

The Essence of Freedom

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Seeker: I'm think I am finally beginning to understand the whole *paramatman-Isvara-jiva* relationship. So if I am correct in my understanding, *Maya*, being an eternal part or power in awareness is either manifest or unmanifest. When *Maya* becomes manifest, awareness, being always present, becomes aware of it and this association of awareness being aware of *Maya* we call *Isvara*. Correct??

Ramji: Correct. If you had said that it becomes aware of itself, you would have flunked this class. It doesn't need *Maya* to know itself. It is self-aware. Best not use the word "part," because the self is a partless whole. "Power" is more accurate.

Seeker: If so it makes perfect sense to me. In the Native tradition, *Maya* is expressed as water and *Isvara* is depicted as a water bird. A living spirit that comes from the fire "above" (*paramatman*) and enters into the water (formless/ignorance). It does so in an attempt to find dry land (the world). But the water bird fails to find dry land and instead comes up with a root (*Isvara* is the root, which is thought, the idea of creation). The turtle, seeing the root, decides to help, dives into the water and comes up with dirt on its back. From there the dirt grows and become the world, hence the term "Turtle Island." The turtle is the shell which holds the world, meaning the universe.

When you look at the night sky, it is a big dome above you. This is why it is referred to as a turtle. So essentially the shell would be space. The limbs would be the four elements which reside in the shell. And the dirt on its back is Mother Earth, which is held by the shell (space).

Anyway, it's all very beautiful and goes on and on.

I continue to see and hear non-duality expressed everywhere, even in the simple term people use everyday like "myself."

Ramji: Yes. The self, like gravity, is so much a part of our everyday experience that it is unconsciously acknowledged continuously.

Seeker: "My" – referring to the me (awareness) being in possession of a "self" (*jiva*). Once you see it, it's inescapable, isn't it?

Ramji: Yes, indeed. All Vedanta does is point out what we already know but never acknowledge.

Seeker: Also, it seems I have come full circle with my meditation practice. Before, I thought I would meditate in an attempt to add a discrete experience of God to my *jiva* and somehow

become “more” or better.

Now, realizing that *Isvara* has created this hunk of meat and all its attendant unconscious thought patterns, which manifest as habits and cause endless turmoil, I realize meditation is simply a way of redirecting *Isvara* back to myself. The ensuing effect is the temporary interruption of the unconscious thought patterns, resulting in fewer thoughts. Fewer thoughts means less compulsion to act. Less compulsion to act equals the ability to say no to myself. If I can say no to myself, then I am free. I was always free really, but now I get to experience freedom. So... back to the pillow. What a trip!

Ramji: I’m sorry I didn’t reply sooner but – same old story – fame caught up with me and I’ve been running flat-out managing the life it demands. Consequently I’ve had to let the good old boys like you who know who they are look after themselves. This is not to say that I don’t enjoy your letters. I love the story of the water bird and the turtle. And yes, when *Maya* appears it is illumined by me, awareness, and I “become” *Isvara*, the Creator of the world, without surrendering my status as the ultimate ground of being. I particularly liked the statement that *moksa* is the effortless power to say no to one’s not-self.