

Is the Object There Because the Individual Sees It? No

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Hugh: I just wanted to ask about something regarding *jivas* and God. Let's say there is an object. *Jiva* sees this object. God sees this object via *jiva*, *jiva* being a creation of God.

Shams: That's right, but let's establish that, as you know, God (*Isvara*) is not a person who sees through another person (*jiva*). *Isvara* is the Creator and the Creation. Although we say that *Isvara* is the doer, we say it because all the apparent action is just *Isvara* "happening." God doesn't act like a person, so it doesn't do any specific action, like watching an object. On the other hand, the *jiva* is neither seeing nor not seeing – the interpretation of action is just that, an idea about a doer, the identification with action. The object appears in the mind of the *jiva*, the little mind being a perspective of the mind of *Isvara*. The object depends on the big mind, not on the little one.

Hugh: All of this happens in awareness. *Jiva* doesn't see the object because it's there, but the object is there because *jiva* sees it.

Shams: That's not true. The appearance of objects depends on *Isvara*, not the *jiva*. And all of that is dependent on awareness. Making this mistake is part of superimposing *mithya* onto *satya*. In reality *jiva* is just an object in you, like any other object.

Hugh: However, maybe there is also a different *jiva* looking at the same object. I guess that I (*jiva*) and another *jiva* are looking at this object, but really we don't see it because it's there, it's there because we see it.

Shams: At the [empirical] level of the world, any object would still be there, whether a *jiva* is there to look at it or not. Because it's *Isvara*. You, your friend and a stone, the three of you appear in *Isvara*. The three of you are objects too because you are seen. We could say that you are perspectives (little ones) of *Isvara* as the Creation.

Hugh: But, this other *jiva*, other than me as a *jiva*, is known to me. That *jiva*'s there because I see it, not that I see it because it's there.

Shams: That is true only if that "you" is awareness. The other *jiva* is known to you, awareness, as the *jiva* called Hugh is also known to you. How can you be sure about it? You can look at it on your own. When you are in company of other people, anything you perceive appears in your mind. The *jiva* that you are seeing appears in your mind as a visual stimulus, then the intellect interprets it as a person. But actually, you don't perceive "the other *jiva*," i.e. you don't perceive the ego, the mind (you can't perceive other minds and, even if that were possible, any experience would still be appearing in your mind). So the person that you see is a series of stimuli

interpreted in your mind as another *jiva*. Is it there because you see it? Or do you see it because it's there? Well, the other person (as any other object) doesn't depend on your vision and totally doesn't depend on your perception. At the level of the world, it is there because of *Isvara*. So Hugh saw another person because it was there.

At the level of the self, you can say that the object "another *jiva*" appeared in you, awareness, as your own mind appeared in you. Awareness is not perception. Perception appears in awareness as an object.

Hugh: So if that other *jiva* is there because I see it, then doesn't that make that *jiva* dependent on me, and therefore not able to perceive me?

Shams: Of course, but only if you are talking as the self. As the *jiva*, that is completely untrue. You could maybe extend your inquiry into the use of the verb "to see" because actually that is only a metaphor, as the self doesn't do the action of seeing. Awareness is free of it. To see is exactly the same as any other experience. And experience is always subject-dependent. The act of seeing appears (and disappears) in you, and you are free of that. The world that apparently appears is a dynamic chart on which you apparently appear as a *jiva*, the *jiva* being just a small part of the whole object, called Creation.

Hugh: I think I've heard James say that there's only one *jiva*, yet he also sometimes says that there are many *jivas*.

Shams: Sometimes it could be confusing to call *Isvara* a *jiva*. By definition, *jivas* have bodies and egos (*jiva* means "embodied being"). But *Isvara* doesn't have a body or an ego. So to refer to *Isvara* as a *jiva* could make *Isvara* sound like a big person, which it isn't. This understood, we can also say that there is only one *jiva* because there is only one awareness appearing as many apparent *jivas*, or individuals. We could call it *Isvara* sometimes, but let's stay with the first definition of the *jiva*, which is the part that depends on *Isvara*.

Hugh: There seems to be fear of these *jivas* out there, who are capable of harming me as a *jiva*. Instead of relaxing, thinking that it's all under God's control, that I'm not a doer, I think that there are all of these dangerous *jivas* out there in the world. Even though they can't hurt me as awareness, they can hurt me as a *jiva*.

Shams: It seems that you are applying the right thinking to the question. Nothing can hurt you as awareness, but it's also true that anybody can hurt you as a *jiva*. *Moksa* will never change that. You don't look for liberation in order to become a more secure *jiva*, but to know that you are free of the *jiva*. The fear related to physical menaces to the person is an evolutionary tool that should be heeded and used in life, like any other tool, with the help of intellect. The truth is exactly as you said: (a) all is under God's control, (b) you are not a doer and (c) there are all of these dangerous *jivas* out there in the world. The fear is the way that God says to the person that it would be an unwise decision to walk into a Yakuza bar at midnight. That's part of *Isvara*'s perfect order, and you should trust in the Lord by hearing and taking action after rational fears. So then

you can relax.

If you were dominated by fear, then that would mean that *tamas* is predominant in the mind, and it would be a good idea to examine the motivations of the mind. A *sattvic* mind doesn't repress fear, but knows how to react according to *dharma* and the situation. A person that knows the self understands this and keeps looking after the *jiva*, even when he knows it to be just an object.