

Enlightenment Is Your Nature

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/336>

Daniella: Dear Sundari, I want to thank you so much for sharing your *satsang* on the three *gunas*. I do hope that more writing on this topic will be posted at the ShiningWorld website. When I read James' book, that was something I definitely wanted to know more about! I have come to realize that many unwanted habits are merely poor attempts to manage the *gunas*, particularly *rajas* and *tamas*, as they disappear when *sattva* is predominant. For example, when I come home from work I am always "wired and tired" and I always want to eat something starchy for that calming effect. Of course it doesn't work that well, or rather the effect is temporary, so I'm trying to do prayer and slow breathing when I get home (doesn't always happen due to events out of my control). I can see the difference, and I would like to know more about managing the *gunas*.

Sundari: I am so glad that the *guna satsang* helped you; it is such an important teaching. It is psychology of the highest order, and without a proper understanding of this, it is very difficult (if not impossible) to render the *vasanas* non-binding and to negate the doer. I have outlined how the *gunas* function pretty clearly in the *satsang* I sent, and James has covered the topic in his book. There is not much more information one can have; the thing is to apply the knowledge. Like I said in the *satsang*:

"This is where Vedanta differs from other paths. Vedanta is both a means of knowledge – a pathless path – and a path of action, meaning that it provides tools and the instructions how to use them, which when applied rigorously and with dedication will remove ignorance and its effects. It will set you free."

The *gunas* make up the macrocosmic mind, and are always operating, as you know. The main thing is not to identify with them, so when Daniella gets home "wired and tired" and wants to self-medicate with *tamas*, bringing your awareness to this is half the battle won. Daniella is on automatic pilot (*rajas/tamas*), so you will have to take steps towards managing the undesirable effects of the *gunas*, so that you can enjoy peace of mind. *Rajas* is the hardest one to manage, in a way; it can have such devastating effects. In order to manage them, lifestyle patterns have to be addressed, which is not always easy in most people's hectic lives. Make sure that you eat properly during the day, educate yourself about nutrition so that you don't have to rely on the carbs for the fast fix. This is not difficult; good nutrition is common sense and there is so much information available. Make sure you get some exercise, take time out for yourself, do something to relax. Try not to waste time doing mindless things like watching too much TV, talking on the phone endlessly or anything else that depletes your energy (*tamas*) or agitates the mind (*rajas*). There are always hidden factors in most people's lives that they do not take into account and can be changed. By the sounds of it, your work is very *rajasic*, so if you can't change it then you have to faithfully practice *karma yoga* as well.

You are right that the *gunas* are the governing factors in the creation of all likes and dislikes (*vasanas*); I made that clear in the *satsang*. They are totally predictable and give rise to predictable thoughts, feelings and behaviour. They colour everything, all the time. When you

identify them without identifying WITH them, track what triggers them. Daniella has a built-in nature which will have a predominant *guna*, even two. She did not make herself this way, *Isvara* did. So if you want freedom from Daniella and what runs her, apply the knowledge, and make the changes that are necessary to diet, recreational activities, work, how you manage money and all resources, the people you associate with, exercise, time for self-inquiry and contemplation, etc. We are gathering material to flesh out this teaching, which will outline more extensively what thoughts/feelings/behaviour are typical of all *gunas*.

I found one very interesting article on the internet; this is the link: TheNewYoga.org/GUNAS.pdf. You have to do this for yourself; this is “the work,” no easy way around it.

Track Daniella on a moment-to-moment basis, keep a keen eye on her likes and dislikes and what motivates her to do anything. Do a fearless moral inventory, see what values are running her life and the *guna* that underpins them; change what you can to steer Daniella towards peace of mind. All the *yogas* are absolutely essential for *moksa*, self-inquiry being the most important. It takes dedication and determination to free oneself from ignorance, as the ego is hardwired to resist change – and ignorance is so persistent. The more you subject your mind to the self-inquiry, the faster the knowledge will be there and the quicker you will make the adjustments for peace of mind in each situation. Keep up your *sadhana* and make sure you make the correct lifestyle changes for you to have peace of mind.

Daniella: Thank you so much for elaborating on the *guna* teaching as well as providing the link which was so helpful! I hope you do not mind that I have outlined the results of my thinking about this knowledge over the past two weeks. If you are inclined to make any comments, they would be much appreciated.

I gave a lot of thought and observation as to why there is imbalance. My job is not very *rajasic*, as I work as a librarian cataloguing manuscripts, a quiet though intellectually-demanding job. I watch little television and have no social life beyond visiting my husband’s family and a very occasional lunch with a friend. I don’t spend a lot of money and consequently rarely worry about it. I don’t drink coffee or alcohol and am moderate with sweets; I walk part of the way to work. However, my day is almost completely taken up with my job and taking care of my family. What I am missing is time alone, time to read, contemplate and meditate. I realize that this Daniella-*jiva* has been created to need a good deal of alone time, to turn the senses inward, and that without quiet time there is illness, frustration and little peace of mind. While I’ve known this for a long time, as it was even a habit as a child to sit alone in the bedroom or avoid noisy social gatherings, I have not respected nor stood up for this need very well. I have allowed other people’s disapprobation and my own desires to co-opt this need. There was a brief period in my life when I took care of this need, and the results were astounding in terms of physical and emotional health and peace of mind. But I didn’t realize then that I needed to maintain that lifestyle. Sometimes I think, I wish I knew about Vedanta then! But clearly I wasn’t ready and there were lessons to be learned before I could be exposed to this beautiful knowledge.

With these realizations I think my decision-making will be better guided, and I will continue self-inquiry as the surest means to liberation.

Sundari: Your email is well-written and carefully presented. Your problem is one that many Vedantins face, and it is not an easy one to solve. You have the nature of an enquirer and your

mind is naturally *sattvic*, yet you have the *karma* of a householder and have to attend to it. You have correctly seen that you need to claim time for yourself and make sure that your needs are also met. Failing to do this obviously causes stress and anxiety for you (*rajas*). One has to work from the place we find ourselves and do the best we can; some things we can change and some things we cannot. Accepting your family as they are and not wanting things to be different (*sattva*) prevents agitation and conflict (*rajas*), but you still have to be true to your *svadharma*, your inborn nature, *sattva*. Failure to do this is *tamas*, and in the long run will cause anger, depression, resentment, illness, etc. – all more *tamas*. You need to use some *rajas* to get yourself out of this, i.e. making some decisions as to what your needs are and acting them out – firmly and kindly, which is *sattva*.

I know what it is like to be amongst people who do not understand and whose ignorance makes them narrow-minded and self-absorbed. I come from a large family which has always been judgemental and critical of me. I have simply moved on, but I have no *karma* left with them, so I could do this. It is very important for self-inquiry to choose carefully the people one associates with, even if one does see them as the self. This is not always possible though and life situations can dictate that you have to have contact with such people. The only solution is to be clear and firm about what you require for self-inquiry and make time for you. *Karma yoga* is essential here and the only way to deal with such situations. You need to see your family as you, awareness, under the spell of ignorance. Consecrate all your actions on a moment-to-moment basis to *Isvara*, knowing the results are not up to you – and take the results that do come as *prasad*. Continue your *sadhana*, putting into practice all the *yogas*: *jnana yoga*, *karma yoga*, *triguna vibhava yoga* and *bhakti yoga*. *Bhakti yoga* is simply knowing that as love is your true nature and it is not a feeling; you worship all objects as yourself, awareness. See your family as God and serve them as the self, not as Daniella.

Self-knowledge is not only the surest way to liberation, it is the only way.

I wish you the quiet and steadfast confidence of the self you are to make the appropriate choices for peace of mind.

Daniella: Dear Sundari, thank you for your lovely reply.

During the time between our correspondence, I finally knew myself to be awareness. It has been a step-by-step process of eliminating the body, then the mind, then the *vasanas*, then the *gunas*. There was nothing left but awareness.

My ego feels much as you described yours when you embarked on your marriage: it has nothing to grasp onto. Everything in this apparent reality is known to be what it truly is: fleeting and ever-changing. In some ways this is so much a relief because there is nothing “I” need to do or be. Life can happen, and I (this *jiva*) can simply be without guilt or hesitation. I see things with a more detached eye. On the other hand, the spiritual quest has been so much a part of my ego’s identity that there is now a large space left in my thoughts and motivation. My ego frequently asks, what do I do now? What’s the purpose of this? Why bother? And life still proceeds, with a family to care for, a job, a spouse who works a lot and a mind that needs some space to itself. I realize that there is some enlightenment sickness going on, and this will remain as long as *tamas* and *rajas* are excessive. So managing the *gunas* will still be an important skill.

I thank you for your empathy; I think it’s very rare that a person seeking enlightenment is

supported by her family or loved ones. It seems to be a way to separate the dross from the gold because one's desire has to be particularly strong in order to stay firm and to have faith in one's quest. I remember reading in the *Yoga Vasistha* that of the four conditions for seeking enlightenment, strong desire was the most important. I have found this to be true because there were many times in my life when all I had to keep me going was desire.

Sundari: *Jai Bhagavan!* Well done to you, this is the most beautiful music to our ears when we hear that a sincere and dedicated seeker has become a finder. May life continue to unfold with this clarity and peace, no matter what is going on with Daniella. It is wonderful that you are so dispassionate about what the ego still thinks and feels; it is normal for it to feel a bit lost. The effects of ignorance do not disappear at once; the blades of the fan still turn until they don't anymore. The *gunas* will always be there; they will still condition the subtle body until they don't anymore. It is all fine, once you know who you are, you are free to choose the kind of *jiva* you want to have. It is not about perfecting Daniella, as you know. As long as you know you are the knower of it all, who cares if there is the odd binding *vasana* hanging around? As long as it does not contravene *dharma* and you cannot not act on it, you know yourself to be the knower of it. There is no problem with any of it because you know it belongs to *Isvara*, not to you. It does not sound to me like you have enlightenment sickness, quite the contrary. You are humble and matter of fact about yourself realisation, your *karma* and Daniella. You have not made a big song and dance about it all nor do you expect anything to be different. These are all the signs of a true *jnani*. Well done, I am so very happy for you!

Yes, indeed it is rare that those of us who are ready to escape *samsara* are applauded for it. ☺ It is the nature of ignorance to prevent such rebellious and unseemly behaviour! But there is nothing that will stand in the way once one is ready for *moksa*; that drive is stronger than ignorance and nothing will stand in its way.

I hope we get to meet one day; perhaps you will come to one of our seminars or visit us once we have a base.

Daniella: Thank you for the lovely message, Sundari, it brought tears to my eyes. I look back over my life and it seems so incredible that I should have found what I was never missing at all. I would love to meet you again.

Sundari: Yes, it so incredible, is it not? The pearl of great price was sitting there in full view all the time, not recognised until now! Once you know this, it can never be unknown and nothing is the same again, though nothing is different either. I just love how all paradoxes dissolve into awareness; it is so ordinary and so extraordinary!

~ Much love to you and many blessings, Sundari