

Uphadis and the Knower

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John: To preface my main questions to come in this email, I'd like to state that *karma yoga*, *upasana yoga* and *jnana yoga* are in practice. I understand *sravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana*. I have a firm grasp of the teachings as they start with concepts within the perceived duality, separating the subject from the objects, discriminating *satya*, *mithya* and the Creation with cause-effect, ultimately reclaiming everything as the non-dual consciousness that is the substratum of all and negating cause-effect for non-origination. So, I am existence, consciousness, bliss.

The mind I witness is the type to dissect things to bits, it wants to understand, it wants to have the answer for all the questions. I, awareness, witness this entity. However, I'm going to speak normally, I only intend to point out that I get the purpose of all this is to realize the non-experiencing witness and firmly identify as pure awareness.

I'm going to just throw out the following and hope you can help to make sense of what I'm asking and how to answer it...

Consciousness is non-dual, therefore the non-experiencing witness of all bodies and minds are the same, not many. Since the perception of attributes that create a sense of difference and separation only involve the five sheaths (both microcosmic and macrocosmic bodies), then the witness of "my five sheaths" and the witness of "your five sheaths" must be identical, and therefore non-dual because the witness has no attributes.

Sundari: Yes, correct.

John: If I am the one non-dual consciousness, then why don't I witness the five sheaths of all *jivas*? The same non-dual consciousness witnesses all *jivas*, but I don't, so how can I be that non-dual consciousness? The only answer for this I can come up with is that I am actually the only body-mind being witnessed like this and it only seems like all these other *jiva* entities are being witnessed, but they are not. They are merely creations within me, projected out with the world like virtual reality. The dream state is accepted to be this way for the dreaming entity, but only from the perspective of the waker.

But then are you not real? Yes, your interaction with me is all *mithya* so it's not real, but are there actually all these *jivas* out there really experiencing themselves, experiencing *mithya*? The *Maya* projection I witness would be different than the projection you witness; this leads back to separation and duality. One witness can't witness multiple projections unless it is actually witnessing multiple projections, and I'm not, I'm only witnessing the projection involving one set of five sheaths. The only way to make sense of me being the one awareness is that this that I witness is the only one and all of "you" out there are not being witnessed by consciousness, it only seems that way within the projection, but because it's all a projection for me the one witness, its not real and I'm the only one. But that isn't a satisfactory answer if "you"

are also witnessing an experiencing entity like I am. Of course there's no way to know this. You say you are aware like I say I'm aware, but how can I prove that you actually are? Maybe this is just the projection confusing my mind, making it seem that there are other experiencing entities out there just like "me."

Sundari: Although there is only one eternal *jiva*, *Maya* makes it look like there are many individual *jivas* by giving sentient beings a seemingly unique *uphadi*, which is their *vasana* load, the subtle body, or personal ignorance (*avidya*). A *uphadi* is a limiting adjunct – that which makes something appear to be something other than it is. For instance, if I have a red rose behind a clear crystal, the clear crystal will appear to be red even though it is clear. Put it this way: the *uphadi* for the Self/awareness (or what we can also call perception) is the person – the individual, or self under the spell of ignorance, and it makes the Self look like it is a *jiva*. However, what belongs to the person does not belong to the Self, because the person and awareness do not exist in the same order of reality.

The Self, the subject, is what is real; and the object, the person, is what is apparently real. The definition of "real" is "that which is always present and never changes," which only applies to the Self. The perceiver only looks different in accordance with the *uphadi* in association to it; the difference belongs to the *uphadi* and not to the subject (the Self). It is just an appearance in awareness causing a sense of difference where there is no difference. *Maya* is a very clever trickster – ignorance is very intelligent. *Maya* is *Isvara's* (apparent) *uphadi*.

Your confusion is in what belongs to the person and what belongs to the Self: you think that what applies to the person also applies to the Self. As stated above, the person and the Self are not the same, because of the different *uphadis*. What belongs to the person cannot belong to the Self, because the Self is a partless whole. So the Self cannot be a *jiva*, but the *jiva* is the Self. Understand? Like the wave is the ocean but the ocean is not the wave, the pot is clay, but the clay is not the pot, the ring is gold, but gold is not a ring, that kind of thing. These are only apparent contradictions which resolve when the logic of Vedanta is applied to them.

Remember that the Self is not an experiencing entity. It is the witness of the experiencing entity. The experience of the "experiencing you" is limited by the *upadhi* through which you experience, i.e. John, therefore you only know the objects you have contact with. You cannot know what another mind is thinking or feeling except by inference. As long as you are identified with John, you are limited and bound by "his" ignorance. You are the only one with a John *upadhi*. I have a "Sundari" *upadhi* so I can't know what you are experiencing, but because my personal ignorance has been removed by Self-knowledge, I do know we are non-different because we are both the Self, which is all there is.

The two orders of reality, the real and the apparently real, duality and non-duality, are not in opposition to each other and do not contradict each other, even though duality is not real and is superimposed onto non-duality. As long as the so-called individual mind is under the spell of ignorance, it thinks it is separate and chases objects to complete itself. When ignorance is removed, although you are still limited by your *uphadi* and cannot know anyone else's thoughts because *moksa* does not confer omniscience (which only belongs to *Isvara*). You no longer see others as separate from you, because you know that the essence of all life is the Self, you. The wave dissolves into the ocean, the pot into the clay, the ring into the gold. You no longer chase objects to complete you.

Discriminating *satya* (what is real, unchanging and ever-present) from *mithya* (apparently real always changing, not always present) does NOT involve imposing *satya* onto *mithya*, which never works. It seems you may be doing this because while it is clear you have an intellectual understanding of the teachings it is not clear if assimilation has taken place, which I know I pointed out before. I said to you in our last exchange that for Self-inquiry to work, while we need a clear and functioning intellect and must apply it diligently to the all the stages of Self-inquiry, we cannot think our way to Self-actualization. Only Self-knowledge “does the work” of removing the last vestiges of ignorance. The intellect will only get us to the door of Self-Actualization but is not capable of freeing the mind from the hold duality has on it. For that, we need to learn to think differently and want different things.

John: Knowledge is that which cannot be negated, but who or what can know knowledge? Knowledge is the Self itself because the Self is the only “thing” that cannot be negated. If the Self is self-revealing, is it self-knowing but not self-knowing as an experienced object? So where or what is “the knower” of Self-knowledge? The non-dual witness cannot be the one that knows the attributes, because I only witness the knowing of attributes with one body-mind (five sheaths). Therefore something within the five sheaths is responsible for knowing the attributes; is this the intellect? But even if the intellect is what knows, I witness that knowing, but I only witness that knowing for one intellect. Unless, as previously stated, this is the only five sheaths being witnessed by consciousness.

I get the idea of reflected consciousness, like one sun reflecting off many puddles. But it doesn't settle the questions. Non-dual consciousness shines the light of awareness on one projection (*Maya*). Within this projection are various names and forms (all consciousness as the substratum). Some of these forms are such that they are a reflecting medium for consciousness. This reflection illumines objects within the projection and creates the foundation for an experiencing entity to form. The experiencing entity takes the projection to be real and acts accordingly to what arises. Taking the projection to be real equals *samsara*, and knowing the projection to be a mirage is *moksa*. This circles back to my questions. What knows the projection to be a mirage? Are there multiple equivalent experiencing entities? If there are multiple entities, but only one witness, why doesn't the witness witness all the experiencing entities? Does the reflection equal that which arises as an object in consciousness or is it more than that? Is the reflection a witness to the experiencing entity or the reflection is the experiencing entity? If I negate the five sheaths as *mithya* and take a stand as awareness, is this the reflection “I am” or the pure original consciousness? And who or what knows the attributes that give rise to the perception of difference and separation? Is the knower of *Maya* different than the knower of Self-knowledge?

Sundari: Both known and unknown do not apply to the Self, because it is not a knower. How can it be if there is only itself? What's to know? The *jiva* is not a knower either, because it is not conscious; it is an inert object. Yet with the light of consciousness shining on the mind knowing happens. *Isvara* is the only knower. Knowing is not possible without the presence of awareness.

Here is how knowing works:

1. Pure awareness does not know anything, because it does not modify to knowledge/experience, and there is nothing for it to know, because it sees only

itself.

2. When *Maya* appears, *prakriti*, the subtlest form of matter and what the Creation is created from, appears “simultaneously” when *Maya* appears, before the *gunas* emerge. *Prakriti* is reflected awareness and also does not know anything, because it is not modified by the *gunas*.

3. When the *gunas* arise, *Isvara*, pure awareness operating *Maya* in the “role” of the Creator, knows the world – the reflected medium – because *Isvara* is conscious. With the appearance of *Maya* there is something to be conscious of – an apparent Creation, the reflected medium.

4. The reflected medium is the field of existence in which the *jiva* perceives and experiences. The field and the *jiva* seem conscious because the light of consciousness shines on them. We can infer that the field is intelligent and must have an intelligent Creator because we know that we are conscious, and the field is intelligently designed. Consciousness makes everything possible, everything depends on it, but it is unaffected by everything. It is all very subtle, I know, and hard to grasp.

It sounds like you are doing your best to “do things by the book.” But understanding exactly who is the knower and the known is tricky because it is so subtle. The split mind watching itself has a slippery tendency to claim to be awareness as the ego, not as the Self.

John: As you can see, lots of confusion above. I am not confused, I am aware of the confusion, but that also doesn’t answer the questions.

Sundari: I beg to differ, John; you are confused and it’s the ego claiming not to be confused. If you were really not confused, you would not be writing this confused email.

~ Love, Sundari