

# The Subject-Object Split

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**Jacob:** Hi, Sundari, health, love and blessings to you and Ramji!!!

I must testify again that Vedanta as taught by Ramji is an excellent and fast path to *moksa*. Knowing that the subtle body is just a computer and having burning desire for *moksa* (and loving Vedanta), I transferred all *satsangs* (Vedanta set, *Panchadasi* and online resources) to my phone and I listened to it non-stop for the past six months through headphones 24/7, including while sleeping (subconscious learning), whenever it is safe and my attention is not required in *maya*. Smart, eh? 😊

**Sundari:** Way to go! You are indeed a smart man. Thank you for your kind feedback, much appreciated!

**Jacob:** I have a question about location of objects “exercise.” When Ramji says that objects are in me and made of awareness, should it be seen from the macrocosmic perspective (that everything is pure awareness, I am pure awareness, so all physical objects are made of me and are in me) or from the microcosmic perspective?

**Sundari:** As you probably know, Vedanta is a kind of set-up in that it uses non-dual teaching methods to destroy the notion of duality. The whole point of the location of objects teaching is (1) to see objects (the *jiva*) and *Isvara* (the macrocosmic mind, or *dharma* field) from the perspective of the *jiva*; (2) to see the *jiva* from the perspective of *Isvara*; (3) to see *jiva* and *Isvara* from the perspective of awareness. In order to understand this, one must understand the identity between (1) *paramatman*, or pure awareness; (2) awareness plus *maya*, or *Isvara*; and (3) the *jiva*. This is where all the teaching in Vedanta takes place and where most people get stuck, or rather, unstuck. It is one thing to know that you are awareness but how does this translate into the life of the person? As we know, we cannot do away with the person or the world they inhabit; to be free of it we need to understand the nature of objects, the nature of the field and how that relates to you as awareness, which is the thrust of your inquiry.

There is only one awareness out of which everything arises and depends upon but awareness is always free of the objects. Think of water: it is always free of the ocean and the wave but the wave and the ocean depend on water to exist.

Even though the subject (awareness) and the object (*jiva* or world of objects/*Isvara*) share the same identity as awareness, this does not mean that these two orders of reality are the same. This is because we have to take *maya* into account.

## The Cause and Effect Teaching

Awareness is *adjata*, unborn. Vedanta is the path of the unborn because it reveals that although there appears to be a creation, nothing ever really happened, from awareness’s point of view. All objects are made up of awareness and dissolve back into awareness in that they appear in the mind and the mind appears in

awareness. The mind (subtle body), like all objects, is an object known to you, awareness. The thoughts that appear in the mind belong to the *gunas: Isvara*.

The apparent reality (*mithya*) is a union of *paraprakiti*, or higher reality (meaning *Isvara*), and *aparaprakiti (jiva)*, lower reality. Their common identity is *uparaprakriti: awareness*. Awareness is the both the intelligent cause, that which shapes the materials into form (without ever losing or modifying its own nature), and the material substance, meaning the effect from which the forms are created, like the spider's web emerges from the spider and is made up of the spider. As consciousness is non-dual, there is no real world. When *maya* appears, awareness plus the *gunas* becomes *Isvara*, the Creator. *Isvara* is the name for all forms, not for a particular form.

*Maya* is made up of the *gunas: rajas, tamas* and *sattva*. *Rajas* is the energy of action, projection, desire. *Tamas* is the dense energy of matter, concealment and denial. *Sattva* is the natural state of the mind, the energy of revelation, clarity and peace. When *rajas* and *tamas* arise in the mind, *sattva* is obscured and *maya*, or ignorance, reigns. The effect of *maya* is *samsara*, an apparent reality, the belief in duality, aka ignorance.

*Isvara* is not a doer, a *samsari*. From the *jiva's* point of view *Isvara* is unlimited and the *jiva* is limited. From awareness's point of view both *Isvara* and *jiva* are limited. Even though *Isvara* is omniscient relative to the *jiva* (because only *Isvara* has knowledge of all objects) *Isvara*, like the *jiva*, depends on awareness to exist. Although *Isvara* is not conditioned by *maya* and is conscious and the *jiva* is conditioned by *maya* and is not conscious, both *Isvara* and the *jiva* are reflected awareness and make up the apparent reality. Therefore neither *Isvara* nor the *jiva* are real, "real" being defined as "that which is permanent." *Maya*, the power to delude (ignorance), is a power that exists in awareness so although its appearance gives rise to the apparent reality *maya* is neither real nor unreal. *Maya* creates the categories of real and unreal. Without *maya* there is no creation, no *jiva* and no *Isvara*. It is very important to remember that *maya* only covers a very small portion of awareness because awareness cannot be covered. Awareness is that which knows *maya*, the apparent covering.

Awareness does not create but *maya* creates the apparent duality with apparent doers, *jivas* being the small doers and *Isvara* being the big doer. Once *maya* is transcended, i.e. non-duality and duality understood, ignorance falls away and only awareness remains.

**Jacob:** Objects are made out of the mind or in the subtle body. This teaching got me confused because it almost looks like there are two kinds of objects - a tree as pure awareness "out there" independent of the subtle body - and a tree as an image in a subtle body, made out of the subtle body.

**Sundari:** Objects are made out of mind-stuff (*chitta*), and *chitta* is made out of awareness (*chit*), so you are right. Objects appear in the mind (subtle body) which seems to think and feel but the mind, like all objects, only exists because the light of awareness shines on it. The mind is inert and has no value in and of itself. *Moksa* is discriminating awareness from the objects that arise; they should not be confused. To do this you need to understand the nature of objects (*jiva/the world*) and the nature of the field (*Isvara*).

If you take yourself to be the person and your reference point is the body, then any object (like a tree) will seem to exist outside of you. If you know that you are awareness, you still perceive the object (outside of you) – take a tree, for example – which appears as a thought in the *chitta* as tree-knowledge.

Knowledge of objects is always true to the object and not the subject. You will not see a rock if you are looking at a tree. However, as awareness you will know that the tree has no independent existence outside of you. This does not mean that the tree stops being a tree; it has an apparent existence just like your body does but you know that the tree is no more real than the body or any object, for that matter.

Self-knowledge is always true because it is true to the self which never changes, meaning it cannot be dismissed or negated by any other knowledge. It is different from knowledge of objects. To repeat, knowledge is object-based, not subject-based. It is not knowledge unless it is true to the object. If it is my knowledge then it is my interpretation of an object, which is not necessarily knowledge. Ignorance (or my point of view) causes me to see or experience objects as though they are actually there. People believe that ignorance is knowledge because they believe that what they experience is knowledge. It may be knowledge but it may not be.

Self-knowledge depends on the nature of the self, not on knowledge gained through personal experience. On the basis of self-knowledge the individual can retain or reject the knowledge gained through his or her personal experience.

The very fact that you know something means it is an object. Awareness is the subject and the one that knows the object. Without awareness no knowledge can take place; without awareness no objects (which include knowledge and ignorance) exist. Awareness is not an object of knowledge and cannot be known by the mind, which is an object known to it. Awareness can only be revealed in a *sattvic* mind with the removal of ignorance through exposing the mind to the teachings of self-knowledge (Vedanta).

*Maya* encompasses *jiva's* personal creation, or story (*jiva srsti*), and *Isvara's* impersonal creation, *maya*. *Isvara* and *jiva* appear to be different when ignorance rules the mind but both the *jiva* and *Isvara* have a common identity as awareness. *Isvara* creates, sustains and destroys the whole universe.

Although *Isvara* appears as individual subtle bodies, there is really only one subtle body, and we all share it. The world we see with our senses and the senses with which we see it are *Isvara's* creation. Within *Isvara's* creation are innumerable *jivas*: plants, animals, humans, insects, etc. *Jivas* are living beings with gross, subtle and causal bodies. Human *jivas* have intellect which makes them self-aware, self-reflective. This means that they can interpret their experiences. The way that a *jiva's* subtle body interprets its experience is its "world."

When we say the world would not be there without the mind (subtle body) we mean *jiva's* interpretation, its projection, would not be there. It does not mean that the material world, the senses, subtle body and the *vasanas* (*Isvara srsti* or creation) would not be here. We call the *jiva's* creation "*pratibhasika satyam*," the subjective reality. There is only one Jacob and he sees things a certain way owing to his conditioning.

*Isvara's* creation is called "*vyavaharika satyam*," the objective world. This is the world of science, the objects and the laws which are not under the control of any *jiva*. We need this teaching so the *jiva* does not confuse its creation with *Isvara's*.

The *jiva* is part of *Isvara's* creation and is required to respond to it.

This is called *dharma*, appropriate response. If the individual responds properly to what *Isvara* wants, it will be in harmony with *Isvara*, the creation, meaning its environment. But if the *jiva* is living in its own world, gets a request from *Isvara* and responds according to its fears and desires, likes and dislikes (*vasanas*, or conditioning), it is quite possible that it will run afoul of *Isvara*, meaning its circumstances – and therefore suffer.

This teaching also makes the *jiva* aware of the difference between the subjective and the objective realities. If it is clear which is which it can choose to follow *dharma*, not its own desire – in case they are different. There is no problem with *jiva's* desires as long as they conform to *dharma*.

HOW objects are experienced depends on whether the *jiva* knows its true identity as awareness or not. If the *jiva* has self-knowledge it will not confuse its creation with *Isvara's*. Through self-inquiry, discriminating the self from the objects appearing in it, self-knowledge negates all objects and reveals that they are only apparently real. This is why *moksa* is freedom from dependence on objects.

**Jacob:** *Viveka* came easy. I separated self from objects, nothing can touch me, I am awareness, but I don't have a full understanding of non-duality, or non-separation, because I don't fully understand my relationship with objects.

**Sundari:** This is the crux of discrimination without which *moksa* is not possible. An object is anything other than you. If you can see something, it is not you. I have gone into the nature of the *jiva* and the field above and I have attached an article I wrote on the *paramatman-Isvara-jiva* identity and another one on *maya* which will benefit you to read.

When the knowledge that "I am awareness" is firm and you have negated the notion of doership as well as rendered the binding *vasanas* non-binding, then what will change is how you contact objects. You will not be run by your fears and desires, you will act according to your *svadharma* (inborn nature) and follow *dharma* at all times, not only because you value peace of mind but because you see all objects as non-different from you. Non-injury to yourself or others is your top value. Your values which govern your likes and dislikes will be universal values (i.e. *Isvara's* values), not personal values. You will not seek objects to complete you because you know that you are whole and complete and the joy is in you, not the object. So you will have contact with all objects (experience) not for happiness, but happily.

**Jacob:** I believe with great confidence that all is pure awareness like me but I don't understand if objects/"world" are made of atoms or my mind. Are we talking from *jiva's* point of view or pure awareness's point of view?

**Sundari:** All objects, from the tiniest subatomic particle to the gross world of skyscrapers, are made up of consciousness – because that is all there is. Science would have us believe that the creation came out of nothing, but that is such a moronic perspective because how can anything come out of nothing?

However, you cannot know awareness with reference to objects because awareness

is not an object of perception. This is why Vedanta has devised a complete teaching that gets you to think from different perspectives, ultimately embracing the one view, which is non-duality. To understand that you and the objects are the same is counterintuitive because from the *jiva's* perspective, clearly they are not. Self-knowledge, however, reveals this to be the case.

With regards to your question "...are we talking from *jiva's* point of view or pure awareness's point of view?" the answer would be: that depends on who you are identified with.

The definition of *jiva* is "awareness with a subtle body." *Jiva* is a principle, a *tattva*, not a specific person. It is actually pure awareness, *paramatma*.

There are three *jivas*. There is the *jiva* who thinks it is a person. This *jiva* is often called the doer, or the human being, the one identified with objects. There is the *jiva* who knows about awareness but it does not know what it means to be awareness. This *jiva* is often called a self-realised *jiva*. And finally, there is the *jiva* that knows it IS awareness and what it means to be awareness while apparently manifesting as a *jiva* or individual. This is the *jivanmukta*, the self no longer under the spell of ignorance, or the self-actualised *jiva*.

So who is it for you?

What is essential to understand is that non-duality does not go away when you know that the true nature of reality is non-dual. Duality is a superimposition onto non-duality, which is why it is called *mithya*, the apparently real, because when *maya* is operating it looks like the subject and object are two different things. This is the whole point of self-inquiry, to resolve the subject-object split.

It does not work to for *moksa* to superimpose *sattya* (the real) onto *mithya* (the apparently real). One has to fully understand what it means to be awareness and how this translates into the life of the *jiva*. This means understanding *Isvara* and how that relates to the *jiva* as a person and as awareness. This is what self-actualisation entails.

Duality, or ignorance, is only a problem if you don't know what it is; when you do know what is, as the *jivanmukta* (the self no longer under the spell of ignorance) you can enjoy the objects for what they are: temporary and temporal. Duality has a kind of limited bliss, but no lasting bliss. This is why we want *moksa*: we want the permanent bliss of the self. Vedanta reveals that duality is a conditioned superimposition, like the mirage on the desert floor: when you know that it is a mirage you would not try to drink the water. As stated, when you know that the nature of reality is non-dual you do not look for things to complete you because you know that you are already whole and complete.

**Jacob:** It seems like *jiva* is also essential for existence of objects because there is no world in deep sleep, so the world depends not only on awareness but *jiva*? Which understanding is more useful for *moksa*? Which Vedanta teaching could help me understand it?

**Sundari:** This is the age-old question – does the world exist because I see it or do I see the world because the world is there? Remember what James always says: if events are projections brought upon by the non-apprehension of the true nature of

reality being non-dual, then nothing ever happened, which is admittedly not how it seems but how it is.

As I made clear in the cause and effect teaching above, ignorance makes the world appear to be real so without *maya* there are no objects, no *jiva*. The whole of the apparent reality (everything below the line, metaphorically speaking, which is *Isvara/jiva/jagat*) is a projection on the screen of awareness. Jacob and his life story is the movie, *Isvara* is the projector, and awareness is the movie screen.

This is good thinking on your part though because objects only exist for human *jivas*, they don't exist for awareness, animals, plants, i.e. *Isvara*. Objects, or experience, only mean something to human *jivas*. From the *jiva's* point view Jacob is projecting his movie onto *Isvara*, creating his own world of perception (*pratibasika*, or subjective reality, *jiva srsti*) until such time as Jacob knows his true nature to be awareness, negates the doer and renders the *vasanas* non-binding.

The movie is not always on (as in deep sleep) and it is always changing. Awareness is that which is always present and never changes. As you point out, there is no world and no *jiva* in deep sleep because the subtle body has been subsumed into the causal body so there are no objects and no knowledge either. There is only ignorance; although the deep sleeper is experiencing the bliss of the absence of objects, the *jiva* does not know he or she is doing so. When the deep sleeper returns to the waking state the *jiva* can infer that they it was asleep and that it was blissful. The three-states teaching serves to unfold the irrefutable truth that the only constant in the three states is the knower of the three states, YOU, awareness.

**Jacob:** Thank you.

~ Blessings, Jacob

**Sundari:** You are most welcome, Jacob, I hope this is helpful!

~ Much love, Sundari