

# The "Logic of Existence" Teaching

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2019-01-06

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3793>

**Nick:** I hope you and James are well! I've been doing my daily studying, reread *The Essence of Enlightenment* a few times, reread your last email several times, reading hundreds of *satsangs* at the ShiningWorld website and watching lots of videos. I know I still have a long way to go, but was hoping to clarify a few points; these questions could be for you and/or James. I know you're extremely busy, so I do not expect a quick reply, but I very much appreciate the service you provide!!!!

Did your book about the *gunas* come out yet, and is it available at Amazon? You also recommended James' book on the *gunas*, which I still plan to get as well.

**Sundari:** Hello, Nick, glad to hear you are as committed as ever, way to go. I am still working on my lifestyle/*guna* book, but James' book on the *gunas*, *The Yoga of the Three Energies*, has been available for a few years now.

**Nick:** I sort of get it for a period of time and then "unget" it. I'm 37, I still have ambitions in my career/craft and a family to provide for, and I'm sure have a long way to go in Self-actualization.

**Sundari:** The stage you are going through is what we call the "firefly" stage, when the knowledge has not properly assimilated and blinks on and off. It is a difficult stage because unlike total ignorance (darkness) and total knowledge (*moksa*) the twilight zone is a mixture of ignorance and knowledge. It is the time of day when it is hardest to see, which is why, metaphorically speaking, it is the stage where it is still quite easy to be led astray. Just keep up the inquiry because if nothing else there is nothing else better to do with your time! The knowledge does do the work of removing ignorance and if you stick with it and have the requisite faith in it.

**Nick:** Sometimes when studying Vedanta, I'm asking myself if this really is the supreme reality or just some philosophical mind acrobatics designed to calm our egos. How can we be certain that there is this unchanging eternal principle or substratum to reality and that "it" is what we truly and most realistically should identify as?

**Sundari:** Just ask yourself, "How do I know what I know?" Can you ever say you don't know or are not conscious? So, if you can't, who is it that knows/is conscious – and what does it know? If you know something, can it be you? No, it can't. Everything is known to you, consciousness, all the time. If you say you don't know when you are in deep sleep or in a coma, how do you know that you slept or were unconscious? Clearly, there was something there that knew or you would not know you slept and would never have awoken or you would no longer be here to ask the question.

*Maya* is such an efficient trickster, it's got us confused and identified with the body-

mind. Duality is very persuasive, if you are relying on your sense organs, that is. If your epistemology is confined to the senses, you are out of luck because they are only good for knowing objects, and even then they can deceive. There are plenty of reasons for us not to trust our sense organs, even without the teachings on non-duality.

Don't get discouraged by your doubts, just don't fall in love with them. We are given the doubting function because we are supposed to question everything, as nothing in this world is what it appears to be, except for one thing – consciousness, which is not a “thing,” which is why it is so hard to grasp. It is not an object of knowledge. The object can never know the subject, because it is subtler than it – so you are left with a choice: faith in the scripture as the authority on what is true or go the way of confusion and wander around trying to figure it out yourself, which you of all people know has not worked and does not work, because the truth is not “out there.” And in the spiritual world, it's the blind leading the blind, for the most part. Though some teachings are better than others and have some of the truth, none other than Vedanta has all of it, plus a methodology that works to remove ignorance, if you are qualified and stick with Self-inquiry.

**Nick:** Another doubt that comes up is that I'm not sure that I fully understand why something is said to be real only if it is changeless, because we have no real evidence of anything changeless, do we? What if the nature of consciousness is just as fleeting and constantly changing as everything in *mithya*? How can we be sure that awareness existed before the Creation? Is the answer because it was intelligently created?

**Sundari:** The evidence that there is something changeless is simply the irreducible fact that there is only one invariable factor in all our experiences: consciousness. An invariable factor is one that cannot be removed, therefore is always present and never changes. If this were not the case, as I pointed out above, how would you know anything, how would you be able to question or doubt? You would not. You would not exist or you would be six foot under. It is also an irreducible fact that everything else in this world is always changing and not always present. You can loosely equate consciousness with the concept of time (I say loosely because consciousness is not in time; time is an object known to it, like space). The saying goes that time passes quickly or slowly, depending on your point of view. But time never passes, we pass – if you are identified with the body, that is. So it is with the unchanging witness, consciousness. It never passes, because it is always present regardless of whether or not a body appears before it.

It's the chicken-and-the-egg theory: which comes first? Well, without consciousness there would be no chicken or egg. As long as you think matter is real, you need a cause for it. Then the *sat* (existence) “aspect” of the Self is responsible for the material Creation. But matter is purely a projection. When you dig into it, it resolves into existence/consciousness, the substratum. Even our current scientific knowledge knows this.

Here is the long version of the teaching on this:

**Why Is It Logical that Consciousness Is My True Nature?**

The logical approach to non-duality as a means to explain the Creation, while useful, breaks down (from the *jiva* perspective) when it comes to the analysis of the cause of the universe. Deductive reasoning will only get you so far because the only means of knowledge available for it are the senses (perception and inference), which without Self-knowledge are *mithya* and are stuck in *mithya*. The difficulty modern science has in understanding the origin of the universe is a good example of this. It can reason up to the point where it understands that there must be a moment when the Creation began – but it cannot tell us what happened at the point of creation or before it began.

Quantum physics, the most advanced theory in physics to date, cannot go beyond the Big Bang, even though in essence it conclusively proves that objects exist only from the point of view of the observer, the body-mind. The reason for this is that non-duality is a state (it's not a state, but I use the term here advisedly) from which there is no information to reason. If it's non-dual, there are no objects, no time and no experience. Non-dual means "nothing other than." Science will be stuck at this point until it understands what consciousness is – which it won't unless Self-knowledge removes ignorance for the individual scientist.

If we apply just a modicum of logic we can reason that there had to be something before the appearance of objects. Nothing comes from nothing, although science illogically tries to prove that consciousness comes from objects. If that is the case, where did the objects come from? What was there prior to the objects to make them manifest cannot be answered with the syllogisms of this kind of deductive reasoning. But there had to be something there before the appearance of objects, something that the Big Bang banged from. If we take clay as a good analogy – clay as it is is just undifferentiated mud. But before the pot can appear, there must be clay.

Clay is one thing, but when the potter creates a pot it assumes a name and a form and seems to become something else. But the sculpture is not something else; nothing has been added to the clay other than name and form. The clay was there before during and after the pot or sculpture appears. If we destroy the pot, we will see the five elements which make up the clay from which it came. And if we break it down further and look at its particles under a microscope, eventually we see "empty" space – which is not empty at all, because it is existence itself. We cannot get rid of the particles; they will dissolve back into the substratum and become clay again. As we know, matter equals energy and cannot be destroyed.

Existence, consciousness, was there before the appearance of the Creation, during and "after" it is withdrawn back into consciousness at the end of the Creation cycle. We can never get rid of the substratum, existence. It is always present underpinning and supporting all objects or they could not exist. Science calls pure existence the "unified field," and in theory I agree with this. If an object appears before you, consciousness appears before you in a different form. It may not be conscious, as it is only a reflection, but it is nonetheless consciousness – although consciousness is not it. It can only be consciousness because the nature of reality is non-dual consciousness. Only when *Maya* appears does a Creation appear in name and form, which (seems to) obscure existence, consciousness. Before that, there was only nameless, formless undifferentiated consciousness, with all powers present in it, including the power to obscure.

The materialists argue that there is no way to verify non-duality, which is true from the dualistic standpoint from which they look at it. If your epistemology for knowing anything is the senses, the only knowledge you can gain is through inference, based

on perception, which is not capable of knowing or understanding consciousness, because it is an effect, the subject. The effect or subject cannot understand the cause, the object. Consciousness/existence is not an object of perception, because it is that which makes perception possible. There is no way from within the Creation to understand this. It is only through the Vedanta *pramana* that ignorance of the true nature of reality can be removed by Self-knowledge. Even the scientist must agree that there is no evidence other than that gained by the senses that the Creation is anything more than an appearance, one that we take to be real. But it is not real, as we know. Real, as you know, is defined by “that which is always present and unchanging,” which can only be ascribed to the consciousness supporting all objects, the only constant, invariable factor.

No sense organ is capable of perceiving the substance of all objects, consciousness. The senses are only capable of perceiving the properties of objects (sound, colour, shape, texture, taste, smell), and not an actual, existent object. Name and form may hide the true nature of existence, but it does not alter it. With the Vedanta *pramana* we can investigate the nature of reality through Self-inquiry by analyzing the relationship between name, form and consciousness.

You can also arrive at the same conclusion by an analysis of the objects themselves. It should be easy to see that an object like a thought is made of consciousness. It is not so easy to see that the physical objects are made of consciousness. But as mentioned above, if we investigate matter scientifically, it breaks down into particles and space and the knower of particles and space, i.e. you, consciousness. Material science cannot make the obvious connection of matter and consciousness, because (as stated but bears repeating) it relies on perception and inference as a means of knowledge. It does not realize that perception is an object known to consciousness in the form of the scientist and that perception is consciousness. *Maya* makes it seem as if consciousness is an object when it is actually the subject.

*Maya* also makes the individual *jiva* think that it is a unique entity, separate from all other entities and objects. But a *jiva* is not what it seems either. *Jiva* is really consciousness – appearing as matter. So the relationship between the three seemingly separate factors *jiva*, *jagat*, *Isvara/Maya* (which creates the material world out of consciousness), is pure consciousness/existence – you.

If you look at the Creation, where does it exist? Have you ever actually seen a Creation? Nobody has. You have only experienced the objects that appear to you at any moment, and these objects are not separate from the thoughts that make them up. Creation is only an idea, a thought. When that thought appears in you, the mind imagines the totality of objects by inference, but those objects are never directly experienced. All that is directly experienced is you, consciousness, and the properties of objects. The only issue left to resolve is whether or not consciousness or matter is primary. Which came first? When we use the word “first” we mean, which stands alone? Does matter exist prior to consciousness so that we can still have matter without consciousness? No. You cannot separate an object from the consciousness of the object.

In other words, objects are not conscious. They do not know themselves or other objects. Consciousness is not conscious in the way we understand what it means to be conscious. *Isvara* associated with *Maya* is conscious (although it is not a *jiva*, or person) and is not modified by ignorance/*Maya* (the *gunas*). *Isvara* is conscious because with the appearance of *Maya* there is something for consciousness to be to be conscious of, i.e. objects. Consciousness is “prior” to matter in the sense that

matter depends on consciousness. Consciousness stands alone. It is the first “principle” out of which everything arises.

Finally, as we have established that you cannot get something out of nothing, so if matter depends on consciousness, it must come from consciousness. Therefore the effect (matter) is just an apparent transformation of the cause, consciousness. It is not an actual transformation, because if it were, consciousness would have lost its limitless nature when it transformed into matter. It would have become limited, bound by time and space – and there would be no sentient objects and no movement possible in the Creation. Matter (subtle and gross objects) arise in you, consciousness, which if you think about it is actually your (unexamined) experience.