

Consciousness Not Prior to Consciousness

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S. Theyagarajan: Respected madam, I am S. Theyagarajan from Chennai, India. I have questions about deep sleep, whether we have consciousness in deep sleep and also, what is nature of space and time during deep sleep? Why we don't have "I" awareness? If there is no space and time and no consciousness, can we call the state prior to consciousness?

~ Thanking you, S. Theyagarajan

Sundari: Hello, S.

Thank you for your inquiry, it is a good one. You have not written to us before, so I have to ask you, have followed the instructions for self-inquiry at our website? I strongly suggest you do. Please read James' books, read the e-satsangs, using the search function to find answers to your questions. Also, watch as many videos of James teaching as possible.

To answer your question, consciousness is not a "state," because it is all there is. A "state" is something that comes and goes, but consciousness is always present and never changes. If this is a non-dual reality, which we know it is, then consciousness is all there is, so how can there be consciousness "prior" to consciousness? That would mean that there is another consciousness apart from consciousness, which would make reality a duality, not a non-duality. Self-inquiry into the true nature of awareness reveals that everything other than awareness can be negated because it is not always present and always changing, so in fact reality is a non-duality, not a duality. This is why Vedanta defines the world of experience as "apparently" real. *Maya*, which is the power in awareness to delude, makes what is unchanging, always present and limitless (awareness, or consciousness) appear to be changing and limited. But it is not so.

Dream and Deep Sleep States

Consciousness is the non-experiencing witness of the experiencing entity, called the *jiva*, or doer. It is not involved in the creation yet the creation does not exist without awareness.

Jiva manifests as three "little" *jivas* according to the state that it experiences:

1. As *viswa*, the waking state entity. In this state its mind is totally extroverted. It is hypnotised by duality. It chases and consumes experiences. *Viswa* appears in two forms: (a) free of identification with objects (a *jivanmukta*) or (b) as a doer (*karta*), or "person" identified with objects (a *samsari*). Both a *jivanmukta*, a liberated person, and a *samsari*, a bound person, have a common identity as awareness.

2. As *taijasa*, the "shining one," awareness with a subtle body illumining the dream state. In the dream state the subtle body is turned inward facing the causal body, the *vasanas*. The experiences the dreamer has are just experiences of the *vasanas*.

Jiva is not present in the dream state in the same way that it is present in the waking state. In the waking state, *jiva* identifies with the doer, so the doer is not seen as an object. It is thought to be the subject. In the dream state there is also identification, but the doer/ego can also appear as an object illumined by *taijasa*, awareness reflected on the subtle body. For instance, in the dream you can see the waker going about its business, walking, talking, eating, etc. The doer/ego is a dream doer/ego similar in some respects to *viswa* but with unique powers. These powers are inherent in the dream state and do not belong to *taijasa* although in normal dreams it identifies with them. The doer-ego and the events appearing in the dream are just waking state events that have become *vasanas* that outpicture as dream events.

3. As the sleeper, *prajna*, in the deep sleep state. *Prajna* means “almost enlightened.” It is almost enlightened because it experiences the limitlessness and bliss of consciousness but lacks knowledge of what it is experiencing, because the intellect is not present in deep sleep – that is why we the deep sleep state is called blissful. Consciousness identified with the causal body is called *prajna*, or consciousness operating as the *jiva*, experiencing the macrocosmic causal body, i.e. the deep sleeper. *Prajna* refers to awareness experiencing its own nature, or bliss, i.e. the absence of objects, because all *vasanas* are dormant in deep sleep, so there is no mental activity.

The only objects present in deep sleep are ignorance and nothing, which are experienced and known through inference when the deep sleeper wakes up. We use the “three states” teaching to elucidate that the *jiva* is not real, because it is not always present and it is always changing. The waker disappears and becomes a dreamer; the dreamer disappears and becomes a deep sleeper; the deep sleeper disappears and becomes a dreamer or waker – etc. The only constant is the knower of all three states: consciousness.

Dreamless sleep is known as the bliss sheath: *ananda-maya-kosha*. In moments where there seems to be no doer/experiencer, there has to have been a witness who knows the joy/bliss. If not, how would the *jiva*, or deep sleeper, know joy/bliss was there in the first place? How can the *jiva* say that it did not know anything while it was asleep unless awareness was there to witness the absence of knowledge? Therefore the deep sleeper cannot be the lack of knowledge, or ignorance, the experiencing entity. Deep sleep is called experiential bliss because it ends, like all experiences do. The bliss one is after if one is seeking *moksa* is the bliss of self-knowledge, which never ends (*anantum*), because it is one’s true nature.

The subtle body disappears in deep sleep state, as does the microcosmic causal body (personal subconscious). The personal subconscious belongs to the *jiva*, and produces the *jiva’s karma*. The deep sleep state is defined as a state with no mental activity. It is the same for everyone because the personal subconscious is subsumed into *Isvara*, the macrocosmic causal body. The macrocosmic causal body, another name for *Isvara*, is the deep sleep state. Deep sleep is the presence of *tamoguna* alone. *Rajas* and *sattva* are dormant. There is no sense of individuality (*ahamkara*) in this state, because the subtle body of the individual is not there to be conditioned. The *ahamkara* belongs to the subtle body. This is why the deep sleeper is called “almost enlightened”; there is a subtle *vritti*, called *prajna*, in deep sleep that makes it the experience of bliss possible.

Although the nature of both the *jiva* and *Isvara* is awareness, both the *jiva* and *Isvara* are inconstant factors with reference to awareness. *Jiva* is inconstant, because it

changes from state to state and because self-knowledge removes the notion that it is a limited entity, revealing its nature to be pure awareness. *Isvara* in the role of Creator is inconstant, because logic and scripture – which is just science – informs us that it disappears at the end of the creation cycle; whatever is created will be destroyed.

The dream state has two aspects: waking dream and sleep dream. It is called the *pratibasika state*, the subjective state of reality. It is *jiva's* creation (*sristi*). It is an individual *jiva's* interpretation of reality. In the dream state (whether the *jiva* is awake or asleep) *vasanas* influence how reality is interpreted by the *jiva*. *Isvara* provides the raw material for the interpretation, but not the interpretation itself. Ultimately, it is all *Isvara*, but to get to that understanding – which is tantamount to *moksa* – the *jiva* has to understand its oneness with *Isvara* and its difference from *Isvara* so that it can be free of both itself and *Isvara*.

Lucid dreaming is a condition that sometimes happens in the dream state when *jiva* is one with *paramatma* and the individual *jiva* is either absent or appears in the dream as an object. The light illumining the dream is *paramatma*, pure awareness, reflecting on the subtle body. *Moksa* is dismissing appearances as “not-self,” and fully embracing one’s identity as awareness, the knower of what appears.

I hope this helps.

~ *Om shanti*, Sundari