

# Freedom from or Freedom for the *Jiva*?

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**Carl:** Hello, Jim, happy new year.

I'm still looking at *Panchadasi* and rereading *The Essence of Enlightenment*. I've got a bit of grounding in the teaching now and try to keep vigilant, so it's trending along.

**Jim:** I'm really impressed with your dedication, Carl. Perseverance is the key to self-inquiry.

**Carl:** On page 186 of *The Essence of Enlightenment* you you say, "...we said that *moksa* is freedom from *jiva* and freedom for *jiva*." The latter throws me a bit, as I've been drumming the former into my bean. In *Panchadasi* it's always the point that *moksa* is discriminating the self from *jiva* – not *jiva* getting anything new or "gaining." If you could clarify...

**Jim:** Great question, Carl. These seem to be confusing statements. Self-inquiry follows a certain trajectory. First you are self-ignorant but you don't know you are self-ignorant, consequently you suffer. Then you hear about the self; let's call it enlightenment. You are still ignorant but now you know you are ignorant. Your suffering continues but at least you know there is a solution. You are told by Vedanta that ignorance is seeing yourself exclusively as a *jiva* and not seeing yourself as awareness. You get it "intellectually" but you are denied the freedom the knowledge confers, because you have been thinking of yourself as your *jiva* since the day you popped out of the womb. So even though you know you are free as awareness, you do not feel free; you keep behaving like a jerk. The jerk can't set itself free of itself, because – well – it won't let itself go, because it won't be there to enjoy the freedom, since freedom is abandoning the the jerk. The jerk wants to remain and be free, so getting free of the ego is not done by the ego. Since the ego/jerk can't free itself, it needs to seek the knowledge that frees it. When the knowledge takes place – it is usually a gradual process, so there are periods of blissful freedom interspersed with periods of suffering – it sets you free of the idea that you are exclusively that jerk. At the same time the jerk is still there and insofar as there is any identification with the jerk, the jerk still suffers, albeit not as intensely as before. The Carl would not have kept up the Vedantic inquiry if there were absolutely no benefits for him. He would have abandoned it. But the knowledge has objectified The Carl Person and you love him – poor dear! – and you want him to be free of his Carlness, at least those negative traits that cause him to suffer. Freedom is not so free if The Carl isn't completely satisfied with himself and his life.

Freedom is perfect satisfaction (*tripti*). The self is always perfectly satisfied because it is always free of all the *jivas* that are attached to it, but the *jiva* is only free when it is completely satisfied with itself, meaning when it sees that its imperfections are absolutely perfect. Getting to this point – self-actualization – necessarily involves understanding *Isvara/maya* because *Isvara* is responsible for the idea that life is imperfect. The self doesn't see imperfections, it only sees itself. The *jiva* may see imperfections but it doesn't create them. Why would it? It only wants to be happy all the time. *Isvara* is that part of you, the self, that makes what is perfect – you and the

world – seem to be imperfect. So how do you free the *jiva*? You appreciate *Isvara*. If *Isvara* is to blame for the dissatisfaction, then you won't identify with it. You can only legitimately identify with something that "you" actually do. You don't consciously think, "I'll be dissatisfied," before you think, "I am dissatisfied." So you are not responsible for the idea that there is something wrong with life and with you particularly.

The realization "I am limitless ever-free awareness" rarely happens in a purely spiritual situation, as it did with me. I didn't have a job, kids, wife, money, status, friends, etc. when I started seeking. All I had was a burning desire to be free. I had left all that worldly stuff behind and *Isvara* put me in the energy field of a purely spiritual *mahatma*. I stayed in it for two years without a break, so my attachments were broken, and when the knowledge became firm, Jim was free, meaning that he had the lifestyle in place that allowed the knowledge to effortlessly do the work, so he went fishing and generally wasted a lot of time. Firm knowledge means that Jim didn't take himself and life seriously, because he understood that Jim is *mithya*. He was always just an object, like someone else, to me. When you know that, Jim can't suffer and if he does, the suffering isn't actual suffering.

The knowledge allows the *jiva* to be happy with its apparent imperfections – as those imperfections are gradually effaced by the knowledge. In fact *moksa* is understanding the meaning of the word "apparent." Imperfections – such as they are – exist and persist, but if they are apparent, they are as good as non-existent. You may have a good cry at a movie but you aren't really crying, because the movie is – well – not real. If you know the movie isn't real, the tears can't be real either even though it feels as if they are.

In any case, self-knowledge generally takes place in the context of a purely *samsaric* life. One's relationships are less than perfect. One's spouse and one's kids don't know you are the self and they don't care. They see you as they always saw you and they treat you the way they always treated you. If they knew who you were they would treat you like the king/queen you really are. There are duties and responsibilities that you wouldn't have incurred if you had been in your right mind when you undertook them. There are money worries, health issues, etc., etc. ad nauseum. You know you don't need any of it to be happy. You know your relationships don't jibe with who you are. But you lack the courage to confront them and lay them to rest. Assuming that you still take some part of that part of you that isn't you to be real, maybe you think that *Isvara* wants you to continue suffering these things until *Isvara* decides to change them, and so you don't proactively deal with them. You fall into a *tamasic* state, which you think is surrender to *Isvara*. And the poor little *jiva* keeps on suffering – more or less.

So freedom from the *jiva* is the first stage. The next stage is freedom for the *jiva*. Generally, you have to wait until you are free of the *jiva* to give the *jiva* the confidence to tackle its unwanted residual *karma*, unless you can be happy with a dissatisfied *jiva*. After all, freedom is freedom; there are no rules. If you are happy with dissatisfaction, is it dissatisfaction?

The *jiva's* desire to free the *jiva* should be an intellectual consideration, not an emotional consideration like it was before you have self-knowledge. You do it because it is the compassionate thing to do. The *jiva* works on itself patiently. It has time to waste time. It sins intelligently. It does this because it knows that life is a big joke.

**Carl:** How much do you have to know to apply the knowledge? It seems like you almost have to be as on it as the teacher to truly get all the angles – quite daunting.

**Jim:** You don't have to know much, actually. You have to know the difference between you, the self, and the objects, i.e. experiences, that present themselves to you and what it means to be the self in terms of the objects. So it is a moment-to-moment discrimination. It is daunting if ignorance is well-entrenched and very easy if your lifestyle is *sattvic* and permits it. But once you know what discrimination is, you really don't have any choice, since life is nothing but discrimination.

*Samsaris* discriminate shadows from shadows, which causes suffering. But enlightened people discriminate the shadows from the light. Every right discrimination sets your life right and every wrong discrimination – going with an object – sets your life on a bad path.

~ Love, Jim