

Awareness and the Cosmic Sound

Ram (James Swartz)

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Marlon: Dear Ram, thank you for your excellent book (*Meditation: Inquiry into the Self*) which I recently came across on the internet. I have been meditating for over 35 years as a Soto Zen Buddhist and even though I have had a very uneventful spiritual life and “successful” practice (i.e. it has helped in many ways), when I came across the teachings of Advaita, or non-duality, about six months ago, I was actually both shocked, amazed and delighted that what I had been taught re enlightenment was fundamentally a search for what was already my true nature, here and now!

Now, I am not suggesting this was not there to be intuited from the teaching, but it seemed that the “master” was pointing to an ideal state of Buddhahood to be searched for that was not present here and now. But your book (as well as other teachers) has clarified many things for me.

Ram: Yes, you are very fortunate to have made this discovery with the help of the *advaitic* teachings. What we are looking for is simple, ordinary, always-present awareness. The hyperbolic statements by individuals who have had non-dual epiphanies, but whose minds are not dispassionate, has created expectations that do not serve. An ideal is always an ideal. It is never attainable. It amounts to serious frustration.

Marlon: However, I was hoping you might give me a clue as to how to incorporate an aspect of the Silence that is always there for me . And that is the high-sounding stream of energy (like a transformer) that is always there and particularly clearly heard when I enter the Silence. Is the Silence you speak of behind/around that?

Ram: Yes. That is “*nada brahma*,” the *om*, the sound that creates the universe. If you experience it regularly it means that your mind has attained a high degree of *sattva*. It is very good.

Marlon: Can it be used instead of a *mantra*?

Ram: There would be no benefit to using it in any way. It is the subtlest level of creation. You are going for self-knowledge. This sound is inert, although it seems to be conscious. It cannot deliver self-knowledge.

Marlon: It isn't a problem. I am only wondering how I might use it in self-inquiry, given that I cannot do anything to not hear it. Any response would be very much appreciated.

Ram: Here is how to use it. Notice the limitless “field” in which this sound is occurring. That is you, awareness, the “Silence.” Put your attention on the field, keep it there and meditate on it.

Eventually, there will be a shift and Marlon, the attention that is meditating on the field, will discover that he is not different from the field and he will either melt into the field or he will appear as a object in awareness, like the *nada brahma*. You will then understand that you are awareness, not the meditator. The meditator, attention, is you, but you are not the meditator. Take your time. It may be a little difficult to meditate on the field. Let me know how it goes. This is very interesting.

Marlon: Dear Ram, I deeply appreciate your response. It is very helpful and I will do as you suggest. I particularly like your pointing out that “this sound is inert, although it seems to be conscious. It cannot deliver self-knowledge.” I look forward to seeing you and will let you know how it is going. Thank you again for your generous response.

~ Sincerely, Marlon