

Not on the Same Page

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Theo: Hi, Ram. Thanks for the quick reply! We don't seem to be on quite the same page here, but that is quite okay with me, for now.

James: I agree. We are not on exactly the same page. What do you think are the differences? It seems to me that we have somewhat different views on the "who am I?" issue. These differences pop up here and there throughout this email, and I have highlighted them with comments throughout. It is natural that strangers will have different views and it is fine with me. My only concern is that if our views are quite different and either of us is attached to them, that I will not be able to help you. I want you to know that in general the views I express assume that you are writing to get help on the identity issue, i.e. the *moksa* issue. All my comments are related to it and are in harmony with the teaching of traditional Vedanta. I noticed that you were influenced by Vivekananda and that the beginnings of our spiritual paths were very similar. You should know that while the tradition has great respect for Swami Vivekananda as an important figure in the revival of Hinduism and the education of the West about Vedanta, it has certain well-reasoned criticisms of some of his ideas, particularly the multi-path confusion.

Theo: I fully realize the difficulties involved. You of course don't know me from Adam, but I know "you" to the same degree that I understand what you are saying. That degree is approximately 100% so far. I noticed that you have mentioned that fellow seekers should include a little bio info, and that is so far missing from my side.

Ram: Yes, it is helpful. I would have written a slightly different letter had I known more about you. But at the end I mentioned that if my assumptions were wrong my comments should have been disregarded.

Theo: Also, I fully realize that you have been involved with this work for quite some time and likely have many followers evolving right along side you.

Ram: I don't have any followers, Theo. I am not a leader. I am dead set against this kind of thinking. In Vedanta the communication is *sakya bhava*, friendship, as modeled in the *Gita* by Krishna and Arjuna. Krishna, if you will recall, drives Arjuna's chariot and takes orders from him in battle. I have friends. My thinking is firmly non-dual and the leader/follower idea is very dualistic and unhelpful for delivering the non-dual message.

Also, Vedanta has no truck with evolution. It is not a helpful idea, because it puts undue emphasis on the idea that the *jiva*, the embodied idea, is a doer, someone moving toward a goal. Vedanta says that you are the goal and you cannot evolve toward it. You can only understand who you are. Thinking in these terms is directly related to the purity issue, which is a slippery slope. But if you take the apparent reality to be the reality and see yourself as a doer of *sadhana* - which is not the kiss

of death and has a certain validity – then evolution is real – for you.

Theo: Obviously you have achieved a higher level of awareness than some time before, which is then consolidated into your latest book.

Ram: With reference to what I just said above, I would not characterize it that way, Theo. I have become a better writer over the years, however. The import of both books is the same. For me there are no higher or lower levels of awareness. My vision is non-dual. I can't say that I have evolved at all. But I understand what you mean on the relative level and appreciate the compliment.

Theo: So you have moved onward, and thereby suggest that we others do so too by simply hopping on board the same train by reading your book and getting up to date.

Ram: Again, the only movement I have experienced over the years since is in my ability to communicate. There has been no change in me or in my experience in forty years.

Theo: I'm still back at the beginning of this process somewhere, as the new kid on YOUR block, but as you will soon see, I'm not at all the new kid on THE block.

Ram: Well, I don't think I have any block. I teach traditional Vedanta, which is an impersonal means of self-knowledge. The only thing that belongs to "me" is the way I express the teachings. None of the teachings, however, are mine. "Me and you, us and them," are not really very helpful ideas, although they enjoy a standing in the world. My view is that you are me and I am you and that any differences are purely the consequence of a misunderstanding.

Theo: And your block is obviously only a tiny subsector of the whole block. This very tiny "issue" will very easily get worked out, just by passing the football back and forth a few times.

Ram: I am not sure that it will, but we can try if you like. I say this because I think there is only one block and it is not "mine." It is good that you are willing to work out the "issue." I hope you are not particularly attached to your views. And the bad news is that you will not be arguing with me – I don't argue – you will be arguing with Vedanta, the vision of non-duality, which is not "mine." It is just the way things are.

Theo: We just have to get to know each other a little better, and that requires a certain amount of time and effort put in on both ends. Let's just call it round one, and move on to round two.

Ram: Okay.

Theo: A couple of loose items... Bhagavan Das is not my *guru*. I merely happened to recently see a video of him over at YouTube where I hang out a lot. He happened to be doing some traditional spiritual multitasking with a Tibetan prayer wheel and some beads while he was talking, and happened to mention that his *guru* recommended it. I then happened to stumble upon *The Hanuman Chalisa* shortly after. Upon viewing it a few times in rapid succession, I became bored with reading those incomprehensible lyrics and zapped back to ShiningWorld to continue reading something I could more easily understand. I continued to listen though, as the music was very enjoyable to my ears and it was also making my heart *chakra* all warm and expanded. To my surprise I soon realized that I could read and absorb your words at a faster and faster pace and that something slightly miraculous was taking place. I had merely blundered my way into something previously unknown to me, which I now call spiritual multitasking.

The way it seems to work is that the undivided mind apparently cannot process two or more different streams of ingoing information at the same time. But instead of shutting down in protest, it simply directs one stream down to the unconscious, and keeps focused on the other in the conscious. Through the power of the will the "I" can then force the mind to do its bidding and continually switch the streams back and forth, but at times the mind is stronger than the will and tries to switch them back instead. It's a classic power struggle. When your words get forced down to my unconscious, they then start to heal all the damage caused by the influence of *bhakti yoga* with all its curious concepts of duality. As I have been steeped in Vedanta for many decades, your words are not at all new to me, they are merely better and more clearly expressed than any one else's. I came to all the same conclusions way back when but was unable to get the human confirmation that I apparently so desperately needed from a significant other at that time. So my true spiritual conviction wavered and I paid the price in pain, hence the present healing. So in summation, this practice is merely the most effective means I know of to repair some age-old spiritual damage that is presently manifesting itself as pain in the subconscious. That this practice actually works for me can be seen by the subsequent epiphany. It will continue as long as it is beneficial to me.

Ram: I am glad that it works. Keep it up.

Theo: My teacher wisely directed me to read Shankara, Patanjali and Ramana, but unfortunately I was also reading everything else under the sun at the same time, so no 100% understanding ever occurred.

Ram: Yes, that is understandable. It is better to stick with one teaching. Each teacher uses words differently, and if you don't know who you are - and you wouldn't be reading if you did - you will inevitably misunderstand the meaning of the words and become confused. It is best to be directly taught because the teacher can make sure that you understand the words the way they are meant to be understood. He or she will prevent you from interpreting them according to your beliefs and opinions.

Theo: But I believe that I have learned and absorbed about 75-90% of what Vedanta had to offer. That should be enough for now, so I'm going to fast-forward to my

present state of mind so that you can better understand the context of this unusual epiphany.

Ram: I think you perhaps believe that Vedanta is a philosophy. The subject matter of Vedanta is just you, the self. And since it is whole, complete and non-dual, you cannot actually understand a fraction of it. You either get it that you are the self – or not. If you think Vedanta is a school of thought or a philosophy you might understand some parts of it and not other parts. But actually Vedanta is a *pramana*, a means of self-knowledge. It is just a number of *prakriyas*, inquiries, all of which are meant to reveal one truth, to wit: you are whole and complete, non-dual, actionless, ever-present, ordinary, experienceless awareness. So there are no percentages involved.

Theo: On the everyday 2-D screen of my mind, I'm presently experiencing the descent of light, which comes and goes but usually only covers about 10-20% of the upper portion. This started for the first time a few months ago. Useless thoughts rise up and get disintegrated by the light, that's all. On that same screen is a window where my teacher appears in a very different 3-D format, where she manifests as a living, breathing entity blinking her eyes and talking. Very cool, not at all unlike the main archetype area located somewhere much deeper down. I have access there, but don't use it much these days. Used to go there a lot when I was doing a lot of family-recovery type work. It's where you can see how the layers of the onion of your personality got formed in childhood and beyond. It's not Vedanta, but it's important to be able to see and understand the quality of light there and the very 3-D stage-like scenes. Unstable people sometimes end up there and think they are talking to God, but they ain't.

Of greater interest is the much larger horizontal screen seemingly lying at about eye-level. This of course is like the ocean, but in my case the ocean seems to have been dried out. It's eerie because the waves are still there, like ghosts of themselves, but there ain't much movement or power in them. The water is gone, but the salt remains. As this is the hotbed of *rajas*, it's multicolored, but the dominant color is red. It is through this state of mind that the dome broke through, not the more usual very restless, stormy and uncontrollable ocean. So how did the ocean become a desert?

Well, in high school I used to play football, despite my small stature, and in the line no less. The coaches told us it was all about desire, attitude and discipline, and I was about the only one who really got the message. Because of my size, I had to. Soon I realized it was also a mental game, and all you really had to do was to make up your mind when no one else did. Then I became unstoppable. Among a few other reasons, one day I found out that if you hit hard enough, your whole nervous system lights up in an electric light blue light. It's kind of like an orgasm, just a whole lot better, and I got addicted to it. But damage occurred, and today I can have up to six pinched nerves at a time. Ouch! I also have a very serious case of celiac disease, which can cause intense pain in the solar plexus when it's out of control. And I have had some serious liver complications as a side effect when undigested food starts entering the body directly and clogging up the liver. All three of these waves then broke around the same time about seven years ago, and I've mostly been living in a tunnel of pain since. I'll spare you all the details, but the essential is that life just ain't worth living when the pain is that great.

Ram: I am sorry to hear that. It is quite a shame that ours is such an aggressive culture. I had similar experiences from fist-fighting, but quickly gave it up when a fellow hit me in the face with a baseball bat. I got a very nice *samadhi* out of it, but the downside was more than I bargained for and decided that if I wanted to compete I would be better served by developing some smarts.

Theo: The result has been a lot of out-of-body type experiences and some kind of unconscious surrender to it all. I don't really know how it happened, but most of my worldly and, yes, even my spiritual desires just plain dried up, and that's how a once mighty ocean became an empty salt desert. The intense pain has been subsiding for some time now, and this leads to increasing spiritual efforts, but to be honest, I really don't do much. I apparently don't need to. The stage is already set. I only have to witness the unfolding events.

Ram: I should think that remaining as a witness would appeal to you, considering what you have been through.

Theo: My take on this recent epiphany? Looks to me like the *kundalini* is rising, but I didn't want to plant that idea in your brain.

Ram: No need to plant it, Theo, it was already in my mind. I'm a bit of an expert on it. But so what? It will rise and it will fall. It is a very fickle energy, not to be counted on.

Theo: But I'm surprised you didn't mention this possibility. You have lots of connections, Ram. How about a second opinion? You also said that you've had some similar experiences. Care to share? It might help me a lot to hear of the experiences of another.

Ram: You can read the account of my *sadhana* at my website. It is on the books page. It is called *Mystic by Default*. It has more *kundalini* than you can shake a stick at. Be sure to note my conclusions about *kundalini* and epiphanies toward the end. There is also an article at my website about it and several *satsangs* in the spiritual experience section.

Theo: I hadn't previously even noticed that you had a section on such matters at e-*satsang*, as this is not my usual area of interest. But I'll do my homework. Also, I'm wondering what you think the essential difference is between Buddhism and Vedanta. I have a close friend who is a Buddhist who might need some help in these matters.

Ram: Buddhism is a chip off the tooth of the *Vedas*. It is a heterodox Vedic system and loses a lot in translation. There are a few e-*satsangs* on the topic at the website. I get so many emails on most of these topics every month that I can't replicate them over and over for each person, so I have posted them all at the website. There are over 1,500 pages of them on various topics. Please read my book and the e-*satsangs*

and the things I recommend in this email.

All due respect, Theo, but I think we are in the same stadium wearing the same uniforms, but playing slightly different games. Since you did not refer to the distinction between knowledge and experience that was the import of my last email, I think it would take a lot of work to get you to appreciate where I am actually coming from. I have no intention of upsetting anyone and I never argue. So if you take a more disciplined approach to the Vedanta as I express it, I am sure you will figure out what I am actually saying and then perhaps we can have a nice chat. People almost invariably contact me for one reason and one reason alone, although it is not always known clearly to them at the time. I think that the problem is related to your view of the nature of *moksa* and the means to attain it. You are a smart guy, so you should have no problem getting the gist if you carefully read the first two chapters of my book *How to Attain Enlightenment*, as I mentioned in my last email. Read it like you would an academic text, although it is far from that, with an eye to understanding. Discount any experiences that it may trigger.

~ Love, Ram