

Dear Ram,

Joking aside, thank you so very much for your answers and guidance. I have found the way you put the explanation of the witnesser during these times incredibly helpful. I am very grateful to you.

Catherine: There was another contradiction or paradox maybe in your last email. You wrote a whole paragraph on experience. To summarize, as I understand it, is that the small self is the experiencing entity, not the big self. (I know they are the same but, for the sake of clarity I am putting small self). Nevertheless you agreed that everything is always experienced. However, you were at great pains in your *satsangs* in India to point out that one cannot 'experience' the self. One knows the self. Or it is knowledge that reveals it, rather than experience. And that the self is not an experiencing entity - it just is. Now you are saying that there is no distinction?

Ram: Apparent contradiction, Catherine. Apparent. First, there is one self and it thinks it is limited (small) because it does not know its nature. The experiencing entity, the body/mind, can't experience awareness, because they are gross instruments. Then can only experience their respective objects. The key point (and you suspect it) is that knowledge reveals the self. The intellect needs to develop the discrimination to see the self in every experience.

Catherine: I understand it when you say, "there is no actual distinction between experience and knowledge. They go together. Experience is the container and knowledge the contents, the essence. When you experience a tree you know the tree." But why did you then make such a distinction in Tiru?

Ram: Vedanta employs a certain methodology. From the point of view of a *samsari* who thinks enlightenment is an experience, we first need to show that enlightenment is not an experience by the use of experience based logic. Then once the seeker has realized that he or she is barking up the wrong tree by chasing experience, he or she is ready to accept the non-duality of experience and knowledge. Unless you understand the context of a particular teaching, it seems to contradict other teachings.

Catherine: Or am I the witnesser to the experiencing entity and of the knowing entity? (Experience and knowledge being the same.)

Ram: Who is Catherine? Is she conscious or are you conscious of her?

Catherine: I think this next sentence explains it better and it is a delicate distinction of language between knowledge and experience. After all someone may have lots of experience but no knowledge and vice versa, but I would just like to clarify. You say, "You are suddenly released from the perspective of the experiencing entity and you 'go back' to your natural 'state,' the self's point of view. And the knowledge that goes with this should be 'I am the seer, the witness, etc.'" The witnessing is going on in 'normal' states too, it is just not as obvious."

I say, yes to all that apart from the last sentence, which is kind of my stumbling block. (So sorry to sound so ignorant). So this means that one 'knows' this all the time, even if one is not 'aware' of it - or, indeed experiencing it consciously? But if the knowledge is not hard and fast I guess this is the problem - getting sucked back in to *samsara*, which one 'experiences' for a bit. For a bit - is that all right? I guess not. The point is to always know yourself as the witness, right? To have this knowledge, even if you are not having the experience. And I said 'academically' because I was meaning that this is how it seems when the 'experience' isn't so intense or seems to slip.

Ram: That's correct. The whole problem is a failure of self knowledge. You are always the witness but you think the witness is the experiencer i.e. limited. Hard and fast knowledge means that you don't forget and re-identify with the body/mind.

There is one subtle doubt expressed here in the second sentence where you say "even if one is not experiencing it consciously." In this case knowing is an experience, so you are right. This is where knowledge and experience meet. Knowing is a kind of experience. For the witness, you, there is no knowing as an experience. It is just your nature. It is like sugar. Sugar does not 'sweet.' It is sweetness. You do not have knowledge. You are Knowledge, meaning awareness, since the essence of any knowledge is awareness.

Catherine: Thank you for this statement, "peace ensues when you see that you are free of all objects. It is a positive realization, not a negative realization. 'Nothing is real' is not the same "Everything is me but I am free of everything." I shall ponder on this. I just bought a Byron Katie book to read when I have finished yours and have had a flick through it - of course it is all saying the same.

Ram: Did you check with your guru to see if Byron Katie is on the approved reading list? Ten more lifetimes in *samsara* for you, naughty girl! Actually, she isn't too bad, considering the vague quasi spiritual drivel the Neo-Advaitis spew out.

Catherine: You say, "Yoga therapy may be all that severely wounded people can relate to, but at what point do you discover the 'real' cause? The 'real cause' is self ignorance. But this solution is only for healthy people." By your definition healthy or qualified people are very few. The point of yoga therapy is to get people healthy on some level to relieve suffering - on some level. Then, if they are very lucky, they may find a teacher who can help them to remove ignorance. But if not, this surely doesn't negate the value of proper yoga therapy which can help to remove pain - even if it is just at a lower 'maya' such as at a physical or psychological level. And this is good preparation for them if they were ever to find a teacher!

Ram: Catherine dear, is a case in point. Yoga made her well so she was qualified to meet the wonder that is the Ramji, an ocean of Mercy!

Catherine: You then said that the *gunas* naturally balance when we have self-knowledge. But, my understanding is that the self is above the *gunas*. And surely, even with realization, the *gunas* still play and change - but one is just not affected by them.

Ram: Again we are in very subtle territory. Self knowledge means the self. So if you are the self, the *gunas* take care of themselves. When you think you are the experiencing entity under the spell of ignorance, you interfere with the natural action of the *gunas*, so you are always making adjustments and corrections, 'manipulations' to use a term that I am partial to. Yoga is conscious manipulation that takes place with knowledge of the *gunas*. You can more or less beat the system with yoga. Well, let's say you can manage life pretty successfully by applying knowledge to balance the *gunas*.

Catherine: You might still get ill, for example, because of the *gunas*. And if you did get ill - how is this not karmic? Like when you got filaria, for example. Are you saying that because you know this isn't real and you are not identifying with anything in *maya* and therefore it cannot be karma, because you are not taking action in it?

Ram: It depends on what you mean by karma. Everything is karmic. The question is how do you, awareness, relate to it? What does it mean to you? What is interpreting it for you? If you are interpreting it, you are ignorant of who you are because it just is what it is. There is nothing you can do about it. It can't be any other way. I think you are implying that karma is bad or good. But it isn't. It is just the impersonal operation of the vast cosmic machine that ignorance constructed. Thinking it is bad or good is the problem. It is bad when it seems to deny you what you want and it is good when it gives you what you want. But karma does not know what you want. It impersonally delivers results on the basis of your gross and subtle actions which are in turn the result of other gross and subtle actions which are in turn the result... It goes on mindlessly ad infinitum.

Sickness and health are the result of karma. Is health good and sickness bad? Maybe. Maybe not. How do you evaluate things in the karma world, in *Maya*. Krishna says, 'About the topic of karma even sages are perplexed.'" There is no karma for animals because they do not evaluate what happens to them. That's the long answer. The short answer is yes. This is why the scriptures unequivocally say there is no karma for the wise.

Catherine: Even if, say, the action was 'apparently' going to India and having the consequences of you apparently being ill?

Ramji: The problem with this statement it is that it assumes I had filaria. I did not have filaria. My body...which is *Isvara's* body...was host to some parasites that were also *Isvara*. Illness belonged to the body, not to me.

Catherine: But maybe this is something else I need to wait to see you in person to ask more about. Wow, my own in-house guru! I will try not to annoy you and ask you too many questions at inappropriate times - like when you have just got up or something. Just think - if only the neighbours of Britain knew that Enlightenment might be happening behind the net

curtains of any ordinary house in Middle England! You just never know what goes on, do you!

Ramji: I expect mindless devotion at all times and no questions before ten am. It is necessary to keep ignorance in its place.