

Reincarnation and Reflected Awareness

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George: Actually, there is one area I would like to talk to you about but I will sit pat till I have finished reading your book... It has to do with the thing you said in Spain about me living someone else's *karmic* leftovers... Coming to grips with the fact that there is no "George" soul or little bundle of objective energy with "George" in it is the thing I want to ask about... I am not hung up on "George," I just want to understand a little more...

It seems there is a not-too-subtle message in non-Vedantic spiritual teachings that there is a soul and it is a "George" soul, and it has a *karmic* account, so I must have a "George" account somewhere? From Vedanta's point of view I would like to understand what happens when the object "George" dies. Do I come back as another object *jiva*, a "Bruce" or "Susan" living out someone else's *karmic* leftovers? What about my *karmic* leftovers?

James: There is only a "George" soul when you are thinking of a George soul. Most of the day you have other thoughts occupying your mind: shopping, watching videos, serving at the BK Ashram, etc. This "George" thought - to which you have given much attention over the years - is not real in the sense that it only exists sporadically. But when it is there in your awareness, you believe that it refers to "you." Insofar as you take the George thought to be you, there is George *karma*. We say that George is apparently real. He exists but he is not permanent. You can't be George because you are aware of George. He is an object known to you. Insofar as you exist as George there is a *karmic* account in the causal body. It is managed by *Isvara*, just as the bank manages George's account. When the George object dies, that's it for the present George. But the *karma* created by the George person continues and at some point it starts motivating a new George. But this new George is not the same George as the previous one because the old George's *karma* is working out in a different time and in different circumstances. It is a new George. Even if it is the same old George it doesn't mean anything because *Isvara* cuts the memory cord when it delivers the old George's *karma* to the next life.

George: When the *jiva* dies as a droplet of water it falls back into the ocean. As a "George" droplet of water I drop back into the ocean of awareness... seems the hard sell is as objects there is no soul, no *karma*, no *karmic* leftovers... no "George" anything... I am just awareness and once the "George" experiential *jiva*, reflected awareness, dies... end of game. I am eternal but as awareness... the ultimate zero-sum game, as you say.

James: There is no *karmic* leftover if the *jiva* droplet has realized that it is awareness, but if it hasn't it is subject to reincarnation as described above.

George: My question relates to souls, *jivas*. *Karma*, *karmic* leftovers, accepting as awareness I am eternal, but as awareness the subject only, what is awareness for "me" as awareness once George is not an object? Do I have the awareness of

awareness I have now?

James: Yes, you have the same awareness. "Have" is not the right word, actually. You are the same awareness you are now. If you say "have" the answer is no because you are the one that "has" the awareness, not the awareness you have, i.e. the reflected awareness, the subtle body. The problem with your statement is revealed by the word "once." You are the same awareness before, during and after any event. Your statement implies that you will be a different awareness when George is not an object. Actually, George is always an object known to you. Or if the word "George" refers to you, the subject, then George is never an object, even when the George thought appears in you. The problem here is a confusion between reflected awareness (the moon) and you, pure awareness (the sun). It is very difficult to distinguish a reflection from the surface on which it reflects, a mirror, for example. The reflection is not the same as the mirror but it does not stand apart from the mirror either so it is easy to confuse the mirror and the reflection. You can only do so when you think about the relationship between the reflection and the mirror. Similarly, you can only separate you from George when you think about it because you and George seem to be non-separate. You are separate from George but George is not separate from you, just as the moon's light is not different from the sun's light. It is the same light reflected. So George is awareness, but awareness is not George. When you understand this you are free of George, yet you get to enjoy George. It is a win-win.

George: Is it that we are all only awareness and we need to get over hanging onto anything else?

James: Yes.

George: What about *Isvara* and the *gunas* he used to create me as a *jiva*? *Isvara* gave it his best shot on the day... zero-sum game for *Isvara* too?

James: *Isvara* just keeps recycling the *gunas*. Yes, zero-sum game for *Isvara* too. In fact, *Isvara* invented the zero-sum game.

George: I risk any semblance of credibility writing this maybe... still, I am happy to do so with you. I do not even know how to ask the question, it would appear. I will give it more thought as I read your book then come back with hopefully a more straightforward question.

James: It was a thoughtful question, George. It is the essence of a *jiva*'s ignorance. Everyone has this doubt because *maya* creates the idea the sun and a reflection. And unless the intellect is subtle and has been taught, it is always difficult to separate you awareness from George-awareness.

George: Now the afternoon sun has passed... the book and the chair have less life... as does the room... and the village in the distance... the day is closing...

I'll get back to you once I have read the book... hopefully, with a little more clarity.

Thanks, James. Forgive me creeping up on this.... I have enjoyed writing to you... best let this one go through to the keeper for now.

James: You are welcome, George.