

# I Know but I Don't Know

Ram (James Swartz)

2019-09-02

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3918>

**(James:** This is probably written by a disciple of Swami Paramarthananda. It is a good read.)

In the “Madhu Kandam 1.4.7” of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* there is a famous statement. It says that before the Creation came into being the self existed and after the Creation it “entered” (*anupravesa*) the body. The word “entered” might cause an inquirer to question the authority of the *Upanishad* because the self is all-pervading limitless existence, the non-dual substrate for all objects, so it can't move. So, how can we understand this statement and keep our faith in the *Upanishad*, which is the source of self-knowledge? In his commentary on this verse Shankara gets around this problem by saying that when you say someone has entered a room the actual meaning is that the person is available in the room. The self didn't enter the body but, because it is everywhere present, it is available in the body as the witness consciousness, the *saaksi chaitanyam*. And since the purpose of the *Upanishad* is to give self-knowledge, why worry about how it got into the body, why not just see it as it is always experienced and always known – as “I am”? Everyone knows they are the self because they confidently say “I am.” But they don't know that they are free, which is the experiential meaning of “I am” because they associate the self with the body, which the self pervades, and which is obviously not free. The association is so intimate that the qualities of the body, suffering, life and death, for instance, are attributed to the self. Consequently they think they are suffering now and that they will die one day. The non-located, non-specific, actionless, impersonal “I” says that it suffers and enjoys.

The self is “*atma apnoti atma,*” which means that the self includes all objects, pervades all objects and is different from all objects. It is the “eye of the eye.” If you identify with one organ you exclude the other. For instance, if you are a speaker, you are not a hearer. You can only be one thing at a time because you are only one thing. So for a meaningful conversation you should play the listener when the other person speaks and play the speaker when the other person listens. If you maintain your identity as a speaker when the other person identifies with the organ of speech you will not understand what is being said. The self is not a specific person, a specific role. It is non-specific and actionless.

Is the verb “*upasate,*” which means “should,” in the *Upanishad* statement in the knowledge verse in the Madhu Kanda “*atmeti eva upasate*” a command or not? The statement is “you should know the self.” Does it mean that you should do something to know the self? Does it mean that once you know the self you should keep remembering it? Shankara says no, because when you get knowledge you get the memory automatically. When you are told your name by your parents, you don't have to remember it. When you feel small, you remember that you are small. The problem with the idea that you are small is that it is not true. It is false knowledge based on an emotion which seems to be real knowledge. *Upanishads* say you are big (*brahman* means “limitless”), which happens to be the truth. But this knowledge contradicts your false knowledge. You will, however, accept it because it means that you are free of objects, which is what you want. It produces a very different feeling, i.e. experience, from the (false) knowledge “I am small” (p. 140). You also do not

need to be told to remember the self, because it is painful to remember all the misery of *samsaric* life, so there is a natural attraction of the mind to the knowledge “I am free.”

But you may argue that book knowledge is indirect knowledge and to make the knowledge direct you should do meditation to experience the freedom. If you remove the thoughts, you will experience the self. But Vedanta says that removing the thoughts doesn't work; you should do inquiry on who you are because inquiry removes ignorance. When that is gone you will see that you have always been experiencing the self - as the “I.” What do you have to do to be? The *Brahma Sutras* dismisses *yoga* for *moksa*.

You may also argue that since Vedanta doesn't tell you to do anything you won't accomplish anything, and therefore you won't get any benefit. Shankara says that elimination of ignorance gives the benefit desired by everyone - freedom. So “should” means expose your mind to the whole teaching. Replace self-ignorance with self-knowledge and your suffering goes away. In a sense “exposing the mind to Vedanta” seems like a command, but you do it eagerly when you understand the benefit. So “should” is not a command.

### **Knowledge Doesn't Imply Action**

Normally, when you know something, it is an object. But the ever-free self is not an object. So the statement “You should know the self” means that you should own the self as the subject, which never becomes an object.

Benefit of knowing I am limitless consciousness: (1) You know everything, not every fact but the essence of everything. (2) Name and fame. You become famous because of your good qualities. (3) Good relationships with everyone because you see them as non-different from you.

### **Selfish Love and Real Love**

*Mantra* 1.4.8: The self is the dearest thing because it is pure satisfaction, pure pleasure. Everyone is only interested in pleasure and the means to get pleasure. Of the two, love of pleasure is primary and love of the means is secondary because when you get the pleasure you no longer love the means. Love for the means is selfish, false and conditional because you really want the pleasure. Therefore all love is only for the sake of the self. If you love a woman because she gives you children, it is not true love, because you really want the pleasure of enjoying a child. And when the child no longer gives you pleasure, you stop loving it. Pleasure is the motivation of every action, which means self-love is the motivation behind every action.

And why is the self the dearest? Because there is nothing closer to me than my self. First, my self, then my wife, children, etc. I loved it before I was married and had a family and I don't stop loving it first when I get a relationship. You cannot love your neighbor or your spouse more than you love you, because they are not as close.

A self-actualized person is also selfish but his idea of himself includes everything, so he loves everyone unconditionally.

To say you love anything more than yourself is foolish because everything other than yourself will be separated from you one fine day. Then see how happy you are.

*Mantra 1.4.10, Brahma Kandika Mantra (p. 161)*