

Ignorance of Objects and Ignorance of the Self

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Sundari: Hello, Anna, I am answering your questions, as I am helping James with the e-satsangs. He will check it to make sure that it gets the Vedanta clearance!

~ Om, Sundari

Anna: Dear James, thank you very much for doing the evening *satsang* in Amsterdam about two weeks ago. It was a joyful surprise. I look forward to the next opportunity. Your website is very helpful, the e-satsangs in particular. I am called a dyslexic, yet until now reading this stuff goes quite smoothly.

Sundari: James says that appreciation is always welcome. ☺ We are glad that Vedanta is working for you. Dyslexic is just a term referring to a particular condition that affects the way the intellect functions. It is not who you are – YOU are not dyslexic. The knowledge works because it is you, awareness, that shines the light of knowledge on the intellect and thus removing ignorance of your true nature.

Anna: I have some questions concerning this verse of Adi Shankara's *Aparokshanubhuti*:

“Just as earth is the material cause of a pot, awareness is the material cause of ignorance and the thoughts it produces. This is the way of inquiry.”

I'm confused about ignorance from reading this text. Does “ignorance of the self” mean that the self is ignorant? Or does it mean the *jiva* being ignorant of the self?

Sundari: The verses of Vedanta need to be explained by a teacher. On the surface they can seem to be confusing. Awareness, the self, does not consciously set out to create ignorance of itself. In fact it is absurd to think that the self ever forgets who or what it is. However, because awareness is limitless it has limitless power and if it did not have the power to forget it would not be limitless. Nonetheless, self-forgetfulness is not limitless. If it were, reality would not be non-dual as scripture claims and as our epiphanies reveal it to be. Because inquiry reveals that everything that is ultimately resolves only into awareness, awareness is said to be the cause of self-ignorance. Ignorance in Vedantic literature does not refer to ignorance of subtle or gross objects, only to ignorance of the self.

Or we can say this another way: the self is pure consciousness; it does not think and is free of all qualities (*nirguna*). Therefore it can neither remember or forget itself. But when *maya* (ignorance) is operating, the self apparently does the impossible and “forgets” its true nature!

Anna: And if Vedantic literature does not refer to ignorance of subtle or gross objects, only to

ignorance of the self, where does this ignorance take place?

Sundari: Once *maya* is operating, the *jiva* (the self apparently under the spell of ignorance) experiences ignorance (and knowledge) in the intellect, the *buddhi*, which is a function in the subtle body. This causes it to think it is a doer and that it is separate from gross and subtle objects, i.e. it creates *samsara*, which is simply the belief in duality.

Vedanta is a proven means of knowledge given to the self by the self to remove the spell of ignorance, so that the *jiva* can live free as the self while it seems to live with the subtle and gross objects that make up *mithya*, the apparent reality.

Anna: In what way is there a difference between ignorance of subtle or gross objects and ignorance of the self? Are they disconnected in a certain sense?

Sundari: Subtle and gross objects are not real; they have a dependent reality on the self, but the self is always free of the objects. The self and the subtle and gross objects are in a different order or reality: *satya* and *mithya*. *Satya* is the self, pure intelligence with no qualities; *mithya* has qualities. It is an apparent reality that the *jiva* thinks is a real reality.

Ignorance and knowledge of gross and subtle objects is harmful or helpful in obtaining what one wants in the world, and self-knowledge is helpful in freeing the self of the *jiva*, the one who wants things in the apparent reality. So they are disconnected in the sense that they have different purposes. Having said that, it is just one ignorance because one seeks for things in the world because one is ignorant of the self.

Anna: What happens to the ignorance of subtle and gross objects when through inquiry the ignorance of the self is removed?

Sundari: Self-knowledge only removes self-ignorance, not ignorance of objects. When you know you are the self, you can still forget your keys or to keep an appointment or the experience of any and all objects. When you know who you are, you cannot forget yourself, because you are always present.

Avidya, which is your personal ignorance, does end with self-realisation, because self-knowledge permanently removes it. This is called enlightenment, but actually it is just removing that which “covered” the self and hid its true nature from itself. It is not the *jiva* that attains enlightenment, the *jiva*, or subtle body, is inert; it owes its existence to the light of the self shining on it. When ignorance is removed (*avidya*), your true nature as the self is revealed to you, the self. It is then the self that “experiences” the ego, not the other way around as it seems.

Anna: I’m sorry for the amount of questions... thank you for your answers.

Sundari: You are welcome, Anna.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari (with a bit of help from Ram ☺)