

Is the Self Covered by Ignorance?

Arlindo Moraes

2017-04-21

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3283>

Questioner: I read the other day a post saying that “ignorance is universal; the self is covered by ignorance.”

It made me think because, at times, I hear you say that ignorance is universal and beginningless or eternal. In this case we could also say that the self, being also universal and eternal, also shares the same qualities related to ignorance and knowledge, right?

Arlindo: No, the self is free of all duality. The dualistic notion of knowledge and ignorance does not apply to the self. Ignorance and knowledge are only relevant to human *jivas*. From the standpoint of *maya//svara* there is no such a thing as knowledge and ignorance.

Yes, ignorance is said to be universal, but only in the sense that it is a collective phenomenon occurring to all *jivas*. *Maya* is the power projecting this apparent reality. Within this projection, the human *jivas* appear, with a sophisticated subtle body with the function of not only reflecting awareness and perception of other objects (which is the case of all other creatures), but also with the self-awareness “I am, I exist, I know.”

Jiva's self-awareness has a huge price tag attached to it because the moment the *jiva* knows “I perceive, and I know that I perceive” it begins developing a conscious mind and a sense of subjective independent existence based on the identification with the body-mind and its desires for and fears of (preferences) objects. This is called self-ignorance, a phenomenon which exists only in reference to the human *jivas*.

On the other hand, the self is never covered by ignorance. Should ignorance have the power to cover awareness, awareness would be dependent on ignorance in order to shine and pervade the entire universe. Awareness is absolutely free, all-pervasive and ever-present in its fullness and totality. Ignorance is only an analogy to illustrate that the mind of the *jiva* is under the influence of excessive *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*, and therefore unable to assimilate self-knowledge.

The self is attributeless, therefore there is no question of knowledge or ignorance for the self. *Maya//svara* is pure knowledge, pure intelligence, pure *sattva*. Within *maya//svara* two other energies develop: *rajas* and *tamas*. *Rajas* and *tamas* are essential energies, without which the dualistic manifestation (subject-object) would not be possible. There is no question of attributing ignorance to *maya//svara*.

Ignorance comes into play only with the human *jivas*. Although their subtle bodies are sophisticated enough to produce self-reflectivity, this reflectivity is not clear, because their instruments are in most cases affected by excessive combinations of the energies called *rajas* (projecting power) and *tamas* (the concealing power). That's what we call ignorance: excessive *rajas* and *tamas* clouding or agitating the mind of the *jiva*.

Human *jivas* have this incredible instrument (subtle body) to illumine and contact the world of objects, but unfortunately their instruments are not pure enough to understand and know the non-dual nature of reality as well their own identity as pure awareness rather than the body-mind construct.

Excesses of *rajas* and *tamas* become a problem only for the human *jivas* because with human intelligence comes desires, fears, free will and, inevitably, psychological suffering.