alive and well in the spiritual world.

**Tom:** In 1996 it dawned on me that awareness without an object was the I. Of course I didn't understand that the "I" was me... I had been seeking officially since 1970... so my cooking went on until your teachings on Vedanta Gracefully showed up...

**James:** Yes, you had all the pieces, but you needed Vedanta to fit them into the puzzle of existence. Grace is earned. When you purified yourself enough, *Bhagavan* brought Vedanta to you.

**Tom:** Ranjit's teaching allowed me to fully only give attention to the Absolute Real nature of Self, what doesn't change.

**James:** I don't know why he didn't relate the self to the world and the *jiva*. He must have read Shankara and his *guru* must have understood Shankara's statement, which is the essence of Vedanta, "The self alone is real, the world is apparently real. There is no difference between the *jiva* and the self." If you are not taught systematically or you choose to hear only the teachings that appeal to you, you will not be a good teacher, because your understand will be incomplete. The negation of the *jiva* and the world does not mean that they don't exist. They exist all right, and pretend that they don't at your peril.

**Tom:** Unfortunately, I was attempting to completely ignore everything that changed. Identification was still going on with what appeared sometimes. I didn't experience myself to be complete! So I bounced around digging deeper and deeper, both inside my self and through the smorgasbord of Neo-Advaita, through all the self-proclaimed "awakened" teachers on the internet.

**James:** You have to be paying attention unconsciously to something to ignore it. Once my *guru* said, "You know, Ram, you are what you are rebelling against." We are what we ignore. *Moksa* is complete knowledge. It is the knowledge of *satya* and *mithya*. Most *gurus* claim that the world and the *jiva* are non-existent, not realizing that the both the teaching *jiva* and the listening *jiva* can only make claims if they exist. The world exists. It is consciousness as existence. *Mithya*, the apparent reality, is too subtle a concept for them. Vedanta is the only teaching that has *satya* and *mithya*, and points out that the *jiva* is actually the self. If it is the self, you can't get away from it. You can't transcend it or destroy it.

**Tom:** It is my understanding that Ranjit was making the teachings into a very simple format. His basic thing was to point out that you weren't your name or form. He did this by hammering away the fact that everything reduced to zero, meaning that all forms and names return to space, which is zero. So how can anything be real if it is zero?

**James:** Maybe he didn't have any qualified disciples and maybe he didn't know how to wield the means of knowledge properly. Who knows? The problem is that space isn't a zero, although it seems as if it is. It is the container for all the elements, i.e. the whole world. Space is the self, but the self is not space. There is no such thing as zero, because there is only consciousness. You have to understand in what sense things that apparently have no substance are actually you, the self. The zero/void idea is as old a piece of ignorance as there is. The Shunyata Buddhists got it started, and it is alive and well today. The self is all-pervasive, eternal, unborn "positivity."

**Tom:** Furthermore, once you fully understand this, then what remains is Real, which isn't an experience.

**James:** Correct.

**Tom:** Also what was Real didn't produce the appearance. The appearance was a product of *maya*, and since *maya* doesn't exist the appearance isn't real.

**James:** Yes, but not exactly. The self doesn't produce the appearance but there is no appearance without the self. *Maya* is not non-existent. We know this because we can observe the effects of *maya*, i.e. the world and the *jivas*. It is known by inference. The problem with most of these teachers is that they rely only on perception as their means of knowledge and ignore inference, which is based on perception. They think if you can't perceive space it is non-existent. Inference is a valid means of knowledge but it takes a special kind of intellect to trust logic and base one's life on inference. You cannot see truth as an object, because it is you, the

subject. It is only by saying that the world and the individual don't exist these so-called teachers create a serious problem, to wit: they make the *jiva* feel that any effort it might do to prepare itself for *moksa* is futile. These teachers are really ignorant because a teaching is supposed to remove ignorance, not create it. It seems lost on them that if the *jiva* and the world don't exist then they are talking to someone who doesn't exist. The very fact that they are talking to someone means that that someone exists. So their confusion is between what exists - the self - and what exists but is not real.

**Tom:** He did finally say to me once that the body is unreal and real at the same time. It's real because *ParaBrahman* is Real.

**James:** Yes. There is only consciousness, so if there is a body it is obviously consciousness. It may not look like consciousness, but when you contemplate the *prakriyas* of Vedanta you can understand how it is. The substance of every gross and subtle object is consciousness. The body is not real, however, because it comes and goes. It is just name and form. It changes.

**Tom:** Ranjit became a disciple of Siddharemeswarar when he was 12 years old. There was no doubt that Ranjit was enlightened, he didn't want to teach, but circumstances finally forced him to teach when he was 70 years old. If I only needed to know my absolute unchanging nature, Ranjit pointed this out. For my *jiva* that wasn't enough for it to be free of ignorance and identification... my journey had to go on...

**James:** This autobiographical bit about Ranjit is interesting. Teachers like Ranjit perform a valuable but limited service. Teaching is a particular *dharma*, a skill. If you don't have it, you don't have it. It is easy to talk about things, to point things out, but teaching is a whole different ball of wax. You have to establish a context in which the words make sense. Once the context is established, then knowledge happens automatically, assuming a qualified inquirer. If a so-called "awakened" teacher talks about his experience to another experiencing entity, where is the context? The student has to interpret the words according to his own experience - which is a recipe for disaster because the inquirer is ignorant. He wouldn't be seeking if he wasn't ignorant. This is why virtually nobody gets enlightened through the Neos. People get inspired momentarily, but the whole context in which they are seeking - the elements, the Creator, their psychology and consciousness needs to be understood to make specific statements make sense.

**Tom:** Now the understanding that Reality in its Absolute Nature doesn't contain anything and never does... But it doesn't have any limits, therefore this whole apparent creation can, like a projection, appear from that which doesn't do anything.

**James:** It doesn't contain anything, because it is everything. *Maya* is the key. It is neither the self nor is it the world. The technical term is *sat asat vilakshanam*, something that is other than the real, i.e. the self, and the apparently real, i.e. the world. It is not the self, because the self is everything and is free of everything at the

same time. It is not the world, because it exists independently of the world. It is creation in potentia. You can't say that what is potential exists, but you can't say it doesn't either. *Maya* is ignorance of the self. Ignorance is not a substance. It is an object known to awareness, but since it exists prior to *jiva*, it hides the self from *jiva*.

**Tom:** Further, this can all be understood given the proper means of knowledge because it's always been what is, except ignorance blocked this knowledge.

**James:** Yes. A means of knowledge is the key. I am happy to hear you say this. You cannot figure it out on your own. You have to be taught. You cannot get free from the words of a *guru* unless the *guru* has a proper means of knowledge. A proper means of knowledge is independent of people. It is impersonal. I am a smart person and I worked on enlightenment 24/7 for three years, and I finally gave up. The day I gave up *Isvara* sent Vedanta and my *guru*.

**Tom:** Further, while the appearance of causal, subtle and gross bodies are still functioning due to the past *karmas*, apparent reality goes on. I am not separate from any of it, because it is all of my substance, to understand is to love all. This is freedom without limits.

**James:** I know what you mean, but if you are not separate from any of it, then you are not free. I think what you mean to say is that none of it is separate from you, awareness, but you are free of it. However, understanding the non-duality of the self and objects is *anandam*, love.

~ James