

Self-Knowledge Established by Reason

Ram (James Swartz)

2014-09-14

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/724>

Dear James,

Just to let you know, I am not ignoring this last email. I am going over and over it.

I like the statement, "Reality is 'both/and,' not 'either/or.'" That struck me, because I have often said, "One thing I have learned in life is that when faced with an 'either/or' question, the correct answer is usually 'both/and.'" Of course, I was talking about life choices, not metaphysical realities. But perhaps the one is a reflection of the other.

James: Yes, indeed. Reality is *satya* and *mithya*, the real and the apparent. This distinction is always present and informs all existence everywhere.

Peter: I still have problems with "orders of reality." It feels like an intellectual cheat somehow. Like saying, "When my proposition contradicts logic, I'll just change the rules." But of course, logic is entirely dualistic, so when dealing with the non-dual, how far can it go? If enlightenment can be reached entirely through discursive reason, why has Hinduism developed countless methods of inducing experiential apprehensions of the self? Are these other paths more suited to different types of people? I would think that in all cases, proper intellectual preparation would be necessary to understand and integrate those "epiphanies."

James: People who are empty spiritually are usually experience-hungry. They think knowledge is purely intellectual and imagine that the apparent separation of subject and object is an actual separation, so they long for some kind of experience to bridge the gap, which, of course, it never does because they are already what they seek. If reality is non-dual, no experience is necessary for *moksa*, only self-knowledge, which is established by reason.

Peter: In my own case, I find that I reach a certain point where the concepts become so difficult that I just throw my hands in the air in frustration and long for an experience, something to indicate that I am at least on the right track and not just wandering in an arid intellectual desert. I understand, of course, that I am trying to do something on my own that really requires a concentrated effort over a long period of time with a teacher guiding me.

James: If you have a burning desire to be free, have faith in the scripture and a skillful teacher, you are good to go. You have to realize your helplessness and let go of the idea that you can do it yourself. When you get to that point, the path is joyful and easy.

Peter: It is so frustrating that I can't attend the Trout Lake gathering. Here I am, living not far away, but am stuck taking care of my mother. I try to regard it as kind

of yoga in itself, a form of self-mortification (LOL) that may help prepare me for the real *satsangs* when they can finally happen.

James: Yes, it is a shame. It was an important spiritual event for many people. *Panchadasi* is an excellent text and I was in rare form.

Peter: This is more venting than anything like sensible questioning. But that's where I am, and I'm sure you will understand.

James: Yes, I suppose I shouldn't bother to reply since whining is not particularly helpful, but I have developed an incipient fondness for you, Peter, so I am willing to suffer a bit on your account.

~ Love, James