

A New Narrative for the *Jiva*

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Sundari: Hello, Robert. This reply of yours is indicative of a mind that has far more self-esteem than you give it credit for. This is not an ego that responded, it is a mind that has assimilated self-knowledge, and with it comes the ability to be objective and clear. That is what Vedanta means by a pure mind. It is not about being “holy” or “good.” A pure mind is a mind that is clear, confident and peaceful regardless of its apparent conditioning or the *karma* playing out for the *jiva*. Well done to you.

James sent you an email this morning that we believe hits the nail on the head for you. You need a new narrative for Robert. Do whatever it takes to create one – remember, none of them are real, so what does it matter? Pick one you like and stick to it. Maybe even write it down. I think that would be a good *sadhana*. Create a Robert who is loved, acknowledged and protected – because you are – a Robert who dares to live without fear, knowing it is only the self under the spell of ignorance that has to be protected and the protection is self-knowledge.

Robert: Yes, I have known this for some time, and how to love Robert, I have no idea. I see now that this not knowing Robert I referred to is really not loving Robert. Loving Robert will lead to knowing him. My attempts at loving Robert always tend to trying to fix him. I have even seen how I have tried to engage with Vedanta on that level, to fix and purify Robert. This is probably why Vedanta seems to not stick for me. Intellectually, I understand it; however, it evaporates as fast as the text closes or the video ends.

Sundari: You do know Robert, he is the self. His conditioning is not who he is. Understanding the conditioning is not the same as knowing Robert. “Robert” was/is run by his conditioning, but that does not make his conditioning who he is, because Robert is another name for the self. As you know, to be free of Robert does not mean perfecting or purifying him. Identification is the key to disidentifying the conditioning that makes up Robert’s *vasana* load, but the whole point of the exercise is to see that the *vasana* load belongs to and is created by *Isvara*. It does not belong to Robert or to the self. It belongs to *Isvara*. Therefore understanding how the *gunas* function allows you to realise that nobody in Robert’s narrative ever did anything to Robert and Robert did not do anything to anyone either. Everyone in that narrative suffered as much as Robert did under the whip of “their” *vasanas*.

It is true that there is no way to qualify for *moksa* if the psychological issues (the *jiva* stuff, as we call it) have not been dissolved in the light of self-knowledge. This is where all “the work” is, where most people get stuck and what will preclude some minds from freedom.

The problem is always one of a failure to understand what the *jiva* is, what *Isvara* is and their mutual identity, awareness. It is pointless to try to skip this part because deny the apparent reality all you like, it will not go away. As long as you do not understand it you are conditioned by it and suffer. This is a cruel world when you do not understand what duality is.

Robert: The belief he is damaged and unlovable is so entrenched and all-pervasive it is almost as if I cannot comprehend an alternative for Robert. Robert is so devoid of opposite, positive thought he finds ways of just coping.

Sundari: Being free of Robert is neither purifying him nor negating him. It is only about understanding “his” conditioning. Robert stays, conditioning stays, but it is known to be not-self. A purified mind is a mind that knows this. This is what *moksa* is all about – it is for the *jiva* who lives in the apparent reality and never leaves it. The *jiva* is universal and eternal because it is really awareness. So embrace Robert; there is absolutely nothing wrong with him. How can there be if he is the self? The mind that once identified with Robert’s story and was at its mercy has self-knowledge now. Trust it to do the work of removing all the ignorance. Keep subjecting the mind to self-inquiry while making it your *sadhana* to live as Robert minus his stuff. Taking a stand in awareness is just that: living as the self while appearing as a person. Fake it if you have to, until you make it. You are on the Vedanta bus and it will get you there. There is no purifier like self-knowledge.

Robert: Catherine has real self-esteem and is an accomplished and actualised *jiva*. I have reflected much since I wrote my last email and I realise she had both love for me and is firm enough in herself to realise the relationship was going down the path we both tend to repeat and had the courage and self-love to end it. My response reflected in my writings was a repeat of my ungracious pattern. What is probably more true is Catherine and I loved each other deeply, we enriched each other in many mutual ways, and for that I am grateful.

Sundari: Seeing this is a real step forward for you. Playing the victim does not serve you. Whoever or whatever we love, it is always the self loving itself. No one chases any object for any other reason than the self wanting to know itself, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. Catherine is none other than your own true self, and you did not lose her, because what she represents is wholeness, you, awareness. You just have to claim your true identity because she does not have anything special that you do not already have. That she had the courage to end destructive patterns is definitely a sign that she is clear who she is. We only ever experience any object in the mind, so even though on the *jiva* level it hurts not to have her to love and hold anymore, the love you feel for her is who you are. And the reality of this love does not require that you believe in it nor is it dependent on anyone or anything. It can only be recognised to be who you are. This knowledge is what freed me.

Robert, quoting Sundari: “The problems with Ryan are partly that Robert unconsciously tried so hard to heal his own broken child through his son that in doing so his son rejected him.”

Yes, this I have seen, with great remorse. I have pushed him away. I have already initiated a different attitude and approach and pray for guidance in this matter, as I am at a total loss. In part my approach has been the same as Robert, to fix, not to understand. In this way Ira has shown great fortitude and I am grateful to her.

Sundari: All you need to do is love Robert and drop the idea or belief in his wounded persona. I

know this is easier said than done, but it is that simple. “Our” children are not ours. They are the self and they belong to life, *Isvara*. No one belongs to anyone, ever. I knew that from the day Giorgina was born. Even though we had some pretty difficult *karma* to navigate, that was the founding principle of our relationship. I trusted in the veracity of her own knowledge of herself and I allowed her to act on it. I was considered a bad parent for this! The world is pretty screwed up in its idea of parenting, so no point looking there for guidance. Thankfully, in spite of the way *karma* played out for this *jiva*, I was firm in the knowledge that she came here to live as the self. Other than guiding her with knowledge, my job was to make her independent of me as fast as possible. Apply this with your son. Be honest with him; tell him you did your best and did not know better – that you acted from the wounded part of you, but that is not who you really are. Tell him you are working on this, tell him that he is beautiful and whole and no matter what happens, nothing can change this. This is what I did with Giorgina – I was transparent with her and never hid my failings and shortcomings. I related to her as an equal, as the self even before I was firm in the knowledge of being it myself. She always understood. Children do not expect perfection. They need honesty. Talk to him as the self, you will be surprised how it works. Remember that the self knows itself and always responds to itself.

You have done enough of that; see it as vomit and move on. Drop the story; dare to love yourself totally. Take a stand in awareness as awareness and practise the opposite thought.

Robert: There is great fear in this. Yes, enough vomit now! Man up, Robert.

Sundari: James always says that all our psychological issues basically come down to not getting what we want, the way we wanted it, when we wanted it. At first I thought this was way too simplified an attitude towards what conditions the mind. But if you think about it, it is true. Making a bigger and bigger story out of it, keeping the wound alive and relating throughout our entire lives on the basis of this wounding is a sad state of affairs. What a waste of a beautiful life and how much suffering ensues – it’s so sad. And the vomiting is endless because the “oh, poor me” is endless. But that is how it is for most *samsaris*. Best slit your throat and get it over with, right?

The worst of it is this wounded persona becomes an entrenched tyrant and wants to be fed more drama, so creates more and more *karma* to feed off. Although the suffering and anxiety that accompanies this condition is intense to the point of being unbearable, the ego develops a sick enjoyment of the suffering and also gets a lot of mileage out of it. At least you have a reason why you are such a mess and your life does not work – playing the victim/martyr gets a lot of payoffs. This creates and intensifies the destructive cycle of guilt/shame/self-hatred/low self-esteem, which is then projected onto others.

That is the narrative you have to change because this is where all your bad thoughts/feelings originate from. The ego will not let you do this easily, as a lifetime of this identification is tenaciously resistant, so this will take a lot of commitment.

Luckily, you have had the good grace to find Vedanta and the best teacher alive to teach you, who is James. Grace is earned. There is no escape from this endless *karmic* wheel of suffering without self-knowledge. We all have to man up and get over the story – enough is enough!

If, on the other hand, you really “cannot outrun the wave” in your dreams, then surf it! Embrace the bad thoughts; relish them like a pig in shit. Eat the vomit – until you just can’t stand it anymore

and even the ego gets tired of the story. If the story is really that powerful and the hooks so strong, then put an end to the struggle of trying so hard to do whatever it takes to suppress it, manage it or “cope” with it. If you can’t get over the negativity, get pissed off at *Isvara* and put the blame there! If no positive means work to sublimate the thoughts, this is a negative way to keep the mind on *Isvara*, but at least the mind is on *Isvara*. See the upside. See how ridiculous and funny it actually is, how absurd it all is, that you made such a story out of something that is not real. It’s a joke – and you are not unique in this. Life in *samsara* is vicious; no one wins, ever. It’s a zero-sum game; everyone gets damaged to some degree. And we all get hung up on our story until self-knowledge ends the pity party.

Do Vasanas or the Gunas Come First?

Robert, quoting Sundari: “The *gunas* set up the creation.” My understanding how this happens is not firm.

Sundari: There is only one awareness out of which everything arises and depends upon to exist, but awareness is always free of the objects. 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/*jiva* (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*, or awareness plus *maya*), and *aparaprakiti* (*jiva*), “lower” reality. Their common identity is *uparaprakriti*: awareness. *Isvara* (awareness plus *maya*) 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. The *gunas*, or the three forces in creation, are synonymous with ignorance, or *maya*, and appear simultaneously, although there appears to be a progression. This is because the creation is a simultaneous projection. There is no time in reality; time is just the interval between experience and not real. The creation is like the spider’s web emerging from the spider and is made up of the spider, but it is not the spider. When *maya* appears, awareness plus the *gunas* becomes *Isvara*, the Creator. *Isvara* is the name for all forms, not for a particular form. All forms come into being through the three forces in creation: *sattva*, the intelligence behind or inherent in all forms, and *rajas*, the active principle acting on *tamas*, the substance. I have attached the chapter from James’ book *The Essence of Enlightenment*, which covers this topic in great depth.

When the *jiva* and the physical body are completed, the *vasanas* come into being. They are the result of *karma* and what creates it.

Robert: It is all in the identification.

Sundari: So the question is: Do you think you are Robert or the self?

Robert: Clearly, I am still thinking as Robert.

Sundari: Yes, that is always the problem. Identification with objects is called ignorance. Press “pause” every time you use the word “I” or are making a statement about anything and ask yourself: Who is speaking here? Is it:

1. The *jiva* who thinks it is a person with a name, a history and an address, the person called the doer, or the human being, the one identified with objects (including all experience)?

2. Is it the *jiva* who knows about awareness, but does not know what it means to be awareness. This *jiva* has indirect knowledge and is often called a self-realised *jiva*. This *jiva* has had an experience of being awareness, but has not actualised self-knowledge, so the knowledge is not firm and ignorance is still present. This is the one who re-identifies with objects or still seeks experience because the *vasanas* are still binding and doership has not been fully dissolved.

3. Or finally, is it the *jiva* who has permanent direct knowledge because he/she knows that their true identity IS awareness and they know what it means to be awareness – while still apparently manifesting as a *jiva*, or individual. This means that self-knowledge translates fully into ALL aspects of the person’s life. This is the *jivanmukta*, the self no longer under the spell of ignorance, or the self-actualised *jiva*, or person.

Robert: Can you explain sublimation, please?

Sundari: Sublimation is making a conscious choice to redirect energy that one previously put into one activity into another for a higher purpose. For instance, with a lifestyle issue: I used to put most of my energy into my lifestyle as an artist. When I met James and obtained *moksa*, Vedanta became my life, that art energy was subsumed by a greater desire, which was to learn how to wield the knowledge properly so as to be of service as a teacher. You can apply this to any lifestyle issue, like diet, exercise, work, relationships, money, etc. Another example would be with regards to binding *vasanas*, like a sex *vasana*. One makes a *sankalpa* (commitment) to redirect that energy to a higher voltage, like self-inquiry. This is not easy, and managing *vasanas* this way takes great commitment, but it can be done. If one sticks with it (especially by applying the knowledge) *vasanas* are rendered non-binding.

Robert, quoting Sundari: “It is common that people who have realised the self still struggle with stubborn *samskaras* and with fears that seem to have no origin.” This resonates strongly. All I seem to recall is fear, and on my deep regressions where it starts it seems as if Robert was born as fear – that seemingly has no origin or cause.

Sundari: All *jivas* are born in fear; Robert is not unique in this. This is the original sin that religion talks of. Religion sells sin as a transgression against God, but that is not what sin means. It means to “miss the mark.” In other words, the idea that we are born in sin means we are born in ignorance of who we are, our true nature as awareness. The ego is a fear-thought born of the belief in separation. This fear is the “wound of humanity,” as I sometimes call it. It is the king of all

vasanas, also what we call “primordial, beginningless ignorance,” another name for *maya*. The more user-friendly term for this *vasana* is “free-floating anxiety” which, if self-knowledge is not firm, causes a non-specific, unnamed existential fear or dread. It is the fear that causes knots in the solar plexus. It is sometimes called the fear of “being and becoming,” what the Christians call “original sin.” It is always present, yet hidden in the causal body, and it is looking for objects to attach to (*rajas/tamas*). It is related to “others”; it is the ultimate experience of duality, or “otherness.”

Not everyone experiences it directly and acutely like you do, although many do. The skyrocketing number of people experiencing anxiety attacks is testament to this. However, in most *samsaris* it works out in petty mundane and indirect ways all day long, year after year, “a death by a thousand cuts.” You can see the accretions in the faces of *samsaris* as they age – the exhaustion of existential suffering, the weight of the *vasanas* etched in faces inured to delusion. You will notice that it is called “beginningless” ignorance. The implied meaning of this phrase is that it is not endless, because self-knowledge ends personal ignorance (*avidya*) for good. As you have probably experienced, it disappears for a bit, then reappears, so you know that the fear is not real. Unfortunately, there is no quick, easy fix if this is playing out. It will play out until it does not anymore, so you are going to have to somehow embrace it, as you seem to be doing. A “coping strategy,” while helpful, is not the answer; self-knowledge is the only answer to fear because fear is not real. F.E.A.R. stands for False Evidence Appearing Real.

This anxiety is a by-product of very deeply-rooted *samskaras* which have their origin in fear of course. It is macrocosmic or universal *rajas* (projection) and it is part of the *dharma* field. Everyone who is identified with being a person is affected by it to some degree. Usually, the *vasanas* will exhaust themselves after a while, even though they inevitably return, but this one, this unnamed fear, is constantly “on.” As the self it doesn’t bother you at all of course (as you experience at times, I am sure), and for those who are self-realised but not self-actualised, this unnamed fear may still come and go. It is manageable if one does not identify with it, but to be free of the person’s conditioning it needs to be purified through self-knowledge, as it causes great agitation for the mind, as when it rears its head, peace of mind is not possible.

This anxiety is helpful as a motivation to “practise knowledge” – meaning self-inquiry. Ignorance is hardwired, remember. The root of the problem is that the “me” that you and “others” judge as flawed is believed to be lacking. By “judge” I mean that you “don’t like” that “me,” since people who truly love and respect themselves do not have this kind of anxiety. When the mind is gripped by the paralysis of this fear, it means that Robert is totally identified with Robert and his stuff.

The basic issue is *viragya*, lack of dispassion, meaning you can’t separate the thoughts from the feeling of “dis-ease” that they engender. This is because your confidence in the knowledge that you are beautiful is not up to speed. So when this happens you should bring the knowledge to mind and/or alternatively enumerate your good qualities to yourself: “I’m not a murderer or a child molester. I’m a good person. I love *Isvara*. I am dedicated to the truth. I love myself enough to inquire into my true nature. I love my son. I am kind and intelligent, etc.” In other words, you should apply the opposite thought even though you believe there are none that fit Robert – which is not true of course, because Robert is the self. So if you truly can’t come up with any positive opposite thoughts about Robert or his fears/desires, trust that you are awareness and claim it as your identity. This is called “taking a stand in awareness as awareness.” Apply it religiously. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

All this basically boils down to one issue: why you don't love yourself as you are. If you loved yourself (Robert) it would not make any difference what thoughts arise in the mind, although mostly positive thoughts and feelings would fill the mind. You would know that the negative ones are not real and have nothing to do with you. If you can't accept the scripture's contention that you are beautiful and perfect, then you have to appreciate the fact that you had no choice in who you are as the person called Robert. If you could have been different, you would have been. You cannot change Robert, because *Isvara* made him the way he is. You can only understand and accept the apparent person called Robert as he is – warts and all, if there are any. When you do, the pressure of the *vasanas* eases and the straightjacket of fear can be taken off permanently. Although *moksa* is not about changing the person, the person does change in that it is no longer driven by unconscious content. It no longer creates *karma*, and what *karma* does arise is dealt with in the moment, creating no existential drag. While *moksa* is not a guaranteed recipe for experiential bliss, the bliss of knowledge is always present regardless of what is arising in the mind or in the *jiva*'s environment. The way the *jiva* experiences objects (experience) is changed forever because it needs nothing to be complete ever again. And this is your birthright, here and now.

The dreams you asked Ramji about, with the repeated pattern of the threatening tsunami, the one with debris (filth, as you referred to it) is the *vasanas* and how they dog us without mercy, trailing with them the detritus of life. It's what kills everyone in the end. The fear *vasanas* are hard to get rid of, even when you know who you are and that they are not real. With practise of the knowledge, more and more space is created between you, the self, and the apparent self. Once the knowledge is firm there is no longer any confusion between the two.

You can relax, you are on the bus, even if the ego still does its number, let it. Trust that you are protected by the knowledge, assure the ego it has nothing to worry about!

Robert: Does a *vasana* that is carried from life to life retain the same *guna* quality of its "original" creation or is on each presentation of an unresolved *vasana* in a *jiva* incarnation further influenced by the prevailing *guna* which may be in this presentation different to the original?

Sundari: This question is hard to understand; it seems to be suggesting that there is continuity as a *jiva* from life to life. In a way there is, but what does it matter? Perhaps what you are missing is that there is no real "personal" *jiva*. It appears to be so, but in actual fact there is only one universal *jiva* that seemingly manifests as many.

Robert: I think I am still unclear in understanding what soul is (this has come up a lot of late), as I may have a conditioning that the soul continues. Please, could you comment? I have read some at the ShiningWorld site on this and the discussions seem to relate the soul to the subtle body? Does this imply subtle body = soul?

Sundari: Yes, the soul is another word for the subtle body. "Transmigrates" is not really a good term; we prefer to call it "the traveller" because the subtle body reappears as a seemingly different person, or *jiva*, in "subsequent lives." But as mentioned previously, there really is only one subtle body appearing as the many, and there is no time. When inquiring into rebirth or reincarnation, one has to ask: Who is it that is reborn? Vedanta says that rebirth is simply

identification with *vasanas*, which also come and go. The subtle body is called the traveller because it is believed that it transmigrates “between lives” as the *vasanas* that are stored in the causal body sprout. Identification with objects can only take place when awareness has a subtle body. No thought happens without the subtle and gross bodies being present. Outside of the *dharma* field there is no causality and no influence of the *gunas*, as all is in seed form waiting for the right moment to sprout. And the right moment is determined by the *dharma* field and all the forces and laws that run it.

Robert: Thank you, this is possibly the first time I have really attempted to apply Vedanta to Robert as opposed to apply in theory. I have known for a while and stated it is all in the application.

~ With deepest gratitude and love, Robert

Sundari: Vedanta is not theory in practice; it is who you are. So “practising” the knowledge means applying it to the *jiva*’s life. Awareness does not need self-knowledge, so who else is there to apply it to? What use is self-knowledge if nothing more than an intellectual pursuit? Spouting Vedanta is also useless unless you understand that it is about you and what that means. This is why we say that Vedanta as a means of knowledge is a throwaway. Once you know you are the knowledge there is no need to practise it, because you are it.

You are most welcome, we are here for you if you need us, ready to remind you who you really are.

~ Much love, Sundari