

Doubt After Enlightenment

Ram (James Swartz)

2013-08-31

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/310>

Ken: Dear Ramji, after sending you the last email thoughts about it arose. I did not actively create them, they just arose. On contemplating them I reached a different conclusion. My pursuit is absolute clarity of understanding, which has direct bearing on my attitudes and the way I live my life, not mere scholarship or mental gymnastics. Is the following discussion and logic true to scripture?

Question: Who is looking out of my eyes right now?

Answer: The absolute reality.

Fact 1: The apparent reality, the human form, by itself is inert, insentient and unable to do anything. Hence it cannot see, taste, etc. It is an apparent projection from the absolute and is made up of *gunas* and elements. It came from creation, *Isvara*, and returns to *Isvara*. The projection happens because of ignorance.

Fact 2: The absolute reality, pure awareness, in itself is a formless, silent witness, a simple presence. It does not do anything, i.e. is actionless. Thus pure, formless awareness does not see or taste, etc. There is only simple presence-awareness. With pure, formless awareness, the absolute, nothing ever happens.

Discussion: When pure formless awareness is associated with the apparent form it vivifies the form, gives sentiency to the inert form, which then becomes activated, alive. This combination of pure awareness with the form is called *jiva*, person, and is named Ken. Through this living combination seeing, tasting, etc. happens.

This combination, Ken, begins life as a human being with ignorance, i.e. I forget or overlook my true nature of pure, formless awareness and think I am only this form, just the apparent reality. Thus apparent suffering begins. Under the influence of ignorance the living combination, Ken, thinks he sees, tastes, etc., i.e. claims ownership and doership of actions.

With self-knowledge ignorance is removed. The same combination of pure awareness and human form is now freed from ignorance. It continues to be alive and experience human life as before, as Ken, *jiva*, person. But now such a being is enlightened about his/her true nature and recognises the same nature everywhere, in every form, i.e. how ordinary it is.

Ignorance does not interfere with the activities of life. What is affected is the interpretation, or understanding, by ignorant Ken of events and experiences. Seeing, tasting, etc. happens with or without ignorance. With ignorance Ken claims ownership and doership. Without ignorance the combination continues to experience these same activities but Ken understands they are not his. It is all a happening which occurs because of the presence of pure awareness in the apparent form. Events and experiences occur according to the laws of the macrocosm, *Isvara*, which affect the microcosm, Ken. The immediate repository for the origin of these events and experiences arising in Ken is the causal body.

The combination appears as a seeming two. To explain life and living two dimensions

are described. But in reality there is only one. Reality is non-dual.

(At this point Ken more or less repeats the same logic. Then he says, “Am I confusing *atman* and *jiva*??????? Am I going round and round? Your comments, please, Ramji.”)

Ramji: No, you are not confusing *atma* and *jiva*. I cannot find any problem with your self-knowledge. But to summarize: *atma* is pure awareness. It becomes *jiva* when you add the five sheaths, the form, projected by *maya/Isvara*. It is called *jivatma*. Pure awareness is called *paramatma*, formless awareness. Ken is a name given to *jivatman*. It is a combination. As you say, you do not have a living being without two factors. You need duality for life. *Jivatma* is either ignorant that it is pure awareness or it knows that it is pure awareness. When it knows that it is pure awareness and knows what it means to be pure awareness – “the form is me but I am not the form” – it is called a *jivanmukta*, liberated while alive.

I do not understand the doubt. I have no idea why you think you are going round and round, because your knowledge is correct. On the other hand, you must not have complete confidence in it because you are asking me if it is correct. Think about this, Ken: If you know that you are going round and round, are you going round and round? In other words, it should not matter to you – awareness – if you – Ken – is going round and round. Maybe you think that because there is still doubt you are not free. It is only true if you take the doubt seriously. What does the doubt have to do with you, awareness? It is just an object. The effects of ignorance often remain for some time once one is clear that one is awareness but one knows that that they are just the effects of ignorance. *Moksa* is clarity with reference to ignorance and knowledge. If some knowledge is missing it does not mean that you are missing. Can you be happy with doubt? Maybe Ken has been a seeker for so long that he has a hard time not seeking, so he pretends he doesn't know the answers to the doubts he cooks up. ☺ Anyway, thanks so much for the (as always) very generous donation.

Ken: Thanks for your quick reply, Ramji.

Having read it, I realise the issue for me was the inability to be with doubt. I was not happy with doubt. I felt, once again, that something was missing, something was not right with my understanding.

It was a subtle slip-up of identifying with the doubt which arose and taking it seriously. I had unconsciously assumed that with knowledge there would be no more doubt, that there would be absolute clarity once and for all, like a light switch going on and the darkness dispelled once and for all. I did not expect this to-and-fro between knowledge and ignorance. It is similar to the misconception that once enlightened there will be no more pain in the physical body. Except in this case, it is doubt, “mental pain.” It is easy to be with knowledge and glide along in life as if on a magic carpet, and just as it is easy to be with pleasure. But when doubt, pain, disappointment arises, then comes the challenge: “Am I the painful doubt or am I the witness of the doubt?”

Ha ha! I fell again!! I had identified with knowledge and so I automatically identified with doubt. Wow! The power of ignorance and its side effect, identification. I seem to learn best by getting bruised!!!

So the answer to the question “Who is looking out of my eyes right now?” is

paramatma.

It is *paramatma* appearing as *jivanmukta* who was a *jivatma*, i.e. pure awareness, looking out of my eyes right now, pure awareness appearing as Ken who was ignorant but now knows he is pure awareness. I am pure awareness.

I must be vigilant and be with and enjoy both knowledge and doubt in future. When doubt arises I will look on it as an object in me, pure awareness, and have a laugh! The same with knowledge: it is an object. I am the observer of both. I am pure awareness.

Thank you, Ramji. You are a true and powerful source of clarity. Much love to you and Sundari.

~ Ken

Ramji: Dear Kenji, now you got it, as they say. Good on you! And if you unget it, good on you! Why? Because at some point, sooner or later, you will unget the ungetting. This whole enlightenment business is just a big drama.

Let's recapitulate re *drk-drksa viveka*, the discrimination between the seer and the seen. The seer, awareness, sees knowledge and ignorance. The Ramji puts it this way: the self – awareness – with apparent knowledge and/or apparent ignorance. Knowledge and ignorance are objects, known to you. The doubting function is built into the five sheaths. It is useful because the seen, the apparent reality, is – well, apparent. Taking it to be real produces suffering. It works in me and in everyone else.

Doubt is inevitable. *Isvara* produces them like crazy – what can we say? Ken's doubt up until the great Ramji delivered that sparking teaching yesterday was "How can I be enlightened if I have a doubt?" To *paramatma* – ordinary awareness – both doubts have the same meaning – they are just doubts, momentary thoughts arising and then subsiding, no different from any other thought. Your response to this knowledge is appropriate: "I fell. Ha, ha." Why laugh at the fall? Because you know full well that nobody fell because nobody rose because you are awareness. "Falling and rising are just concepts appearing in me." Only a doubt appeared and then disappeared.

If you analyze experience you will see that many times throughout the day – or for many days – there is no doubt about who you are. You just are who you are, thinking about various objects. Always thinking. You do not cease to be who you are because at one moment the thought arises "How can I be enlightened if I am confused?" No. You are who you are plus or minus the doubt.

Liberation is the nature of awareness, in this case, freedom from knowledge and ignorance. In terms of knowledge it is knowing what ignorance and knowledge are. Awareness does not think "I am awareness." It is obvious, so why say it? When you know you are awareness you will not say it – because it is obvious.

This is why we say, if you know you are unenlightened, are you unenlightened? You can't be because enlightenment is awareness – which is there prior to the thought "I am not enlightened." It is devilishly simple. Doubt-free or doubtful, you are always other than the doubt. We have words for this you but in the end it is just ordinary, ever-present awareness, the non-experiencing witness – simply, me.

People sometimes ask me if I am enlightened. I never know exactly what they mean because being enlightened can mean whatever you want it to mean. Of course they expect me to say I am enlightened. But I always say I am not enlightened nor am I unenlightened. Why? Because enlightenment and endarkenment are just thoughts known to me. I never doubt that I am awareness but so what? I have other doubts. I won't tell them all to you or you will run out of money buying Kleenex to dry your eyes. 😊 Poor Ramji! Ramji doesn't like them but so what? It is not up to Ramji.

Doubt is one of *Isvara's* signature thoughts. This is why scripture says the mind sheath (*manomayakosa*) creates doubt. Nobody has the doubt "Will the sun come up today?" It will come up. Doubt is like the sun. It is inevitable. One does not grieve over the inevitable unless one is a fool.

I suggest that you throw out all of the Vedanta terminology – not Vedanta, mind you – and just think in terms of the distinction between awareness and objects. This is easy because it is your direct experience that you are aware and that you perceive objects. Unless you are a serious *Vedantawalla* all the terminology can confuse you. It even confuses serious *Vedantawallas*. 😊 That is why people stay in Vedanta for years and years. You could argue that I am a serious Vedanta guy but it is only because I love the beauty of it as a means of knowledge. It is forty-some years since I needed it. There are scores of terms for the self, for example. So in a way Vedanta make things a lot more complicated than they are.

Paramatma means "awareness." *Jivatma* means "awareness." The *atma*-word indicates "awareness." The *param* and the *jivam* indicate two different perspectives with reference to "awareness." I means "awareness." In me, "awareness," subtle objects appear, in this case, the doubt "How can I be enlightened if I have a doubt about who I am?" You can have a doubt because the doubt is known to you. When you have a thought ask yourself "To whom does this doubt belong?" The answer is "It belongs to me." Your house belongs to you. Do you confuse yourself with your house? No. Your doubt has the same status spiritually as your house or any other material object. You know you are not your house. You know you have a house.

I would trade my knowledge of who I am for some object of my desire because I already have myself and self-knowledge was only useful to show me who I was. It has no meaning for me anymore. Knowledge just takes away ignorance by pointing out that I am awareness and then it goes away too. So it was strange to get your email with this doubt. You do know who you are.

Knowing you are awareness is exactly like knowing you are Ken except the object of knowledge – awareness – is different. You do not need the knowledge of Ken because you know that you are Ken. If you didn't know that you were Ken you would not have sought self-knowledge. Knowledge that you are Ken did not solve all problems so you set out to discover who you are, which does solve all problems.

To repeat once more: any thought is an object known to you. So it can't be you. This is the essence of the teaching.

You let that doubt disturb you because you thought that it somehow had something to do with who you are. It doesn't. It is produced by ignorance. You got tricked by *maya*. All you have to do is know that it is ignorance. It is ignorance to say "I am not awareness." It not only contradicts scripture it contradicts everyday experience. If you know that it is ignorance you will not be bothered by it. To say it another way, you think the thought "I am not enlightened" is knowledge. You think it is true. But it

is not true. The only way you can keep this doubt is if you believe that enlightenment is something other than awareness and that you are not awareness. Perhaps you think that something special has to happen to make Ken enlightened so Ken can join the enlightened masters club and hobnob with the incredible beings who have cracked the code, a feather in your spiritual cap: "I conquered *samsara* and now I conquered enlightenment! Whee!!!!" It is not like that. It is just looking at your experience and, backed by scripture, accepting your identity as awareness.

If you still think you are a person called Ken you can get rid of Ken by looking into what the word "Ken" refers to. What does the word "Ken" actually refer to? If it refers to anything it refers to awareness because that is what you are. All the other things it could refer to just keep dissolving into nothingness as you think about them. Once Ken has been dismissed there are no other identity left beside awareness. Try to be unaware. It is impossible. It is so strange that the most obvious fact about me is that I am aware but this fact is always taken for granted.

~ Much love, Ramji