

Impeccable Logic

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This is a companion piece to a *satsang* posted in July 2014 entitled *Nearly Impeccable Logic (Satya and Mithya)*.

Terry: Dear James, thanks again for taking time out of your schedule, which is no doubt quite full, to answer my letter. Your replies are always very encouraging (and I mean that literally, they “put courage into” this inquirer), so thanks again for that.

James: You are most welcome, Terry.

Terry: I said last time that I had “stopped seeking in the ‘spiritual world,’” but I have to admit a guilty pleasure lately in listening to Ravi Shankar music as a means to settle the mind! It’s funny because I understand how that can appear so contrived, and I don’t have any intellectual understanding of Indian classical music, but it really is enjoyable! Having said that, music can be quite an interesting inquiry when one considers the fact that it is only music because I am consciousness. Without awareness, it’s meaningless, unrelated sounds: each note is apparently related in an apparent time series, but that relationship can only exist against a timeless, silent background.

Oh well, as long as I’m in harmony with *dharma* and don’t expect anything in *Maya* is going to complete me, I guess it’s all fine. ☺

James: The *Bhagavad Gita* says, “I (meaning *Isvara*) am the desire that is not opposed to *dharma*.” The senses are always hooked up to something. It is the duty of an inquirer to see that actions flowing from its desire conform with his or her nature. If you see the music as the *Isvara* and take it as *prasad*, and you notice positive effect on the mind, that is all that is required. If you use the senses to fulfill need that can better be served by self-knowledge, then you are not following the *dharma* of an inquirer. But I think your point is that the silence that makes music meaningful is a metaphor for the self which makes life meaningful.

Terry: I think you are right about “*sravana*,” “getting the knowledge.” It has become more firm, getting firmer. And right you are again: I do need to practice discrimination with reference to *satya* and *mithya*. Your comment about “me” not being stuck is correct, and is not glib at all. I can see that it is important for me to make a practice of reflecting on who I am referring to when I use “I”: I, limitless awareness, am never stuck. I don’t want to go around referring to “Terry,” but it would be useful I think to at least internalize the fact that when we are talking about the limited being trying to “get it,” it is me, but I (awareness) am not it. It (Terry) doesn’t limit or define me.

James: Yes, indeed it is a very valuable practice. I speak as if I were James all the time but I am

very clear that James is not me. The operative word in your statement is “internalize.” There is nothing more “precious” than referring to one’s *jiva* in the third person in the presence of others.

Terry: The apparent sticking point that we have been discussing seems to boil down to a confusion concerning the mind as function of the individual subtle body (the “*jiva*’s mind”) and the macrocosmic MIND (as you capitalized), which is *Maya*.

The “total” experience is just thought (MIND), appearing in the self, including the gross and subtle bodies that the individual *jiva* has mistaken for itself. If I have understood this point correctly, from the relative point of view, the *jiva*’s mind (which is just *Isvara*’s anyway) takes the form (thought) of all of the experiences (objects). The problem is that the *jiva* takes the mind to be real (when it is limited and unconscious), and takes the objects appearing to be “other.”

The one who thinks that he might have understood this point and is “getting it” is not actually unconscious – he appears to be conscious by virtue of his “proximity” to the self (*upahdi*). The one who is aware of this is real.

James: Yes, Terry. Very good. There is only one self and experience is only the self experiencing itself always. *Maya* makes it seem as if there is an individual self experiencing objects. Basically, this is all one needs to know.

Terry: You made some other interesting (and challenging) points in your response, James. Such as the point that it was me, awareness, that “remembered” that particular experience (the insight into the causal realm).

James: Keeping with the fact that reality is non-dual, then the knowledge of experience, and indeed all discrete experiences, is only known by you, awareness. If you were a *jiva* experiencing when you were asleep, you could infer an experience because you can’t have a memory of something that doesn’t happen but ultimately, the *jiva* is awareness, so you arrive at the same conclusion: “I experienced this or that when I was asleep.” All you need to know is that the “I” is limitless awareness, experiencing “through” the limited *jiva*. Inquiry is keeping the knowledge of the “I” as a non-experiencing witness in mind always.

Terry: Also, the point that the “I” thought is supplied to the *jiva* by *Isvara*, because the *jiva* “needs” it. The self is free of thought, yet it is “I”? Further rumination on these points will be needed. ☺

James: Pure awareness shines in every human being in the form of the thought “I am, I am conscious.” This is how you recognize the self. Most discount the limitless nature of this “I” which is actually partially known to them because their *vasanas* extrovert their minds. Inquiry is designed to make its nature fully known. Some of the *gurus* objectify this “I thought” but don’t point out that it is limitless. They assume that there is another “I” that is supposed to meditate on it. Consequently you find people who meditate on the “I” thought for years and get nowhere, because they believe that the “I” thought is going to reveal some kind of experience of the “real I.” They don’t realize that the “I thought” is just the “I” – limitless awareness – shining in the mind,

and that this “I” is not an object of experience, that it is the essence of the experiencer.

Terry: Please correct me if I go awry, but what I think is understood now is: from the *jiva*’s point of view, there is an actual God, i.e. God is real to the *jiva*. Likewise, from the *jiva*’s point of view there is an actual *jiva*. But from the point of view of the self, both God and *jiva* are ideas or thoughts in itself, non-separate or different from the self.

James: Yes.

Terry: “God” just means the total – Creator and creation – from the *jiva*’s point of view. This applies to atheists too. Whilst the *jiva* is not real (*mithya*), the “essence” of the *jiva* is real because it is “*sat chit ananda*”: the *jiva* is just that very awareness in association with the gross and subtle bodies which makes the body appear to be conscious (but it isn’t – it’s me that is consciousness).

James: Yes, indeed.

Terry: From the point of view of the self, there are no objects, there is only the self. The apparent objects are just awareness appearing in the mind (under the power of *Maya*) – and the mind is nothing but thoughts – so these apparent objects are just thoughts. And since the thoughts are an inert manifestation of awareness, they are “made of awareness,” thus all is awareness. Like the wave is not other than the ocean. The conscious being that “sees” the objects is me, awareness. When I think that the objects are independent or other than me, I am the deluded *jiva* experiencing the objects. When my knowledge is complete and unshakable, I “see” only myself, even though the perceived form remains (like the mirage remains even when it is understood, when the mirage-knowledge is present).

The gross and subtle body apparatus does not really “see” anything: it collects the sense impressions. The intellect and ego react to the impressions and the integrated experience that the mind presents. But the intellect and ego are deluded by *Maya* (duality) and because it (the subtle body) is more gross than the causal, macrocosmic body and the self, it takes itself to be real and as the conscious being and agent of action. But its sense of “I-ness” – consciousness – is derived (*upahdi*) from the actual “seer” or witness of all – me – non-dual awareness. The intellect/ego thinks it sees (is deluded that it is the doer), but it is because of awareness that there is seeing. When this is understood, there is only awareness to be seen(?).

James: Got it in one, Terry!

Terry: It is difficult, because of habit, to get away from the notion that “limitless” means “vast” when it really means that awareness is formless and has no attributes that limit it; neither can it be limited by time and space.

James: This is a very important point. Limitless does not indicate spatial or temporal vastness. It

simply means that awareness does not modify to the experiences that arise in it.

Terry: Thus it is difficult or impossible to conceive (for the intellect) that the vast, infinite “universe” is “in” awareness. How is it that the limitless awareness produces an idea of a vast, spatial infinity that is apparently seen?

James: Because we take the body to be the self. From its point of view, space is vast and time is eternal. But nobody ever experienced “everything” apart from the thought of everything. When you examine the body, it breaks down into its constituents leaving nothing but consciousness. Nothing is ever experienced “out there.” Reality is flat, i.e. non-dual. *Maya* sprongs it out into a subject and an object, and creates space-time in an instant, covering the intellect at the same time. So we see ourselves as tiny specks of consciousness in a vast ocean of objects. But “tiny speck” and “vast ocean” are merely concepts in awareness.

Terry: Concerning the “location of mind”: from the non-dual point of view, naturally there is no location of mind or of anything else. But from the *jiva*’s point of view, there is a very persistent feeling that the mind is in the head.

James: *Maya* at work again. The *jiva* sees everything in reverse. In fact, the head is in the mind, and the mind is in awareness.

Terry: Of course, from the non-dual reality point of view we must conclude that that feeling, however persistent, is not real (it goes away in dream and deep sleep for instance). In duality (existent but not-real, *mithya*), the mind is “in” the subtle body, as a function of the subtle body. The mind integrates all the sense data into a coherent “picture” of dualistic reality (contingent) and it “presents” this to the “higher functions” (the intellect/ego) who, operating under the influence of the total past collection of “pictures” or impressions (*vasanas*), determine an appropriate response (i.e. appropriate to its total condition at the time).

One way I sometimes look at this is by way of analogy with a digital camera: Clearly there is an intelligent designer “behind” the device, but the intelligence with which the camera operates is all coded logic. It’s programmatic. The camera “senses” all of the objects, and it can even integrate two channels (video and sound) thanks to the programmed intelligence that is inherent in it (so you could say there is a rudimentary mind). But the camera neither sees nor hears anything. It is not conscious. This roughly corresponds to *Isvara* as the manufacturer of the gross and subtle elements (the camera body, sensors and programmed functions). But without a conscious “presence” there is no seeing or hearing here. And that conscious presence must be what is “behind” *Isvara* as well, for it couldn’t have been intelligent on its own without a source consciousness.

James: A beautiful metaphor, eloquently described.

Terry: Anyway, James, I hope you don’t mind letting me know if I’m barking up any wrong trees

here. And even if my logic is basically correct and my understanding is firming up, the unstinting persistence of dualism makes the illusion of separation so convincing that it's hard to appreciate that I would ever get to the point where the knowledge is fully assimilated, rock-solid. I'm not lost, but we both know who does get lost in *Maya* on a regular basis. ☺

James: Good barking, and only right trees, Terry. It is just a matter of conviction. You have it right. Just keep thinking along the lines indicated by the scripture. You should perhaps know that the perception of duality is eternal. It never goes. The belief that the duality you perceive is real needs to go. Mirage water remains when you know it is a mirage. *Moksa* is only a subtle understanding, a subtle vision, that leaves the world as it is. It is purely in terms of knowledge.

Terry: I hope you're keeping well, James, and all the best to Sundari too. I went ahead and purchased the video series, so I'm looking forward to that arriving soon.

James: Yes, things are quite fine here. We are enjoying ourselves very much. It is a pleasure to *satsang* with you, Terry. Just stick with the Vedanta. Listen you your *ragas* and take it easy.

~ Love, James