

# Experience Is the Biggest Joke

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Marianne:** Hi, James. I have an inquiry question – or a couple of them – things that have come up for me over the last few weeks.

For some time when I was meditating – or just thinking about who I am – I was aware of me watching silence. In one of the *satsangs* you sent me, someone mentioned the noise – a hum – and I thought, “Ah yes, I know that.” But there seemed to be a subtle confusion for me around which was what (although I understand this implies a duality)... what I mean is, that I thought that I was the silence. Then more recently I realized, no, I am the knower of the silence and the knower of the vibration also.

**James:** This is correct. The silence and the cosmic sound are objects. You are the knower.

**Marianne:** So then I was trying to “see” myself – which is almost the point that I started at 18 months ago. But of course I now have the knowledge that I am the subject, not the object – so I can’t see myself or know myself, other than just I am me and thoughts come up.

**James:** *Moksa* is knowledge “I am awareness.” There is no experiential component to it. All experience stays with the objects. So if you are trying, it means you are identified with the doer.

**Marianne:** So the silence, the thoughts and the hum are all me, but in a way I can’t use them anymore to investigate me, as it would be like trying to turn myself inside out, which isn’t possible (I hope this is making sense!).

**James:** It makes perfect sense because this is way it is. When you investigate objects they dissolve into awareness.

**Marianne:** So it is all me, but in understanding through the concepts of real (*satya*) and apparent (*mithya*), which is helpful, I am the knower of the silence, the hum, the thoughts, but the silence which is always present also seems to be *mithya* – or a quality of me which actually could be subject to change. Is this right?

**James:** No. The silence is awareness reflecting in pure *sattva*. It is not subject to change. It seems to be subject to change because the experiencing instrument, the subtle body, is subject to *rajas* and *tamas*. Pure *sattva* is *Isvara* before *rajas* and *tamas* evolve. It disappears at the end of the cosmic cycle, but is projected anew at the beginning of the next one. It is eternal.

*Moksa* is the discrimination between *satya* and *mithya* – looking at it from *jiva*’s

perspective.

**Marianne:** Or am I the knower of the silence and also the silence from which all arises?

**James:** Yes.

**Marianne:** And all else is *mithya*? (Greg Goode partly explains this in his book when he states that there is a period of detachment, or of seeing as the witness – but eventually this morphs back into what is seen, i.e. seer and seen are one but with the identity problem solved. I have always found the “self, not-self” concept helpful around this.

**James:** You are still identifying with the experiencer, Marianne. There is only one knower, everything else is an object to it. Both silences are objects. All objects are known through the subtle body. It is the instrument for knowing objects. The subtle body itself is an object.

The problem words are “morphs back.” It implies that something has to happen to the experiencing entity, the subtle body (*chidabasa*, or reflected awareness) for *moksa*. Ask yourself who would be knowing the “morphing back.” The morphing back is the object, and you, awareness, are the subject. These doubts are coming from a confusion of the self, awareness, with the witness, the experiencing entity. There is still a way to go, Marianne, until the knowledge is hard and fast. But you are getting there. The experiencing entity, Marianne, somehow is still interested in her experience. Experience itself is the object and awareness is the subject. When the knowledge is firm there is no interest in experience whatsoever. Not only are all experiences a joke, experience itself is the biggest joke. It is all a phantom. People are only interested in having a better experience, so the teachers talk about *moksa* in experiential terms, but experience has nothing to do with it. All you need to know is what is the subject and what is the object. *Drk-drksa viveka* is *moksa*.

**Marianne:** You have said that enlightenment is for the mind, in which case it is the thoughts as objects which are trying to grasp that which is unseeable. I can't turn myself inside out and use the objects (i.e. thoughts) to know the subject (i.e. me) or that which doesn't change; indeed this is the basic premise of self-inquiry – lesson one. So at some point one has to leave this and just accept “I am the me which never changes and anything else has minimal validity” – or at least it does unless I make the mistake of identifying with it. In other words I can't mediate on the self anymore, because I understand that am the self and I know things on which I can meditate – not the other way round.

**James:** Yes, one meditates because one does not know. One contemplates because one does not know. *Moksa* is the removal of ignorance, not knowledge of anything. It is not actually true that *moksa* is for the mind, because it implies that the mind is necessary for *moksa* and that the mind is conscious. *Moksa* is the nature of awareness. No mind is involved. The self, which was formerly identified with the experiencer, has seen its ignorance removed by knowledge. The mind does not

know "I am awareness." Awareness knows "I am awareness."

Vedanta is very, very tricky means of self-knowledge. It creates a bit of ignorance and then destroys it. Its methodology is called "superimposition and negation." We say that *moksa* is for the mind to help in the discrimination between the self and the mind. And in a certain sense *moksa* is for the mind, insofar as the ignorance resides in the mind. But the mind is not conscious. The self is conscious. So the knower is never the mind. The mind is only an instrument through which the self sees itself as objects. The mind is an unconscious knower of objects. It is just a reflector (*pratibimba*). So *moksa* on the level of the mind is just the removal of ignorance. The mind is not left with anything. The knowledge goes with the ignorance and the self shines alone.

**Marianne:** And finally – when I think about deep sleep – or deep meditation – it also implies perfect forgetting, or *mithya* – of this life, of my identifications and all the life-stuff that Marianne leads. The *Mandukya Upanishad*, as far as I can understand, describes this via the deep sleep state as bliss, while the waking state, as we know, is just a dream. But does that invalidate the dream?

**James:** Invalidate the dream for whom? For *jiva*, the experiencing entity? The dream is always invalid, although it appears to be valid to the *jiva*.

**Marianne:** I mean, we aren't teaching oblivion here, are we? But rather the idea of enlightenment as freedom in "life" where one can enjoy the dream but without attachment or identification. Can you clarify again for me (because I get asked this a lot)? When you say, "I am not really here – there is nothing here," – you mean that there is something, but it is just so impermanent that it is like a dream. There is nothing that can be grasped. This is important in terms of teaching because in my case I felt everything was pretty pointless when I first started to grasp the true nature of things and I got slightly despondent until I began to see the beauty and miracle of each appearance, even though it is instant and immediately gone. Nevertheless, it has some kind of reality, albeit fleeting.

**James:** It has some kind of reality if you look at it from an awakened *jiva*'s point of view. It has no reality if you look at it from the self's point of view. What is experience after all? It is just flickering images that appear to be solid. When you see a mountain on a film screen it seems to be stationary. But it is actually just a lot of still images of one object turned on and off in such rapid succession that it gives the appearance of solidity.

Is something that is apparently here actually here? The reason you got despondent is because there was still residual *rajas* in the experiencing instrument, but you hung in there, the *rajas* purified and you saw the upside of the emptiness of all things. What is seen is a dream. It is a beautiful or ugly dream depending on the nature of the mind that sees it. When "you" were despondent, were you actually despondent? No. You saw the despondency.

So this *mithya* teaching is just a teaching. It is true when ignorance is operating, but it is not true when ignorance is gone. Nonetheless, we need to give seekers hope, so we tell them that the world is lovely once you get *moksa*. And it is – but it isn't. The

loveliness is only *sattva*. For awareness there is no world. When you see a mirage, it does not mean anything – because it is a mirage. People will not do anything unless they think they are going to get something wonderful. They do – but they don't. Such is the nature of reality. Life and death, experience, means nothing to me. I shine.

~ Love, James