

Not Meant to Be

Ram (James Swartz)

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Theo: Hi, Ram. I guess your closing words, “Love, Ram,” equates to the sound of a bell at the end of round two, so my words, “Hi, Ram,” must be the sound of a bell announcing round three. So be it. I’m enjoying this passing back and forth of a magic football immensely.

Jumping around, and in no particular order by just trying to stay in my own here and now, I particularly liked your use of and referral to friendship, “*sakya bhava*.” It calls to mind memories of my own teacher saying to the whole group from time to time, “I’m not at all lonely, but I’m lacking spiritual companionship.” This simple yet eloquent statement was always followed by a deafening roar of utter silence from the circle of eager devotees, including myself. Perhaps I had a good excuse, as I had largely chosen the role of witness, had a lot more on my mind than just Vedanta and knew I’d be moving on someday soon, but all the others? Anyway, some regrets here that one of life’s greatest gifts was once offered but not fully understood, and thereby turned down. But a lesson learned, and I hereby graciously accept your offer of *sakya bhava*, Ram. I notice that the same word, friendship, was mentioned by you as being the best possible basis for any relationship to another, even when romance is also in the air. I at least half-learned that lesson decades ago, and therefore couldn’t agree more.

Ram: Self-inquiry is the application of self-knowledge to your mind/life. It is a practical, earthly thing. So you have to be yourself, not a caricature of a devotee. You should have a straightforward relationship with someone who knows.

Theo: Yes, I understand what you mean by not having followers, and that is most commendable. My teacher once told me to never allow myself to become attached to another. She also said I should never allow another to become attached to me. The first case is manageable, if not just plain difficult. The second case is beyond one’s own control once it happens. Can’t think of anything more detrimental to one’s spiritual path than that.

Ram: From whose point of view? From the point of view of the one who is attached to you? Many people try to attach themselves to me, but I don’t accept it and they let it go. Then it is possible for them to be real.

Theo: Like yourself, I don’t argue and I often define Vedanta as being that which cannot be argued about.

Ram: That’s right. Either you get it or you don’t.

Theo: But healthy and vigorous discussions and discourses are central to achieving a better understanding of Vedanta, and are in fact a central part of the Vedantic

tradition.

Ram: Yes. Erroneous notions need to be inquired into and dismissed. But Vedanta is really not about anything other than the nature of the self about which there is actually no discussion, because scripture is clear about it.

Theo: Up until a few weeks ago I generally viewed Vedanta as a philosophy, or perhaps more specifically a very philosophical religion, as that was how it was largely taught to me. (*Bhakti* again.) I'm impressed that you could pick that up so quickly. I guess I never chose to view it as a prescription for enlightenment, as enlightenment has never actually ever been on my agenda, although throughout large portions of my life it would seem that I was taking all the necessary, and a few unnecessary, steps in that direction.

Ram: It is strange that you are writing to me, because I am a one-trick enlightenment-pony. Vedanta is not a "prescription" except in the sense that it prescribes inquiry because the problem is knowledge. I think that it is true that you have been preparing yourself for it without actually knowing that is what you were doing. I can tell from your provenance and the way you use words.

Theo: Also, illumined, which also implies degree rather than enlightenment, was the word most commonly used, as enlightenment was a term mostly used in reference to the Buddha. That said, I don't entirely agree or disagree with your definition of enlightenment, but that issue/non-issue will likely come out sometime later anyway.

James: I hope it comes out sooner because I am not exactly sure what you want. Everyone in my life is there for enlightenment.

Theo: Also, your view on evolution and Vedanta does not, at present, wash with me at all, but I'd like to give it further thought for now.

Ram: That's okay with me. What it says to me is that you believe that you are evolving. If that is what you believe, then how can I help? Because what I am saying is that you do not evolve. True, your body and mind change, but are they going anywhere? It is my view that there is one self, that it is eternal and that what evolves is not real. Yes, it seems as if you are growing, changing and maybe even moving toward some goal. But is this true? Is the goal something unaccomplished or is it already accomplished? I am not trying to be difficult, Theo.

Theo: Yes, Ram, you do give me good reason to think, so the process is working. I'm still not up to date on all the matters you have mentioned, but I did start reading your biography a week or two ago and am about halfway through.

Ram: Good. Be sure to note the conclusion I came to about mystic experience. Once you have finished it, please carefully read *How to Attain Enlightenment*, particularly Chapter II - as I believe I mentioned before. Whether we can move forward in our

relationship depends on whether or not you can assimilate the import of that chapter.

Theo: So, on to the meat of the matter. As to the question of who I am, I have trained myself to operate with no less than five different answers to that otherwise eminently simple and straightforward question. This is because I view all perceptions of reality as just different levels of consciousness. These five levels of course simply correspond to the old earth, water, fire, air and ether (space) concepts. I'm obviously very body-conscious when I'm experiencing any of the usual, normal body functions taking place, including work. This I attempt to do by just being here, now, in the body, a spirit just having one more (human) body experience. I generally experience no difficulties here unless the experience is either overly boring or painful. When life's circumstances demand a more emotional response, I try to identify with the most appropriate emotion for that situation. This is sometimes rather difficult for me to do, but not so much so for many others, I have noticed. Compassion seems to be the most appropriate emotion for most situations, so I'm working on getting more in touch with that one. When the intellect is called forth by life's circumstances, then it's quite natural for me to operate from that center by simply identifying with the thinking process. I can of course always call forth the intellect on my own when it's time to read or learn or I can turn the usual outgoing process inward instead through mindfully focusing on self-inquiry, in which case I am the inquirer. When it's outgoing, I am the thinker. Notice how the intellect is exactly in the middle of the five different stages of consciousness? That's why it's the key to understanding all the other states. Next, by taking half a breath or two (air) and closing my eyes, I've easily transcended the other three states, although sometimes the intellect likes to hang around a while in all its various guises. Here my identity is mostly with my higher self, as opposed to my lower self, but both of these selves are still under the spell of the ego. A thoroughly ripe ego will have a remarkably similar resemblance to the *atman*, but it will never become the *atman*, as it is of another much grosser order. In this state of consciousness I identify with the ego as witness, not that other, not so well-known witness, the *atman*. Incidentally, it was this stage I was in when the dome broke through the surface of the dried-up salt sea, as previously shared with you (the proof that I wasn't in the *atman* as witness stage?).

James: You can't be "in" the *atman*, Theo. You are the *atman*. This is what Vedanta says. If reality is a duality there can be a higher and a lower self and there can be someone who can be "in" the witness or who can identify with the *atman*. Being the *atman* only means that you are whole and complete, pure and perfect as you are. Nothing can be done about it except to appreciate it. My job is to help people appreciate it.

Theo: I got scared! Genuine fear, and thought, "There's no way I'm just going to just sit here and watch that rising dome burst right through the top of my (ego's) skull." That's what stopped it halfway, and nothing else, but who knows?

James: What do you think you prevented from happening by identifying with that fear?

It would have gone all the way, and then what? It would have just been another wonderful epiphany and then the experience would end. The one who watched the

fear, who saw it go halfway and who is now reading these words is the *atman*. It is not affected by any experience, spiritual or otherwise. I know this is probably impossible for you to assimilate now, because it seems from reading your letter that you are identified with the experiencing entity.

Theo: It might have stopped on its own anyway, and I was just given an apparently much-needed lesson in fear management as an added extra. So then the final and fifth stage of identity could of course only be with the *atman*, the ultimate witness. What the *atman* gets to witness is the reflection of its self in the underlying sea of consciousness, whose restless waves must first be completely stilled through the single-minded practice of the four *yogas* for true reflection to occur. If and when the *atman* can no longer see itself clearly in the underlying consciousness because of renewed turbulence of desire waves, then identification is instead made with other more appropriate levels of consciousness. Notice how dried-up salty oceans don't reflect the shining self above? What's going on here, Ram? I can't find any explanations in any books!

James: Jeez, Theo. This whole five-identities idea is just too much for me to grok. You are very close to understanding, but you are a million miles away at the same time if you are seeking *moksa*. I can't get into the details here. Just read the book *How To Attain Enlightenment* and we will see if we can proceed.

Theo: My take on experience versus knowledge: knowledge is of a higher order than experience, as well as also being of a higher order than love itself. Experience always implies a doer, something done and the act of doing. After an experience is properly assimilated into the mind through the cognitive process, one is said to have knowledge of that experience. Experiences can either be inner or outer, generally seen as being spiritual or worldly. They basically "shape" the brain, the hardware. Knowledge is more subtle, almost like energy or software. To me, experience is the dots, knowledge is the lines (wires) that connect them. For the organic brain to grow and evolve, it must have new and more experience, the dots. New dots call forth new lines to properly understand and eventually integrate the new dots into the rest of the known grey matter. The average human probably does not need many more dots. Both quicker and better results could most likely be attained by merely rearranging the lines connecting the dots that are already there. The problem is not the limited number of dots but rather the unwise and hopelessly inefficient construction of connecting lines. The workings of *maya*?

I believe that inner experiences are both very important and necessary for most spiritual seekers to have. For some, more spiritual dots seem to be necessary for further progress. The problem is getting the correct assimilation of the experience through the ensuing construction of the appropriate lines. This is where a qualified teacher comes in. Do you know of any?

James: I am sorry but I don't.

~ Love, Ram

Theo and I had one more stab at communicating, and called it quits.