

Moving Backward in My Understanding

Note: italicized statements are Ram's statements from a previous email that Arun is questioning.

Dear Ram,

Once again, I have spent the past couple weeks pondering and analysing your previous email response; and have a many more questions based upon that. In advance I would like to apologise for this extremely long email, but I have so many questions I just have to ask them. I figure, the more questions 'I' ask, the more 'I' learn, right?! But this assumes you can give me your time to answer them in detail (as you have been so far). But this is a long one so be warned.....

1) *"There are 3 states of mind to be experienced....by the **Self**"*

Arun: Ok, this is a pretty basic but important question which I clearly do not understand --- Please define EXACTLY what is meant by the word "Self". And I mean EXACTLY, because the way it is referred to here is a bit confusing. I always thought the Self is non-dual awareness, therefore there is NO EXPERIENCE (i.e. NO "states of mind to be experienced") for the self. But here, you say there are which implies to 'me' that this mind has not understood what Self means.

Ram: You are correct; the Self means non-dual awareness. You are also correct that the self is not an experiencer in the way that the individual is an experiencer. From awareness' point of view there is no such thing as experience. However, if we take the world into account, experience is not possible without awareness. So in that sense it 'experiences' the world. It doesn't chase experience or have feelings and thoughts about what it experiences because it is not an individual, that is to say that it is not under the spell of avidya, ignorance. If it is under the spell of avidya it thinks it is an experiencer. It is like the sun in that it provides the light that makes life on earth possible but it is completely uninvolved in what it 'experiences' although from its point of view there is nothing other than It to 'experience.' You are right to call me on this because I was using the word experience a little loosely.

2) *"...when the mind is aware of awareness...it is experiencing the self"*

Arun: Using your very own definition of "mind" ("mind is awareness directed towards objects") would directly imply that awareness can be an object of perception by the mind. But if awareness is non-dual, awareness cannot perceive/"be directed toward" awareness?? This implies there are different types of awareness, but I thought there was only one non-dual awareness ?

Ram: Good thinking. Again you are right but you need to realize that I'm assuming that Maya is real in my statement. From awareness' point of view there are no directions and no actions. But when we take Maya into account the statement has conditional validity. One definition of Maya is 'that which makes the impossible possible.' It is impossible for awareness to experience, to direct itself, to act, etc. But Maya makes it seem as if awareness is doing this. There is actually no individual from awareness' point of view. But it seems as if there is...as I'm sure 'Arun' will agree. So this seeming individual...this dream person...can shift its attention (which is just awareness focused on an object) away from the objects 'outside' toward the Self 'within.' It will not actually experience the Self directly but if the mind, which is the instrument of experience, is sattvic i.e. clear, it reflects awareness, making it available for experience.

3) *"experiential statements don't make sense for a non-dual point of view" –*

Arun: Exactly! So then why do you even attempt to go on and say, *"Let me try and explain Self Realization in terms of experience"*.

Ram: I wouldn't have said it if you had no doubt about non-duality. By that I mean if you understood that striving to experience things (operative word is 'striving') didn't solve the happiness question. But if you are a human being seeking things in this world then the issue of experience 'of' the Self comes into play. These mystic or spiritual experiences are useful because they present a challenge to the normal samsaric way of seeing things.

Arun: What's the point in 'me' even TRYING to understand all this stuff, when 'I' (Arun) is within the realm of this dream of experience? Surely, this is an impossible riddle that this mind can NEVER EVER solve because this mind itself is part of the dream itself !? How can "enlightenment" even be possible for a mind?

Ram: Again, good thinking. In the dream the Self as mind thinks it isn't limitless awareness. This thought/belief is called ignorance. Ignorance is an uncomfortable condition. The Self as mind/ego doesn't enjoy it. So in the dream it begins a dream quest for dream knowledge. Enlightenment is just the removal of ignorance about the nature of the Self.

Arun: What is the point of 'me' pursuing the study of Vedanta if the mind to understand the teaching & the teaching itself all just a dream?

Ram: There is no point whatsoever unless you are dissatisfied with the dream in some way. Why are you interested in Self knowledge? If you're happy as you are Vedanta doesn't apply. It's grease for a squeaky wheel.

Arun: How is it possible for any object in a dream to realise that what they are in, is a dream - because if an object in the dream knew that (e.g. an enlightened master) & was telling other objects in that dream, that enlightened master wouldn't be in the dream in the 1st place since they have to have woken up already !?

Ram: It is possible because anything is possible in a non-dual reality. Everything is only the Self and the Self is limitless and wouldn't be limitless if it couldn't apparently fall asleep, dream and wake up from the dream. The 'enlightened master' and the teachings are also just the Self appearing in the dream to help the dreamer...which is the Self too...wake up. If you find yourself in a dream you need dream knowledge to wake up. No other kind of knowledge will work. Knowledge should be appropriate to the state in which it is needed. Remember, there is only one Self and it pervades the dream. So this dream person is actually the Self all along. When the Self hears the message of Vedanta...you are limitless awareness...it wakes up and sees that it had been dreaming that it was an individual. When you do 'get it' you have a good laugh because you realize that you knew that you were the Self all along.

Arun: (4) If I am limitless awareness, how & why is it that this limitless awareness seems only to be aware of Arun's thoughts and feelings, but non-one else's. I (Brahman) should equally be aware of every beings thoughts/feelings/actions. What is the special reason for this infinite awareness to be seemingly linked to this "Arun" form (from 'my' perspective)? There must be a specific reason why 'I'(Arun) am only aware of Arun, and not James, or Sarah, or Dayananda or whoever/whatever. You see what I mean - there is clearly some kind of special link of awareness (from my/Arun's view) with this form & no other. What's the significance of this?

Ram: You, limitless awareness, under the spell of Maya, are apparently limited in two ways; as an individual and as the total. The Self functioning through a single Subtle Body has knowledge that is limited by its means: the senses and inference. Arun can only know what is within the scope of his limited means. But the Self functioning through all the Subtle Bodies (Ishwara) knows everything. These limitations, microcosmic and macrocosmic, are called upadhis in Sanskrit. It means 'limiting adjuncts.' If you look at clear water through a colored glass it seems to be colored. I have more to say about this below.

(5) *"...the mind is just the self when it is aware of objects. It is often incorrectly called an experiencer because of this fact."*

Arun: This implies the "pure Self" is NOT AWARE of any objects? Is that correct?

Ram: Yes.

Arun: If so, then why is the Self often referred to as the ultimate subject/perceiver (which implies it IS aware of the object of perception)?

Ram: See my answer to the first question above. Vedanta teaching works by superimposition and negation. Because a person is in Maya and cannot understand the Self immediately it is presented in a certain way; in this case it is called the ultimate subject to distinguish it from the relative subject, the individual. This is to help turn its attention toward the Self by inquiring 'within.' Obviously the Self is both within and without and neither within nor without...looking at it from the non-dual perspective. It is not a subject either because there are no objects. Once the relative subject (which is the ultimate subject all along but doesn't know it) starts to 'experience' the reflection of the Self and/or contemplate the meaning of the non-dual teachings the negation comes into play. Then one is asked to give up the subject object duality. For want of this method Neo-Advaita is not an effective means of Self realization. It just negates everything from the start. Getting out of the dream is a process. It doesn't help to dismiss the dream immediately. You need a bridge out. Vedanta is the bridge.

Arun: (6) Is the "*mind experiencing the self*" ACTUALLY just the pure self seeing a reflection of itself in the mind "reflector"?

Ram: Good! Yes, indeed.

7) "*Individuals crave experience and chase it....*"

Arun: Where does the motive/driving force come from for these "individuals" to crave/chase anything?

Ram: From ignorance of the Self. Ignorance of the Self means that the Self erroneously feels that it is incomplete and tries to complete itself through various experiences. It's an honest mistake because the craving is painful and prevents it from thinking clearly about 'who' wants experience so it rushes out to relieve the pain in the only way it knows...it does what everyone around it does...chase experience.

Arun: If individuals don't really exist, how is that individuals seem to have individual will power to 'do things' ---this requires and would imply individual will power? Surely, if there were only 1 non-dual true self, no separate 'will powers' are possible?

Ram: That's correct. All the apparent individual will powers are just the power of Iswara, the Self functioning through the Macrocosmic Causal Body. Electricity functioning through a bulb manifests light, through a heater heat, through a

radio sound but they are all just the one electricity manifesting. When you analyze action...and Vedanta examines it very closely...you see that the 'doer' is only one tiny part of an action. Doing depends on all the factors in the field...and the Self. The factors in the field are not under the control or will of the doer. When you look at life carefully you see that there are no unique actions. Thinking, feeling, breathing, walking, talking, etc. are universal. If you think you are doing something you are incorrect; you are actually being 'done' by the total...with the blessing of the Self.

8) "*The mind takes the shape of an object...*"

Arun: Where are these objects created ? Surely these objects must have been deliberately & intelligently created and therefore had some INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE *before* the mind could take its shape ??

Ram: Yes. They are created and sustained and destroyed by *Iswara's* mind, the macrocosmic Causal/Subtle Body. The individual is born into a fully functioning cosmos and simply perceives what is already present.

Arun: The world of objects seems far too complex and unknown to 'me', for the mind to have created it & then for it to know relatively NOTHING about this world of objects?

Ram: Your mind didn't create the objects. This is *Iswara's* job. (*Ishwara sristi*) You interpret the objects according to your own *vasanas*. Or we can say that the *vasanas* interpret the objects for you and this makes up what you think of as your life. This is the extent of 'your' creation. This creation (*jiva sristi*) comes to an end when you realize your identity as Awareness. Or you can patiently deconstruct it...or create it differently...through self inquiry.

Arun: Why do I not already know everything about every name & form in the entire universe if I'm the one who created it !?

Ram: I explained this above. Arun is not *Iswara*. He is an individual with limited means of knowledge and *Iswara's* knowledge and power are limitless. However, you can do *Iswara* one better. You can know everything without having to know everything. How? By knowing that you are the Self. If you know water you know every lake, river, stream and ocean in existence because they are just water. The rest is all name and form...which is negatable. Everything in the dream of *Maya* is nothing but Awareness when you inquire into it. Think about that teaching I gave you a couple of emails back where I asked you to analyze the location of objects. Objects are known in the mind. The mind is awareness and the objects are just awareness taking form. They are not separate from the mind. How far are you from the mind? There is no separation. Therefore there

is no separation between you and the objects. You know them all, either as Iswara, the total, or as Arun, jiva, the individual.

9) *"experience is crafted by awareness"*

Arun: Does this mean that awareness made a deliberate and conscious decision to create every single object in the universe; also deciding each object's distinct, separate, intricate characteristics. Including the decision to make this "Arun object" ignorant.?

Ram: Not exactly. Remember awareness is not an individual, a doer. It just assumed the role (sorry for the personification) of *Iswara*, set off the big bang and allowed matter and consciousness to impersonally evolve the creation. The splitting and recombining of the elements in the matrix of consciousness caused the myriad of conscious beings to evolve.

Arun: (10) Using the analogy of awareness as 'light' or an 'illuminator of objects', when sunlight shines upon an object it certainly brings it to light and the sun itself remains entirely unaffected by the actions of the objects illumined by its light; BUT that doesn't mean the sunlight IS ALSO the object itself. But you said all objects are awareness.....I just cannot get my mind to understand that this possible.

Ram: If you can understand the 'location of objects' teaching which I gave you before and reiterated above it will clear this doubt. Or consider this: in a dream the objects are not anything other than the dream. In the dream of life the objects seem to be distinct from awareness but upon investigation they are known not to be. This is difficult to grasp because your orientation is the body. The body seems to be a solid entity and the objects it perceives also seem to be solid and apart from it. But they aren't. Science can tell you this. So you dismiss the body as name and form and consider its constituents. When you get to the smallest particle you have to consider the space in which the particles are appearing. And when you investigate space consciousness comes into play...because how is space known? On the basis of consciousness you can dismiss space as a concept. If the objects are born out space, the subtlest element, and space is born out of consciousness, then the objects can't be anything other than consciousness because an effect (the objects) cannot be separate from its cause. It is simply the cause transformed. But in this case the cause, the Self, does not change its nature when it 'becomes' the objects, like say, milk becomes cheese. The transformation is apparent only. If you have a lump of gold and make a ring out of it, it is still gold. You only say it is a ring because you are not considering the gold.

Arun: (11)"The negation teaching....if applied to every object....is meant to prove you cannot negate yourself" -- What do you mean by "you cannot negate yourself"?? In what sense can I not negate myself? How does the negation method prove this?

Ram: Try to make you non-existent. You can make the body, mind and world non-existent through analysis but you can make you non-existent. Even deep sleep should show you that when everything is non-existent you still exist. By 'you' I mean awareness/consciousness. You can negate Arun because that is just a name.

Arun: It's funny Ram, because I really feel I am moving backwards with my understanding....I'm realising that I really don't understand anything at all! I'm not sure if that is a good thing, but I was reading somewhere that realising that you know nothing is actually quite an important step. But at the same time, this mind demands knowledge; and I always thought Vedanta is something to be understood. But maybe 'my' whole approach is wrong. I don't know.

Ram: Vedanta is working if you are moving backward. This is called negation. Vedanta is not something to be understood. It's not an intellectual discipline like philosophy. It is an analytical tool that is meant to deconstruct all objects, leaving you standing alone. You may not be understanding anything but if you keep thinking along the lines that Vedanta suggests you will realize that you don't need to understand anything. Self knowledge destroys the search for knowledge because when you realize who you are you see that there is nothing to know. Just being awareness is enough. Whatever you know or don't know is only meaningful for your sake. Vedanta is just the knowledge that you are whole and complete, nothing more. All the teachings are meant to lead you to this realization.

Love,

'Arun' (note the quotation marks!)

Quotation marks duly noted,

Ram