

# I Am Is-ness

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Shanti:** *Hari om*, James. Thank you so very much! I realize how busy you must be and am very grateful for your teaching and guidance. More questions below.

**James:** I don't know why but *Isvara* bumped you to the head of the queue.

**Shanti:** Just "is-ness," for lack of a better word. I was in that is-ness for several weeks and then started noticing the separate self trying to get back into the action – of course *vasanas* that need more work. So it has been back to chopping wood, carrying water, like nothing has changed. But yet everything has changed – I am in love, not with anyone or anything, just in love, if that makes any sense.

**James:** Yes, it make perfect sense. Good for you. But here is what you need to know. You say, "I was in that is-ness." This is indirect self-knowledge. If you had realized "I am that is-ness" the seeking would be over. Well, not exactly. How was that is-ness and you being in it known? It was known by you. How was the shift known? By you. Who observed the separate self trying to get back into the action? You. Who thinks the *vasanas* need more work? Not you. Ignorance is talking here. Who is aware of the thought that the *vasanas* need more work? You. Who observes the change to love? You. Who is in love? Shanti. Who sees Shanti in love? You. Who is watching the thoughts and Shanti as Shanti reads this? You. Who are you? Awareness. You are is-ness. You are love. *Sat* (is-ness) *chit* (awareness) *ananda* (love). *Moksa* is converting indirect knowledge to direct knowledge. Forget the *vasanas*. They are not the problem. The problem is that you think that enlightenment is some kind of experiential shift. It is just knowledge "I am awareness, the knower of the known." Contemplate on the words I have just written. It will become clear.

**Shanti:** This resonates deeply. I am is-ness. I know this because all this time I was focused on bliss, energy experiences and witnessing. But now I know that I am the one that is aware of witnessing as well as inner silence. I know without a doubt that anything I am experiencing is not it. I am the one that is experiencing. And there is no boundary between me, the thing that is happening/felt and the actual happening itself. Very hard to describe. However, this is not constant as it was those weeks. No inquiry was needed to abide as is-ness. And now inquiry is often needed to "remember" who I am. Why is that?

**James:** The problem is that you think that freedom is experiential. It is just the knowledge "I am awareness." The clue is in your words "abide as." It is the same problem as before when you said "was in." Who was "in" what? If you are Shanti you cannot be in or abide as awareness because you are awareness. How will you do what you already are? It is impossible because there are not two "yous," one to abide in and the other to be abided in. It shows that you think you are the subtle body, reflected awareness. It cannot abide in anything because it is inert. It is not conscious although it looks like it is conscious because it is illumined by you,

awareness. Thinking you are the doer/abider is like the moon thinking it illumines objects with its own light. In fact you are never that Shanti/abider. You have never been that. You have always been the awareness of the Shanti/abider, the subtle body.

This thinking is an orientation that has been with you since birth. Only now do you know that you are awareness. But the *vasanas* do not know. If you want to see a binding *vasana* this is the binding-est *vasana* of all times. So when your mind gets a little extroverted and dull the knowledge of your nature becomes shaky, and it seems that you are not abiding in awareness. You need to abide in the knowledge “I am awareness.” Inquiry should continue whether Shanti is abiding in or abiding out. It makes no difference. The only way to get rid of this orientation is to patiently create a *vasana* to the contrary. That *vasana* is “I am awareness.” It should be with you all the time, ready to root out the ignorance as it appears in the form of your fears and desires, your likes and dislikes.

**Shanti:** Also, would you please explain the difference between *atman* and *Brahman*? In my direct experience, nothing exists outside of awareness, which I am calling *Brahman* – it was first seen as nothing, and now is being seen as the “part and parcel” of everything, the one that sustains everything. Because no perception of anything is separate from it, that is the only thing that is. However, I don’t directly perceive (through the senses/organs of action), say, your city – everything about that is only a thought, which is also of course arising only in awareness and made up of awareness. Is realizing *Brahman* equivalent to directly perceiving everything everywhere?

**James:** Definitely not. That power belongs to *Isvara*, awareness with the *maya upadhi*. *Atman* and *brahman* are just two different words for awareness. *Atma* is awareness with the five bodies or the three sheaths. Sometimes it is called *jivatman*, and *brahman* is called *paramatman*. It is a common spiritual belief, nay, fantasy that impotent egos cook up, to imagine that they will become powerful and all-knowing when they realize *brahman*. It never happens. Your “equipment,” as Swamji used to call it, is not up to it. Awareness is awareness. I have taken *atman* and *brahman* out of the teaching because it just confuses people who are not familiar with Vedanta. It even confuses people who are into Vedanta because it makes the self seem to be a creator, which it isn’t – but it is.

**Shanti:** Thank you for the above. So when we say “one without a second” what does that mean?

**James:** It means reality, awareness, is non-dual. There are not two awarenesses. The reply I gave above is based on the misunderstanding that there are two awarenesses, a Shanti-awareness and awareness-awareness. But there is no second awareness. So there is no Shanti-awareness. Shanti is just a name given to awareness as it reflects in the subtle body. *Maya* makes you think that you are aware as Shanti but it is not true.

**Shanti:** I took that to mean that it is the ultimate subject, nothing more “behind” it.

**James:** See the duality in this statement. The ultimate subject implies that there are

two subjects. There is only one subject appearing as two, one of which is a seeming subject, not an actual subject, owing to the power of *maya*.

**Shanti:** In the above then, when we say self-realization, is it realizing the *jivatman*?

**James:** No, it is the knowledge that the *jivatman* and the *paramatman* are the same *atman*.

**Shanti:** Since *Isvara* can never be realized (as in including the *maya upadhi*), isn't that *Isvara* the "second" in the one without a second (as in *Isvara* will always be more superior or behind or upstream, for lack of a better word)?

**James:** Upstream from whom? Upstream from the subtle body, yes. The problem is created by your understanding of the word "realization." I think you think it means some kind of experience. *Isvara* can be known. It is just an idea in awareness to help inquirers understand their nature. Or it is used to get people who are ignorant of their nature as awareness (and who therefore take themselves to be doers) to understand that they are neither doers nor the givers of the results of their actions. When *Isvara* is understood the doer will relax and become contemplative.

*Isvara* is not the "second" in "one without a second." *Isvara* is awareness with the *maya upadhi*.

**Shanti:** Once again, thank you so very much. Very, very grateful.

~ Best regards, Shanti

**James:** You are most welcome, Shanti.