

Can the *Jiva* Be Improved?

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Seeker: I have one question from your letter, however. When you said, “But once the *jiva* program is totally dismantled, one continues *nididhysana* purely for the edification of your own mind, not because there are any remaining binding *vasanas*. And there is definitely no need to improve the *jiva*.”

What do you mean by “there is definitely no need to improve the *jiva*”? Isn’t that what Christian’s [Leeby] Calm to the Core is all about... improving, or as Ramji said, “polishing the *jiva*”?

Sundari: When you are able to discriminate *satya* from *mithya* 100% of the time, you never again confuse the *jiva* with the self. But all the same, even though you are *trigunaatita* and have transcended the *gunas*, *Isvara*’s creation carries on as it always does. The aim of self-inquiry is to enjoy life, therefore although you do not need to improve the *jiva*, eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. So you keep the mind polished and pure because a healthy, sane and happy *jiva* is a great contribution to the total, to life, to your life, to everyone around you – and of course, most importantly, to yourself.

It is pointless to try and change the *jiva*. How can you change something that is unreal or for that matter, something that is real? The *jiva* is made the way it is. There is no need to improve it (although self-knowledge does improve it), because it belongs to *Isvara*. But that does not mean that it is comfortable to live with it when it has binding *vasanas* that agitate the mind and it believes it is the doer, both of which are the root cause of all suffering. To be free of the *jiva* means that you first have to understand its conditioning in light of the *gunas*, in other words, in light of *Isvara*. This is no easy task and where all the “work” of self-inquiry really takes place.

Christian’s course is excellent for this, as will be our books on the *gunas*. A happy life for the *jiva* is all about *guna* management, which boils down to thought and emotion management, as well as management of lifestyle factors of course. How you live is terribly important, if peace of mind is what you are after. If your life does not conform to *dharma*, self-knowledge will not obtain, as the mind will be agitated and/or dull.

When you have seen and understood “your” conditioning, you still get to live with the *jiva*, as there is not too much you can do to change your *Isvara*-given personality – and history. But you can definitely see it as only apparently real, just a bunch of thoughts. So when the *jiva* arises, you dismiss it. It’s the thinking Christian sets out in his course, to consciously choose the thought/feelings you have and adjust and train the mind accordingly. It means choosing the *Isvara*-thought over the *jiva*-thought. This is the essence of *karma yoga*, the most vital practice to render the *vasanas* non-binding and negate the doer.

Once you have realised the self you will have gone through the *manana* stage, which is the contemplation of the teachings to remove all doubt. *Karma yoga* has negated the doer and the binding *vasanas*. Although the aim is not to improve the *jiva*, being free of the *jiva*’s conditioning does mean that the *jiva* will be a “better” *jiva* – meaning happier. Here you could start enjoying

the fruit of self-inquiry, which is *moksa* – but, usually, there is still some hidden “*jiva* stuff” that needs to be cleaned out, as I explained to you happened to me. So you have to requalify for *moksa* and return to do your *sadhana*, but this time not to gain self-knowledge but to actualise it.

A self-actualised *jivanmukta* by definition will have resolved all its conditioning through contemplation, assimilation of the knowledge and transformation of its habitual patterns (*vasanas/samskaras/pratibandikas*, i.e. its conditioning) through self-knowledge. This is the essence of *nididhysana*. *Nididhysana* replaces *karma yoga*, although *karma yoga* is still practised, but not to negate the doer, because there is no longer a doer to negate. It is practised because it is common-sense knowledge and the only sane way for the *jiva* to live. The steps to “get there” are the qualities of “being there.”

Once you have self-actualised, there is no *nididhysana* for the self, but as *jnanis* we are ever mindful of the apparent reality. Like I said in my last email, *moksa* does not magically change the *jiva* or transform its *karma*, except indirectly over time through the way you relate to objects (the *jiva*) and to *karma*, which is no longer as the *jiva*, but as the self – who has no *karma*. *Nididhysana* means the *jivanmukta* takes the *jiva* and *Isvara* into account at all times, but is not conditioned by either.

Remember that while it is true that once self-knowledge has obtained in the mind there is a definite “shift” in how one sees life and relates to objects, the *jiva* will always be limited, even though its essence is known to be the self and not the *jiva*. The *jiva* lives in the apparent reality, interacting with the field of existence, which is also limited and always changing – and the *jiva* has no control over it. Macrocosmic ignorance does not end when personal ignorance (*avidya*) ends.

Many people are confused about this, and it is a very subtle and difficult teaching to fully assimilate. But it is vital that you do.

This is a subtle and very important point I made in the newsletter:

Dismiss the *Jiva*!

Even though I had realised the self, my problem for a long while was thinking that, as the *jiva* never disappeared, it had to be catered to, as it is. This may be true – the *jiva* will remain as *Isvara* made it, for the most part – even with *moksa*, and we must love it unconditionally. Nevertheless, *satya* and *mithya* is duality if you think the *jiva* is as real as the self. Taking a stand as the self means the *jiva* is as good as non-existent. You are self. You are not The Self and the *jiva*. So when *jiva* appears, dismiss it. This final realisation only fully sank in recently, and what a tremendous relief it is. It really is true that *nididhysana* never ends for the *jiva*. Self-actualisation is not for the faint of heart, that is for sure! Facing the small, less-than-fabulous part of the psyche *Isvara* equipped us with is not easy. It requires a great deal of courage to face the world as the *jiva*, and it takes even more courage to face the demons that awaits us in the causal body so as to free ourselves of the *jiva*. When we do, we see the demons for what they are, just paper dragons. Not real at all.

I hope this helps!

~ Love, Sundari