

Existence Shining as Consciousness

Sat Darshanam – Ramana Maharshi

Introduction

This seminar is about living from the God dimension as Isvara. The invocation presents the solution (knowledge) first and the problem second.

What I Am – Isvara, the Substrate

Basic Teaching – Abidance i.e. Knowledge – Define Knowledge

1 hour – Thursday 7 PM (1) Ramana Upanishad, (2) unfold Invocation and focus on The Existence Principle shining as Consciousness (**Isvara 1**), (3) define Heart (**reflection, jivatma**) as essence (4) not an object of jiva's experience. (5) Therefore, it can only be experienced by "**abiding in knowledge**." Summary: Ramana's teaching is classic Vedanta. Because he did not explain the method (process) of Self inquiry he became symbol around which a cult of deluded dualists rallied to promote the experiential approach to freedom.

Original Chart

Invocation

What is that Existence Principle that pervades all objects, all names and forms? Without it no experiences are possible. It pervades the experiencing subject also. It is the witnessing Consciousness Principle shining as the essence of the Mind and is called the Heart. It is the only limitless, divisionless, non-dual Principle. Because it is not an object of thought, It cannot be known by the experiencing subject. To know It is **to abide in It** without objectifying It.

Can there be the feeling of "I" without that which exists always!
Free from thoughts, it exists, this innermost being, the Heart.
How then to know that which is beyond the mind?
To know it is to **abide firmly in the Heart**.

The "I" thought is the first to die for those who have **taken refuge**,
out of fear of death, **at the feet of Shiva**, the conqueror of death!
Thereafter, they are naturally immortal.

Commentary: How do you know that you are a sensate living person unless there is something that makes it possible for you to know? Knowledge implies consciousness. This knowing factor is your essence, your "Heart." How can you abide there if you are already abiding there? Verse 2 says that removal of ignorance is the only way. It is the only way because the world is created by ignorance, which is non-dual. Ramana is teaching Vedanta using experiential language.

2 – Who I Am - Jiva - Removing Insecurity

1 hour – **Thursday 8 PM** - (1) the method is not inquiry into the world or God because they are remote. In is inquiry into "The I-sense" aka jiva, the nearest and dearest. Eliminate the non-eternal jiva as I. (2) **Thinking and Feeling** – Feeling a "sense", not an emotion. We are Sentient Beings. "Dropping into the Heart."

Read a quote from my Swami TV commentary, insert here and analyze.

Trusting Isvara is Trusting the

Talk 3 – The Living Processes of Being – States of Mind (Maya)

There is no need to fiddle with these processes because they are spontaneous natural, helpful and necessary and always going on within you.

The distant past lives in us now. We need to "go back" to the precambian erae, the unicellular organism stage, and become aware of and feel these natural instinctual processes - Unicellular organisms are rudimentary processes, evolution refines them and makes them automatic. Life is benign. It eats itself It wants us to live and grow. It is self-supporting. Why does it continue and why do we not want to die in spite of all the chaos, trauma and destruction within and without?

1. Body Processes - The Five Senses – We need to return to the animal environmental animal self. Life today is anti-environmental. We like animals because they are conscious like us yet are not burdened with choice, which produces worry. Pets. **Cognition.** Instead of saying "I'm cognizing a pot, we say "I know the pot." **Perception** – Plants turning toward the sun takes time, is natural, no thought, no effort.

2. Emotional Processes – Feeling – The “I Sense”

Loving, caring, empathizing, sympathizing, mourning

3. Thought Processes – Suffering, Natural Curiosity/ Inquiry/Inventing/Creating (writer’s block is stuck in the thought of creating)

Desire/Devotion/Discipline/Dispassion – I am the Desire not opposed to Dharma, Climbing, Striving, Hunting, Meditating, Listening, Studying, Teaching - Helping, Inferring, Reasoning, **Doing, The Patience Process – Restraining – Renouncing – Trusting/Believing**

The Text

Cause and Effect (karya karana vada) Teaching

**Because we see the variegated world, a single source,
with unlimited powers must be accepted.**

Creation happens only one way. We multiply by dividing. All the sages say the world’s myriad forms must have a single source. Only existence shining as consciousness has the power to create the world. One undivided painted canvas appears as the many objects portrayed on it. Nobody experiences two witnesses or two worlds at the same time. Cause and effect means that time born of ignorance creates.

**The seer, the seen and the substrate on which it is projected...the Light of Consciousness...
are all only He, the One. (1)**

*Creation is a projection of Ignorance on Existence Shining as Consciousness, The
Light of lights.*

Duality

**All religions are based on the existence
of the individual, the world and God.
So long as individuality lasts,
these three remain separate.**

To abide, without duality, in the Self, is the best.

Abide in the Self AS the Self. Once you know the difference between duality and non-duality, you can choose either vision.

**What use are disputes such as ‘the world is real,’
‘No, it is a mirage,’ ‘it is conscious energy,’
‘No, it is matter,’ ‘it is happiness,’ ‘no, it is sorrow.’**

**Abidance in the exalted state
where neither the ego nor the world exists
is acceptable to all. (2-3)**

The fundamental qualification for gaining non-dual knowledge is appreciation of the zero-sum nature of samsara because it destroys argumentation, which is violence unless it is subject to the rules of debate. If you know the difference between what is real and what is apparently real you will not choose the vision of duality. From a dualistic perspective, Vedanta is an argument based on the idea that suffering is unnecessary and unwanted and that the steady satisfaction that the loss of Self ignorance produces is good.

Take the Bull by the Horns

All philosophical and religious systems accept the existence of the individual, the world and God. As long as these divisions remain, the individual will feel separate and insecure. An inquiry into whether the world is real or not, whether it is sentient or insentient, pleasurable or painful, is futile because it is never the same from one moment to the next. Because of Self ignorance the world holds out the carrot of happiness, the ego has a vested interest in non-inquiry into non-duality.

But for those individuals who understand that the way they see the world is the cause of their suffering, Ramana chooses to inquire into the disturbed ego because it is nearest and dearest to us, thus providing a solid motivation for inquiry. Inquiry into the world and God is unresolvable because both are remote and therefore their impact on how we feel in the moment is not obvious. Proper inquiry into the *jiva* results in the non-dual state of steady wisdom in which there are no divisions and no pressurized, localized “I-sense.”

As the Mind, So the World

So long as one thinks one has a form,
the world and God too have forms.
When one is the formless Self, who is there to see forms?
He or she is the Seer, complete and limitless. (4)

I AM SEEING ITSELF

The way you look at God is the way you look at yourself. So leave God out of it and seek to know your eternal Self. If you start with your waking state self, you will quickly discover that it isn't real. Vedanta is not self-improvement. There is only ever one perfect seer seeing itself.

“The Light Sees the Darkness but the Darkness Sees Not the Light”

The body is made up of five sheaths.
The body and the world co-exist.
Can anyone see the world
unless they have a body? (5)

How you see the world and *Isvara* will depend on how you see yourself. Without the belief “I am the five-fold body,” how can the world appear? If you know the teachings of Vedanta you may arrogantly think you are superior to worldly people or take pride in your growth. If you know the glory of *Isvara* you may play the humble devotee, which makes you look good in your own eyes and the eyes of others but is just reverse arrogance.

Ask yourself why you need to feel good? Wouldn't it be better to know why you feel bad about yourself? Why do you care what you or others think? When you know you are What Is, you can only say “I am existence shining as consciousness” because What you are cannot be evaluated. It is the value of everything that your “I-sense” values. You always feel good because bliss is your nature.

Location of Objects

The world exists in the form of five-fold sense objects, like sound.
The sense objects are known through the five sense organs.
The mind alone perceives the world through these organs.
Therefore, the world is but the mind. (6)

Nothing substantial is perceived through the body, only attributes. If you think the body is real, you will think the world is real. If you think you are a unique individual, you will see everyone else as unique individuals. If you think you are a winner or a loser you will see people as winners or losers. If you are depressed “the world” will be a depressing place. If you think you are a fake, whatever you experience will be false. If you are insecure you will always be suspicious. If you love yourself the world will love you.

What is the “I-sense”? It is original ordinary pure Existence/Consciousness plus a material reflecting medium (the mind) and the reflection. This entity is explained in Chapter 4 of Vidyanaraya’s Panchadasi. See Inquiry into Existence.

The World Appears When You Wake Up

Although this statement is factually true in the apparent reality, waking up is a metaphor indicating the vision of non-duality.

**Even though both the mind and the world rise and set together,
the mind illumines the world.**

**The source from which the world and the mind arise and into which they set
is the Reality, which does not arise or subside. (7)**

Is the world there because I see it or do I see it because it is there? The world and the mind appear simultaneously, so there is no cause and effect relationship. However, because the mind illumines the world, it is said to be the cause of the world for the purposes of leading the inquirer back to the source.

The Bhakti Chart

**Worship of the Supreme in any name or form
is an aid for the vision of It.**

**True vision, however, is *merging*
and *abiding* in the Reality. (8)**

Karma yoga is an indirect means and firm knowledge is the direct means of liberation. Abiding is a living vision that is non-separate from the effortless knowledge produced by disciplined scriptural inquiry into the limited personal self. *Merging, abiding* and *state* are words that imply action, which does not apply to

the living non-dual witnessing seer; they are figurative terms. Ramana uses them because unprepared seekers are caught in the changing world of names and forms and cannot understand factual statements that indicate the identity of individual and the “Supreme” as indicated by the statements, “You are That” and “I am That.”

Although Sat Darsharanam doesn’t go into detail, as is typical of Upanishads, Ramana recommends dualistic worship of one of Shiva’s forms as a preparatory practice. Although he was a non-dual wise person he practiced dualistic devotion fervently, which goes to show that non-dual wisdom and dualistic love are non-different. A free person is free to worship in any way.

You Can Count on Knowledge

You can count on knowledge but not on experience. As the basis for an individual’s life, knowledge is always available and reliable, whereas experiential states are intermittently available and unreliable. As Shankara says in Atma Bodh, “Experience doesn’t cook the food. Only knowledge does.”

**When the individual, for whom subject/object
and the triad of knower, known and means of knowledge exist,
is investigated, both prove to be seemingly real.
Then all mental movement
ceases forever. (9)**

The discrimination between the unborn ever-present Self and the world from which the bodily self evolves, is the signature practice of Self inquiry. It is sorting the unreal part of the person from the real part, the existence/consciousness portion from the material portion. An individual can’t experience pure awareness and what’s apparently real only seemingly exists. The world of *jiva*’s experience is always a mixture, like a rope that appears as a snake or a mirage on the desert. The snake is sustained by ignorance of the rope.

The jury is not out on who we are. In fact, “Who am I” is not the right question. The correct question is, “What am I” in so far as identifying one’s self as a unique individual subject to karma causes suffering. Inquiry is a living vision brought about by an unbiased hearing of the teaching.

The scripture, which are the “words” of “the Supreme” says, “You are unborn limitless non-dual existence shining as consciousness, not this limited body/mind assemblage.” Inquiry is exposing the mind to this teaching and evaluating the ego/mind’s beliefs and opinions with reference to it, bolstered by scripture-inspired confidence that the individual and its accumulated experience-based knowledge is not real. *Jiva’s* beliefs and opinions that cause conflict with What Is need to be removed.

The final statement is a figure of speech. If all mental movement stopped forever, then how did Ramana write this Upanishad, not to mention live a normal life? It means the Self is thought free. Thoughts continue by the grace, some say will of God, the creative factor that generates the seemingly real world. To say thoughts stop means thought is apparently real, meaning not real because it does not affect the Self. If you don’t know what you are, they are real for you.

Investigating and Abiding are Living processes, not Dead Concepts.

Can there be knowledge without ignorance?

Can ignorance exist without knowledge?

**Investigating the source of the individual to whom they pertain
and *abiding there* is true knowledge. (10)**

An untaught individual doesn’t choose between knowledge and ignorance until he or she knows what constitutes both because people always think that what they believe to be true is true, whether it is or not. Therefore our “knowledge” is always suspect, until these teachings have been assimilated. Once it gains access to the Self’s point of view, it can objectively evaluate its beliefs and opinions, with the intention of discarding those that are not actually knowledge.

Knowledge and ignorance are mutually exclusive dualities. Investigate the awareness of both. If you are living on the sun you wouldn’t know what darkness is so you would have no word for light. If there were only women on the earth there would be no word for men. You can’t blame yourself for what you don’t know, but once you hear that you are non-separate from the fullness of existence, and by extension non-different from everything that seems to be different, you

are willfully ignorant if you don't set out to understand what the teachings mean and doubly ignorant if you don't discard the vision of duality.

Knowledge is true to the object of knowledge.

**Can knowledge of any object, without Self-knowledge,
be true knowledge.**

**Knowledge of the Self, which is the support of knower and known,
destroys knowledge and ignorance. (11)**

Knowledge of objects is not true knowledge even though it is true to the object because neither the knower of the object (the mind) nor the object itself is true. They are mutually exclusive concepts that depend on each other, so they are not true or real.

If you are knowledge-oriented but don't know what you are, you have no choice but to seek knowledge of what you aren't. Knowledge of objects will not solve the What am I issue. So remove ignorance with knowledge and remove knowledge by "dropping into the Heart," meaning accepting your identity as existence/awareness, which is beyond knowledge. Self knowledge is the Self's only access to itself because knowledge is true to its object. Knowledge of inert objects directs one's living vision to dying things and consigns one's life, which is little better than death without Self knowledge, to a world of concepts.

Self knowledge is "I am limitless, unborn, ever-present, whole and complete existence/consciousness." It is knowing what it means to say, "I am" in light of an individual's experience of objects. It is knowing that the true I is not the "I-sense."

Drop into the Heart and take a stand in What Is.

Neither sleep nor the cognition of objects is knowledge.

In the true state, which is different from both,

There is no awareness of objects, but consciousness alone shines.

Hence it is not a void. (12)

Worldly knowledge is obtained through a process of learning that reveals something that was previously unknown, but Self knowledge does not reveal an unknown object. A thought is required for knowledge of objects but the Self is

not an object and the Self does not think, so Self knowledge is Consciousness because Consciousness is the only “thing” that is thought-free.

Self knowledge is a loss of ignorance, not a gain of knowledge.

Self knowledge is dropping the misconception about one’s identity and the world brought about by exposing the mind to the teaching. Exposing the mind is listening without allowing conditioned biases to interfere. I “get” What I am when I understand that I can’t “get” What I am because I already am it. It is not something new. Self knowledge is “I am free because I am Existence shining as unborn Consciousness. I was never bound.” When you hear the truth, you are not amazed at it; you are amazed that you could have missed something so simple and obvious. That the Self is not known to be unknown is the problem because we misidentify it as a conceptual self.

Add a pertinent excerpt from the Swami TV commentaries to explain what dropping into the Heart means.

Existence is called knowledge when it is associated with a thought.

Consciousness, the Self, is real.

Names and forms cannot exist apart from it.

Do seemingly different golden ornaments exist apart from gold? (13)

Existence alone appears in the form of different types of knowledge. Existence is called knowledge when it is associated with a thought. It is called experience when it is associated with a perception, a process. Processes are eternal living streams of thought activated by the power of Consciousness.

Thought knowledge is not real and the knowledge I am Awareness is also not real but it is enough to cancel the unreal “I-sense,” assuming certain qualifications, to which Ramana alludes when he recommends worship of Shiva and which symbolize preparatory practices that purify the mind, *karma yoga*, for instance.

**Without the “I” the second and third persons cannot exist.
When the “I sense” subsides during inquiry into its source,
the second and third persons disappear
and our natural state shines forth. (14)**

Identification as the feeling of I, the 0“I-sense,” is the root of all problems. It creates a transactional reality and consigns the reflected self to a life of continual struggle and worry. A wise person has an “I sense” but it is taken to be unreal like an impostor. Ignorant people associate Consciousness with the body. Thinking they depend on the body as they searches happiness, they irrationally pursue objects and come to grief. Whereas, wise people are self-controlled because they know the body exists by God’s grace and that identifying as a body produces suffering. They enjoy objects but withdraw the senses like a turtle withdraws its limbs when they sense danger.

How can I have problems with you if there is no me? Stepping away from me means stepping into What Is because there is no other option. Non-duality means that I see different bodies and minds but I know that the same entity is seeing though all of them, just as one electricity powers myriad devices. I am not opposed to anything. I am like space. Fill me with zillions of objects and I remain unchanged.

There is only “now.”

**Debating about the past and future is a laughing matter
because they are only thoughts in the present.
Can you count to two without the number one? (15)**

There is no past apart from the concept of the past. If the past were actual you could experience it but to become the present it has to cease to exist. It depends on the present and the present depends on it. When yesterday existed it was called the present, which is purely imagination. When the future happens it will be called the present. Even the present doesn’t exist because it depends on the presence of two equally non-existent facts, the past and the future. If something depends on appearing and disappearing events, does it actually exist?

The most we can say is that it momentarily exists, which perhaps makes it amusing but doesn't make it real.

However, the present is a useful word because of its association with the word presence, which refers to an actual something: you, existence which is always present. A deaf and blind person experiences the presence of another deaf and blind person. Presence knows presence. Consequently it is said that only a wise person knows a wise person.

If time and space depend on me and I don't depend on anything, then I am free of time and space. That I think I am a time-and-space-bound entity is due to the misconception that I am the body/mind/sense complex. Yesterday is a name for memory. Tomorrow is a name for the fiction that life "continues." It doesn't continue because it never started. It is eternal. It is just another name for existence. When you say you are alive, you actually mean that you are ever-free Consciousness. Life and death, like past, future and present are only concepts. Because they exist, you can take them as Consciousness and stop pretending that you were born and die.

To avoid all these issues we say that reality is "not-two" or that it is "one without a second" and leave it at that.

**Can there be space or time apart from me?
Space and time bind me only if I am the body.
I exist nowhere and everywhere and always.
I am timeless. (16)**

When there is identification with the "I-sense" there are problems. Why meditate on it? When there is no "I-sense" there are no problems. Why not meditate on its absence? I am not located in time and space. In so far as they exist, they are located in me. The only true statement I can make is, "I am omnipresent and eternal."

**Both the wise and ignorant speak of the body as "I".
The ignorant confine the "I" to the body
but the wise see Self shining endlessly as the limitless Heart,
which includes the body and the world. (17)**

Both the wise and the ignorant experience pain but the wise don't experience suffering. Children resemble wise people because they don't experience prolonged psychological and intellectual pain until their likes and dislikes become well established. Every experience leads to emotional and intellectual conclusions because there is more to life than experiences. When the sun arises we conclude that it circled the earth although we did not see it circling. Knowing this fact does not change my experience, only my conclusion. I experience hunger and conclude that I am the body. But when I think about it, I can't be the body because the body is an object known to me.

I, Consciousness have no sense organs. When I no longer identify with an object I am free of it. Likewise with the mind. I know my thoughts. Obviously I am not them. Yet everyone says, "I think," which only goes to show the ubiquity of Self ignorance.

Without a subject, object and instruments of experience I can't have an experience. But I don't experience three things simultaneously. I only experience one thing because there is only one me; my instruments and the objects they illumine are not apart from me. If reality is a conscious subject plus sentient and insentient objects, I still wouldn't experience duality because experience is just consciousness plus thoughts. If thoughts come from anywhere they can only come from me. So when I'm experiencing you I'm experiencing me.

Mandukya Chart

I don't see. I am Seeing

**The world exists for both the ignorant and the wise.
But only the ignorant see the world as real.
For the wise, the formless source of the seen
is the only reality. (18)**

The one who is ignorant of the Self thinks the waking, dream and deep sleep states are real, whereas the wise think the three states are unreal and their witness is real. Negation of the world is not negation of the experience of the world, only the reality of the world.

Inference and direct perception die with the death of the doer-enjoyer entity. An individual sees “the formless source” by inference, which is as valid a means of knowledge as direct perception, but someone who drops their sense of individuality “sees” the formless source *as the formless source*.

**Questioning the relative merits of free will and fate
is only for those who do not know their source.
Those who know the one for whom they pertain
remain untouched by them. (19)**

A Defect of Cause and Effect

Just as it is impossible to tell if birth creates karma or karma creates birth or *vasanas* create actions or actions create *vasanas* or a chicken creates an egg or an egg creates a chicken, it is impossible to determine if fate and free will are real because they are mutually interdependent concepts.

Understanding this fact is liberation because it shows that there is no creation and therefore no individuals at all. There is no creation because creation involves three factors, which are only possible because there are two factors, consciousness and matter, only one of which is real. But there is only one non-dual source, which is immutable, and which is me. How can an immutable substrate generate two things? Only ignorance makes duality possible. Reality is one without a second. If there were two sources duality would be a fact. But there is only one, so duality is purely imagination, *Maya*.

Therefore, we can’t blame God for our karma. We can only blame our ignorance of the Self. If you say suffering is a matter of chance you run up against the fact that the creation is a consciously-designed matrix of laws. I don’t get the results of the karma you generate. When I wake up in the morning I don’t wake up as someone else.

Finally, you can’t blame Consciousness either; because it is non-dual it is impartial. Fate is just an apparent individual’s latent previous actions recycling. If you are a dualist you can only define freedom as bondage to God, since you will only be considered a devotee if you surrender your will to God’s. But God doesn’t have a will because God is not an agent.

Although *karma yoga* is duality, a *karma yogi* is going for freedom from bondage, including bondage to God, which is also bondage. He or she needs the

concept of God to remove the anxiety associated with his or her actions. Although a *karma yogi* takes what happens as God's comment on the nature of his or her actions, he takes responsibility for good and bad results until he or she transcends the God concept. Such people do actions in harmony with the cosmic order which mitigates unhelpful karma and generates helpful karma.

The free will controversy is for people who are ignorant of the cause of their "I-sense." When ignorance is known to be the cause, blame disappears and surrender to the process of Self inquiry is inevitable.

Seeing is Knowing is Abiding

**To see God apart from the seer is only a mental image,
since God is not separate from the seer.
To *abide in the poise* of the Self
is true vision of God. (20)**

The Upanishads don't say if God is real or apparently real because the meaning of words depends on your definition. If God is the creator then God won't be Existence/Consciousness because it is immutable. Nor is it an agent capable of creating. Even if it were an agent, it is not incomplete and it is not sentient until ignorance adds a thought to it, so the idea of creating objects of enjoyment to gain results that it can't experience, is not present in it.

Vedanta is not atheistic philosophy. To dismiss God, God has to exist in the first place, but if the world doesn't exist apart from the concept of it, the creator is nothing but a thought in the mind of a person who doesn't know the nature of reality. Where is the world when you aren't thinking of it?

Ramana defines God as Existence/Consciousness because if there is an independent creative principle it couldn't create without the presence of Consciousness in which case it would be a dependent principle. Ramana calls a dependent god a mental image, meaning a purely conceptual entity. At the same time he doesn't address the issue of creativity. So we can only conclude that there is no actual creation, which means that an apparent creation, like a dream, is good as no creation. It's saving grace, however, is its entertaining dreamlike quality.

Finally, although God is not separate from Existence shining as Consciousness, they are not identical. God is not same as the Self but it isn't different either. Sunlight and moonlight are the same light appearing in two forms.

I Don't Want to See God

**The scriptures declare, "see the Self," "see God."
But because it is one without a second, it cannot be seen.
See God by being swallowed by Him. (21)**

I do not want to see God. Whatever vision I might enjoy would only be a subjective light/love experience or an objective experience, seeing insentient God in a sunset, a panoramic vista or a stone. Seeing God in this way, dualists don't realize they are the seeing Self seeing itself. A remote God did not create the world. There is not one God or many gods; there is only God.

Ramana's definition of God is existence shining as consciousness, which leaves no room for duality. So the only way to see it is to let go of the notion that you are a separate and unique experiencer. If you allow yourself to be consumed by Self knowledge it will destroy the notion that there is a separate experiencer. The ego is rooted in the darkness of ignorance, which can only be "consumed," which is to say dissolved by the light of knowledge, not a particular event. Seeing is simply non-conceptual knowing. It is the nature of all sentient beings.

**God illumines the mind and shines within it, unseen.
How then can one know God through the mind?
Turning the mind inward and fixing it in Him
alone *is to have* His vision. (22)**

Matter is insentient. Illumined by existence shining as consciousness sentient beings evolve in the material universe. Individuals are extroverts first and foremost hypnotized by the desires arising in the mind. Consequently, they don't sense the silent awareness that is illumining the mind. Ignorance is not stupidity. Ramana says self-inquiry is fixing the mind on Awareness, which only means ignoring the thought and emotion generated fears and desires because they are not real or "not self." Because they are not real, following them generates karma which leads to binding discrete experiences...security, pleasure, fame, etc...which keeps the wheel of karma spinning and the mind distracted.

And what does the meditator experience when the senses are withdrawn and the mind is turned inward? Silence. And what is this silence? It is awareness reflecting in the mind. But experiencing the silence is not experiencing God because there is duality. The experiencer has not been swallowed by the Self. How can I remove the duality? By contemplating the non-dual teachings until the mind assimilates them. Assimilated Self knowledge destroys the apparent experiencer leaving only me, Consciousness, shining alone.

Beautiful Intelligent Ignorance

**The body does not say I.
Only fools say they do not exist in deep sleep.
When the “I-sense” appears, the world arises.
Find out with keen intellect, where this “I” comes from. (23)**

Ignorance Projects the Creation

The “I-sense” or “I-notion” (*ahamkara*) is a fictional mixture of consciousness and matter. One non-dual entity appears as two by the grace of Ignorance. There is no third entity called “me.”

Consciousness can’t say, “I am” because it has no organs. The Body can’t say “I am” because it is insentient. Only when Consciousness illumines the mind, does a third mysterious entity, a seemingly sentient being, endowed with the power to speak appears. No one who knows what they are says they don’t exist in sleep because they know they exist in all states of consciousness and in all periods of time. If you try to locate that sentient being, you cannot find it. It is only a “sense of self,” not an actual self.

The Creation Evolves

The body doesn’t appear. It evolves in stages out of the material aspect of creation. It evolves out of the three energies that manifest ignorance, permutations and combinations of reflected awareness, power and space which generates the multiplicity of tangible names and forms. Prior to the appearance of matter only existence shining as consciousness exists. Matter appears first as space which divides and recombines to make the tangible elements, after which

the *jivas* evolve. We began as unicellular organisms which become increasingly complex over time. At first individual entities are completely extroverted but as the experiencing instrument bi-furcates and recombines with itself in different forms, the mind turns inward and the experiencing entity becomes self-reflective, in which case it is called a human being. It is aware of itself, unlike less complex forms of life.

First we only know of our relationship to the world but when we achieve a modicum of security, we start thinking about our relationship with ourselves. The most rudimentary entities, which might be called stone people, identify with the inert body exclusively. Plant people stand on the second rung of the evolutionary ladder in so far consciousness has become capable of movement. Unlike stones, these entities turn toward the sun, photosynthesize and respond in wonderful ways. When a sensate identity fails to provide sufficient satisfaction, the intellect develops and the entity identifies with the thoughts arising in consciousness. A smattering of these thinking entities realize there is something beyond their thoughts, become naturally curious and begin to seek it. Then at some point in every age Consciousness reveals itself to particular individuals, seers like Ramana and the Upanishads, oral transmissions of Self knowledge appear, which are eventually written down. Contemplating on them as taught by a qualified teacher destroys the believe that the “I-sense” is oneself.

The Reflection Chart

**The body does not arise because it is insentient. The Self does not arise.
Within and between the body and the Self an insubstantial knot-like “I” arises.
It is called “I-sense,” subtle body, ego and mind. (24)**

The Reflection Teaching

Your face in a mirror has features of your face and features of the mirror. If the mirror shakes, your features appear to move but the mirror is responsible for the movement. The face “borrows” the movement from the mirror. If the mirror is dirty your face will look dirty.

If the mind is active, it seems as if you, existence shining as consciousness are moving. The mirrorlike I-notion changes repeatedly so you imagine you are changing. When you look in the mirror you think you are looking at yourself. But you can’t see the one and only you that is aware of the looker. It never appears in the mirror; the mirror appears in it.

Asking for it to appear is foolish, although people pray to God to “see” God. If you turn the mirror away from your face the face disappears but you don’t disappear because you are always present. Likewise, if you separate the material part of your self from the witnessing part, the doer-enjoyer entity disappears, as it does in deep sleep. It is like a mirage, only created by conditions. If it disappears is it a real entity? People feel inauthentic because they take themselves to be the reflected self. The feeling is true because the knot-like insubstantial entity is a fake. This reflected self is variously called a thinker, a feeler, a doer, the mind, a person, me, etc. Miraculously it binds the unbound Self to the seemingly existent not-self until it is swallowed by the words of the teacher.

**Born of forms, rooted in forms,
feeding on forms, ever changing its forms,
itself formless, this ego-ghost
takes to its heels on inquiry. (25)**

The I-Sense is borrowed from the existence and consciousness “aspects” of the Self. Its very survival is dependent on the properties and qualities of matter. Madonna, the consummate consumer-extrovert, sang, “I’m a material girl!” This fraudulent person is never the same from moment to moment. A disturbed poseur, it dies in sleep but springs to life when the alarm goes off and the day’s karma kicks in. Addicted to doing, it experiences joy and sorrow woven fine as the mental material mirror oscillates. Because it is unable to eliminate unsolicited thoughts, it thinks inquiry, which is deliberate thinking, is just another useless mental activity. So it falls prey to any of a plethora of useless ideas floating around in the “spiritual” world most of which amount to nothing but denial.

Shifting Your Backpack

**When the ego arises, your world arises.
When it subsides, your world subsides.
All discrete experiences are just your I-sense changing.
Tracking it is the way to victory over everything. (26)**

Trying to change yourself or the world is like shifting your backpack from one shoulder to another. It feels good for a while but becomes a burden sooner or later.

Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. Keeping reflected awareness constantly focused on the I-sense and not allowing it to wander off with distracting thoughts, is called tracking in this verse. Self knowledge is true to its object, the real I, existence shining as consciousness. It is the tracking mechanism. As you track it becomes apparent that there is a you that doesn't track, which allows you to switch your identity to it.

**The "I" does not arise in the real *state*.
Search for the source of "I" dissolves it.
How else can one attain the
supreme state of one's own Self? (27)**

The I-sense is rooted in the non-apprehension of existence shining as your own consciousness. Self knowledge, produced by exposing the mind to Vedanta, destroys the belief that it is real, shifting your identity to bliss that is non-different from the non-dual I. If the shift becomes permanent bliss becomes permanent. There is no other way that an individual can experience its "natural state," which is not a state in so far as it doesn't change. The Bhagavad Gita says, "Once you "go there" you never come back. If you do come back, it means that ignorance is still operative. The only way to get back to where you belong is to continue to contemplate the teachings. How does Vedanta destroy the ego? It proves that the world is *mithya*, seemingly real. The snake disappears when the rope is revealed.

The word "search" or "seek" produces a the misleading idea that Self inquiry is asking "Who am I" and waiting for an answer. The very question is ignorance personified in so far as personhood is unreal as Ramana states. Self inquiry is the application of the self/not-self teaching born of listening to and contemplating on the teachings.

Sense pleasures momentarily suppress the I-sense and the Self experiences reflected experiential bliss, which is non-separate from the bliss of the self. Is moonlight not just reflected sunlight? Associating the bliss of the self with a particular experience produces intermittently blissful experiences, which are always unsatisfying.

**With a keen intellect discover the real source of the ego
by applying self knowledge, regulating the breath,
speech and mind as one would do to recover an object
which has fallen into a deep well. (28)**

Most Ramana aficionados believe that the self-inquiry is the absence of thoughts, an idea that Ramana attacks forcefully in this verse. A keen intellect is a qualified, purified intellect, which is only attained by constant discipline. Ramana touted self inquiry because he practiced in the silence of caves for over twenty years. For an unqualified person the application of self knowledge is totally unappealing because it involves a continuous struggle with a wayward mind. By repeated practice the mind is brought to heel and the bliss of awareness shines forth.

**To enquire silently and deeply as to the source
of the mind, the “I”, alone is self-enquiry.
Ideas like, “I am that” or “I am not this”
are but aids. (29)**

Ignorance is hard-wired. A one-off insight or a mind-blowing epiphany will not dislodge it. Self inquiry is not asking or exploring on one's own without the benefit of a valid means of knowledge and a competent teacher, someone who has received and assimilated the knowledge from his or her teacher. It is not asking God to appear and set one straight. It is immediately seeing the truth of the revealing words as they appear in the mirror of Vedanta. Sitting in a quiet place or in the presence of someone who doesn't speak will not remove the “I-sense” because silence is cosy with ignorance. Only the light of truth removes the darkness of ignorance. Truth must be heard. There is nothing to remember if ignorance is destroyed completely.

In this text Ramana does not explain how this is done so we need to revert to secondary texts by other sages, which say that an unprepared mind cannot remove the “I sense” because it thinks it is the “I sense.” It wants to add a particular experience of Existence/Consciousness to the “I sense” that it thinks will justify its claim to egolessness. Egolessness simply means that I am limitless existence/consciousness since It has no ego. Teaching is not for the ego because the ego is inert, a conceptual entity. It is for the Self under the spell of ignorance. An unqualified ignorant Self does not accept the idea that it is the Self already and that it has an ignorance problem. Ramana does not explain how to use the mind, so there is ample room for misunderstanding. That it is required, however, is clear because he promoted it. Furthermore, it is little wonder that the modern Ramana cult eschews Sat Darshanam because Ramana makes it clear that without the

discrimination, dispassion, devotion and desire for Self knowledge the Self will continue to identify with the “I-sense.”

If you are unschooled in the science of non-duality you may believe that each person experiences the bliss of awareness differently and in varying degrees, in which case you will have to utilize teaching “aids” like the ideas mentioned in this verse. Contemplation on them and others converts the unknown factor into a known factor. In the process, the status of the world changes from real to unreal and the individual discovers that it is, was, and will always be the Self. As such it experiences the constant limitless bliss of its nature instead of moments of bliss interspersed with moments of suffering.

“I live without breathing.” – Shankaracharya

The ego falls, crestfallen, when one enquires

“Who am I?” and enters the Heart.

Then, another I *throbs unceasingly*, by itself.

It is not the ego, but the whole and complete Self itself. (30)

Inquiry converts the unknown to the known. Something that is full of itself has no room for attributes. Once the knowledge comes, one’s actions become motiveless. *Enters* and *throbs* are metaphors.

“Once you go there, you never return.” – Bhagavad Gita

Who can understand the state of the one

that has dissolved the ego and *abides* always as the Self?

For that one, the Self alone is. What is left to do? (31)

The ego is negated and becomes a vessel. Existence shines as Consciousness through a purified Subtle Body blessing the world. You have fulfilled the purpose of life.

Removing teaching remnants.

The scriptures assert “THAT YOU ARE.”

**Without enquiring, reaching and abiding as the ever-shining Self,
endless discussion about the self is due to weakness of mind. (32)**

It is difficult to separate the means from the end. Because Vedanta delivers so much joy it settle for a joyful means. However, Vedanta is a means that removes ignorance and removes itself. Now that I occupy a life that has no otherness. Argumentation debilitates the mind .

The Eye of Wisdom Sees Itself

**Statements like, “I do not know myself”
Or “I know myself” are a matter for laughter.
Are there two selves, the seer and the seen?
The experience of all who truly know is that the Self is one. (33)**

The eyes can see anything but themselves but Vedanta is unique among means of knowledge because the seer and the seen are revealed to be identical.

Knowing as a process is necessary only when there is ignorance of something. But that I am a conscious being is so well known no one needs to inform me. Consequently there is no way to know the self. But I may not know what it means to be existence shining as consciousness in terms of the world in which my equipment exists. So Vedanta focuses on removing projected attributes from consciousness i.e. the ideas associated with the teachings themselves, the five sheaths for instance.

I am not slim or fat, hungry or thirsty, angry or sad, smart or stupid, liberated or bound. I am not white or black, Christian or Muslim, man or woman. No adjectives apply to me. I can only say I am. No quality defines me. I define and defy all qualities.

**Instead of firmly abiding in the Heart in one’s own true state,
Those who quarrel about “real” and “unreal”, “form” and “formless”,
“many” or “one” are indeed blind. (34)**

We quarrel about the teachings because the false center of our experience generated by Ignorance has not been removed by the teaching.

Turning your attention to the Self is abiding in the thought “I am existence shining as consciousness.” It is living in the Heart as the Heart, one’s essence. I will never let ignorance convert me into an enlightened being.

**Self-abidance alone is a miracle.
Other miracles like dreams only last till waking.
Can those firmly rooted in The Real
return to Ignorance? (35)**

If you are identified as the Self, the mind becomes powerful and the mind glows with ever-increasing radiance, which makes the *jiva* particularly attractive. Sometimes this phenomenon brings worldly success. After he realized the Self, Ramana left the temple in town and moved to a cave on the mountain side, but as his fame grew he was forced by the adulation to move even further up the mountain because people were disturbing his inquiry. Eventually, he surrendered to the will of *Isvara* and allowed devotees to build an ashram at the foot of the mountain where he was accessible to the public.

Self-realized people whose abidance is not 100% are, as the Bhakti Sutras point out, “in danger of a fall.” Worldly tendencies that have not been completely destroyed by Self knowledge can extrovert the mind to such a degree that one’s life becomes a misery. Ramana says that overcoming ignorance is the only worthwhile miracle. Worldly success is delusional.

**As long as we think the body is the Self
it is useful to claim “I am the Self” for realizing That.
But when one rediscovers one is That,
claiming it is as futile as a man repeating,
“I am a man”, “I am a man.” (36)**

Until “I am Awareness” becomes a fact for me I should apply it to my mind on a moment to moment basis, but once it becomes a fact, it is no longer required. Liberation is freedom from the doer/enjoyer claimant. A person who claims to be free but continues to claim is narcissistic and needy. Rather than a feather in the apparent *jiva*’s cap, Self realization should inspire embarrassment. How could I have missed such an obvious simple truth after seeking it for so long? If liberation is an event it should be seen as a loss of ignorance, not a gain in knowledge to prevent the “I-sense” rising up again. Self actualized people are neither proud or humble. They simply are.

I am Free when I Know and Free when I Don't Know

**The idea of duality during practice and
non-duality on realization are not true.
The tenth man existed when he was lost
and when he was found. (37)**

Non-duality is not a timebound state, event or experience. Temporary non-duality is a name that refers to unmanifest duality. A non-duality that comes when duality goes is duality. Non-duality is a fact. Duality is a belief based on sense perception. Events and experiences are momentary apparent truths, not actual facts. Fire is always hot, whether I know it or not. Sugar is always sweet. Knowledge is always good. I am never born. I never die. To understand these facts discrete experiences are sometimes helpful, sometime detrimental. When you hear that you are the Self, you start looking for it without realizing it is the one who is looking.

Vedanta reveals the unexamined logic of one's own experience.

**Identified as a doer, one reaps the fruits of his actions.
If you inquire, "Who is the doer?"
and enter the Heart, the doership will end.
Triple karma is destroyed. This indeed is liberation. (38)**

The Self can't do because it has no mind or instruments of action. The ego can't do because it is an inert material concept. When the Self is under the spell of ignorance it identifies with the body/mind, which is in a perpetual state of activity owing to the presence of Awareness. Consequently it thinks it is a doer. By revealing the unexamined logic of its own experience Vedanta proves that the Self isn't a doer.

"Heart" means the essence. Obviously you can't enter the essence because the essence of something is that which can't be entered. For instance, sweetness is the essence of sugar. If something other than sweetness is added to it, it is no longer sugar. The essence of everything, sentient and insentient is existence shining as consciousness. Nothing can be added to it or subtracted from it. It is a partless whole. So "enters the Heart" is a figure of speech that is not to be taken

literally. It is addressed to the Self that thinks it is a doer. It means “eliminate the eliminator.”

Cancel Culture

The practice of inquiry is removing objects. The body is an object. It need not be physically removed. It needs to be cancelled. It is cancelled when you realize that the perceiver of the body can't be the body. They never meet. There is always a gap between them. Likewise with the mind. The doer too needs to be cancelled but it is more difficult because it is our most lovable thought.

Everything we do is calculated to turn the doer into an enjoyer because we don't know we are ever-full actionless Awareness, the nature of which is bliss. If anything is to be eliminated, it will have to be done by a conscious being. The ego can't cancel itself because it is inert. But if it could, it wouldn't because it thinks it wouldn't be present to enjoy the fruit of cancelling.

We enter the heart when we cancel our individuality. We see that we are not *a* conscious being; we are being shining as consciousness. We exist and we know i.e. shine. Try to cancel the one that exists and knows. When we realize that it is impossible we have “entered the Heart,” which is to say we now “abide as Awareness.”

When the doer is cancelled, (1) the karma standing in one's account waiting to fructify, the karma fructifying now and karma that will fructify in the future is cancelled. Because there is actually no past, present or future, karma is not real. It is a concept based on the idea that I am the mind/body entity, which is not real either.

Self-inquiry, Vedanta, is the process of entering i.e. understanding one's essence, which eliminates the “I-sense” by default.

Thoughts of liberation appear only so long as one thinks one is bound.

One attains the eternally liberated I by asking,

“For whom does bondage exist?”

Thereafter, how can thoughts of freedom and bondage arise? (39)

If freedom is defined as the removal of bondage, there is no freedom because the Self was never bound. Bondage is a thought, thoughts are inert and have no power to bind. If there is no bondage how can it be removed? Saying that Vedanta removes bondage is a figurative expression. It means: when one is clear that one's ever-present ordinary awareness is not associated with the body/mind/sense complex, the inquirer identifies with awareness because it is free of suffering. Only the thought "I am attached" is a problem because we know that the body is mortal. When we find out that the self is existence/consciousness we see that it cannot be mortal, that it transcends change. But Vedanta needs to pretend that it removes bondage or no one will listen to the teachings. Once someone listens attentively he or she will figure out that bondage is just an idea.

**Some scholars say that after liberation, form remains.
Others say that forms do not remain. Yet others say sometimes form remains
and sometimes it is lost. The loss of the I-sense,
Which is the basis of these three concepts, alone is true liberation. (40)**

From the world's point of view forms remain. From the jiva's point of view forms don't remain because a particularized "I-sense" dies when identification with the body stops, et a generic "I-sense" that is shared by all humans continues until the body dies. If the Self was nothing, ignorance would not remain. But when you have an existent thing, ignorance comes along with it. Fortunately, ignorance can be cancelled.

Essence of the Teaching

The "I-sense"" is a poisonous snake, the cause of all problems. The only solution is Self inquiry. We project reality on it due to the poison of ignorance. It should be defanged by a systematic study of a proven means of Self knowledge.