

It Is Not about the Experience

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Weyland: Hi, Sundari. I had wanted to email James, though per his instructions at his site I am emailing you. I hope you don't mind. I expect you are as busy as he is. I will choose my words carefully in this email. I don't wish to waste your time though feel I already am. The answer to my query I already know. I could say I know it, but I am it. Still, I find myself writing to you guys. The answer you will give doesn't really matter to me, yet why am I writing? Ha, ha! Like the title says, it could be about making sense of it all. Anyhow, I will explain my life and background. As James wrote at the site, he likes that.

Sundari: Yes, indeed I do answer the *satsangs* for James.

As to why you are writing to me – who is writing? Weyland is a name that refers to the self under the spell of ignorance. It is always the self talking to itself because there is only the self. Maybe it needs to hear something from itself.

Weyland: I have led an unusual life. I will briefly give you some interesting points. I felt lonely in my childhood even though I have three sisters. I was a troublesome child. By the age of 14 I viewed my parents as being too strict, and I ran away from home. Quickly I turned to crime and drugs. I got involved with gangs and became a gang leader. For 13 years I was involved in crime. In that time I had many attempts on my life by terrorists, including being tortured, interrogated, shot at and stabbed. I also caused lots of pain to others. I am from Northern Ireland but now live in England.

I became addicted to cocaine. In the end it was too much for me. With many terrorists after me and a raging drug addiction, I planned to take my life. I chanced upon *reiki*, and that saved me then, giving some respite for a time. That was in September 2005. On occasion I have continued to battle addiction, though something changed in me. With *reiki* my eyes opened, it seemed, for the first time. I have become a *yoga* teacher, a *reiki* teacher and a self-defence teacher. If I can say to you my life has been full of pain, it is true. There has been much guilt also, as my heart softened to the world.

Sundari: Great story, Weyland, thanks for sharing it. It is often the case with “spiritual types” that they are the highly sensitive misfits and usually suffer a great deal because of it. James went down a similar path, although he stopped short of crime and violence. Your story sounds particularly colourful, to say the least! The important thing to understand is that it is just a story. It does not define you. James wrote his autobiography because he got tired of people asking him about it and he was thoroughly bored with it.

I am not sure what your *sadhana* has been, other than *reiki*, *yoga* and martial arts. Vedanta stands apart from all other teachings in that it is not a path, it is not about gaining anything. In fact it is about losing something rather close to you: the “person” you think you are. *Yoga*, *reiki* and

martial arts are all great disciplines and no doubt are very helpful in preparing the mind for *moksa*, which is freedom from the experiencing entity, i.e. Weyland. However (and this a big however), they are all experience-based, and herein lies the problem. Vedanta says that only knowledge, NOT experience, will set you free.

I don't know what your understanding of the scripture is. Vedanta is not a religion and it is not a spiritual path; it is the science of non-duality. It is totally logical and it is the knowledge that underpins all other knowledge. It is not something to be learned or studied, it is to be understood as being about you, awareness. Vedanta has to be approached systematically and diligently, which is why the qualifications are necessary. It has a whole teaching on what the requirements are for the serious seeker to embark on this journey of the self towards itself. It offers the "tools" to apply this knowledge to the mind so that it translates into daily life. You are obviously qualified; this means that you are a mature seeker, have assimilated your life experiences and understand that the joy is not in the object. The joy is in you, awareness.

Very briefly and jumping ahead, if you have not ventured into the scripture yet, there is a very important teaching in Vedanta explaining how the macrocosmic mind functions that would be very useful to further understanding the conditioning that made up the person called Weyland. It is difficult to go into it here, because it is a very subtle teaching and normally comes after the inquirer has established the groundwork in a Vedantic context. However, just briefly, this teaching explains that the macrocosmic mind is made up of three basic programmes called the *gunas*, which is a Sanskrit word meaning "ropes." They are *rajas*, the projecting energy, *tamas*, the concealing energy, and *sattva*, the revealing energy. The *gunas* govern the creation of everything and run everything; collectively they are called *Isvara*, or the Creator. These three programmes make up "Weyland's" conditioning, which means he did not make himself the way he is, *Isvara* did. This is why *moksa* is freedom from the false notion that you are ever the doer. These programmes run the apparent person relentlessly until they are understood. I will speak more about this further into your email.

Weyland: I have been having some differences in perception. I won't say it is experiences, as it is not. It is an awareness of sorts. I know you guys call it that, but I termed it that before I read your stuff. I have had to stop reading some of your material, simply because it is so familiar to what my life is like and I want to try not to, er, "contaminate" things before I speak to you.

Sundari: I know what you mean when you say that what is becoming apparent to you is a shift in perception, "an awareness," which you take not to be an experience. It is an experience but a very different one. What Weyland is experiencing is you, awareness, the experienceless experiencer, the one who knows what Weyland is perceiving/experiencing, aware of itself. It is not "an awareness of sorts"; it is awareness, you. Vedanta calls awareness "the non-experiencing witness." The self is witnessing the limited entity called Weyland, perceiving its unlimited self through the lens of this apparent and seemingly limited identity. "Apparent" in this context means that although this identity (Weyland) appears to be real, it is only apparently so. "Real" being defined by "that which is always present and never changes," which of course cannot be applied to anything in creation, including Weyland. Only awareness fits that definition. It is the self "experiencing the ego" instead of the other way around.

The self, although it gives rise to all experiences, itself does not experience anything and does

not feel like anything, which is why it is very difficult to describe.

You are correct in saying that you don't want to contaminate things before speaking to us. It is a very good idea not to bring your experience, ideas and opinions into it. Self-inquiry involves exposing the mind to the scripture by listening, then reasoning and contemplating in the light of the scripture and not the other way around.

Awareness is not a term that James and I have given to the self; it is what Vedanta calls the self/consciousness/*atman/brahman*. There are many names but awareness is simple and direct. Vedanta is not our teaching, it is an independent means of knowledge and thus has nothing to do with our opinions or experience, although it confirms all of them.

Weyland: Your material is really important. However, the truth that I am is what is applicable to me. The funny thing is, it is not "my" truth, it is yours also. How could it not be? I had best describe things...

Sundari: Again, it is not "our" material, although James has probably done more to bring Vedanta to the West than most other teachers. The "truth" does not belong to anyone; it stands alone, immutable and unchanging. This is why Vedanta is so powerful. It is a complete teaching that has worked out absolutely every aspect of the apparent reality and it is irrefutable. It is called revealed knowledge, *apaurusheya jnanam*, which is the Sanskrit term for it. This means it did not come from the mind of man; it was given to consciousness by consciousness in order that the effect could understand the cause.

The cause being subtler than the effect, it cannot be known directly. Our senses, the tools of perception and inference, are too gross to grasp something so subtle. This is why you feel like it is not an experience; it is so subtle the mind cannot grasp it. In fact the mind does not grasp it because the mind is inert. It is an object known to you, awareness. When self-knowledge appears in the mind, it removes ignorance and the self can be "perceived" in a purified mind. You have been cleaning up your act, and have obviously faced the *karma* from your past actions. This takes great courage.

Weyland: Last summer something happened. Sitting in half-lotus and meditation, my awareness went deep inside me. There was a release of happiness, then bliss. This had been building from happiness for some months. My breathing began to get quicker, into heavy breathing. I began to alternate between crying out loud and laughing. Rushes flowed through my body. I am not being rude (I have a loving wife) but it was kind of orgasmic. Please excuse me saying that to a woman. I only want to give the facts. Weyland melted away and there was a merging of all. Myself (I could no longer call myself Weyland) was everywhere all at once. After 50 minutes I came out of the pose, and for four full days after this it continued.

Sundari: I am not a woman, I am awareness, and as such I have no gender. ☺ Awareness did not go "deep inside you." Weyland "merged into" his true nature, awareness. It is the greatest of orgasms, the cosmic orgasm. This is a classic epiphany, or experience of the self as the self.

The problem with this is it is an experience. All experiences end, so by definition they are not

real. And as you say, it did end. Experience is like a time-release capsule; it is meant to deliver knowledge. If the knowledge is not assimilated, it is lost and the one who had this mind-blowing experience is left longing for another experience. Or they can get stuck in *sattva*, stuck in bliss, thinking that this is the Holy Grail. Unfortunately, it is not, unless the knowledge from the experience is extracted and understood.

James once met a man who had the very same experience to the one you have described here. He was an extreme sports fan, very wealthy. He was skiing down a very dangerous mountain slope and slipped into *savikalpa samadhi*: he saw everything as it really is, non-dual. This state remained with him for four years, and one day it disappeared. When James met him he was back on the spiritual “track,” trying desperately to get it back. This is the problem with these powerful epiphanies; they can be a blessing or a curse, depending on how one assimilates them.

We also know an 83-year-old man who had the same kind of epiphany at 21. It disappeared after a few months and he spent the next 60 years of his life exploring every nook and cranny of the “spiritual world” trying to find it again. He said that he would not recommend it to anyone! His search did make him highly qualified though, and at 80 years old he met James, and finally and permanently realised his true nature as the self and set himself free. I can put you in touch with him, if you so desire.

Weyland: I had never felt anything like that up till then. The world changed. Since then there came a calming of sorts for a time. Fast-forward to lately...

How can this be put? I will simply write freely and openly. This is beyond an experience. This is the way things are. This is the way I am. It is truth, intensely, that knowing is here. The barriers have been cut down. Human drama doesn't bother me. Bad diet habits are falling away. Everyone's issues interest me. There is a happiness. No, there was a happiness, a bliss. There is a huge peace, calmness, now. Every single thing in life pleases me. Every single thing excites me. I am inspired by all in the world. The leaves blowing in the wind, people walking, anything. It all fascinates me. I have never experienced this before, as I have never viewed the world as myself. This has come about by realising that outward things do not give me happiness. That is within. Intuitively I wanted to see what was beyond this happiness/bliss.

Sundari: You, awareness, are beyond any experience. However, Weyland, or the self under the spell of ignorance, is in *savikalpa samadhi*, which is seeing as the self sees, that everything is non-different from you, it all arises out of you, but you are free of it. This is non-dual vision and it feels intensely good, although “feels” is not a good way to describe it. It just feels normal, because this is what is normal. While you are in this state, *maya* or ignorance, no longer has you, the self, under its spell and you see clearly. Unfortunately, this is an experience, and sooner or later you will come out of this state and Weyland will be back.

This happiness and bliss you are “experiencing” is the bliss sheath, *anandamaya kosa*. Read up on the sheaths in James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment*, which if you have not read is a must (we insist on people reading it if they want us to help them effectively). This bliss is called *ananda*, and it is experiential and therefore does not last, even though the nature of the self is *sat-chit-ananda* – awareness, existence, bliss.

The bliss of the self is a different kind of bliss in that it does not really feel like anything and it is

not an experience. It is just a solid and supreme confidence that you are that which gives rise to all the objects – and – you are always free of them. It cannot even be called knowledge, because at this stage even knowledge is an object known to you. It is the self- aware of itself, self-luminous, dependent on nothing. This bliss is called *anantum*, eternal bliss, and when you are firm in the knowledge of your true nature as the self, this bliss does not come and go.

This bliss is what you intuitively want to find “beyond” the bliss you are currently experiencing; you must know intuitively that what you are experiencing is going to end, which it will.

Once self-knowledge has permanently removed the ignorance of your true nature and you know yourself to be the self and not Weyland, duality functions as it did “before.” It is like a mirage on the desert floor: you see it, so it does exist, but you know it is not real. This is called “conditioned superimposition.” The macrocosmic mind is unchanged, the world carries on as usual and a chair is just a chair again. And you as awareness have no problem with any of it. Duality (ignorance of your true nature) is only a problem if you don’t know what it is.

Awareness is normal – and ordinary. It’s no big deal. One of the big problems with *yoga* and many other spiritual traditions is that the self is made out to be this amazing, extraordinary, rarefied “state” that only an elite few ever attain. Epiphanies of the sort you are experiencing most often serve to confirm this myth. This is rubbish, as the self is not a “state” and it is the most ordinary thing there is – because it is all there is.

Weyland: My words at the start of this email were not meant to be flippant. You won’t take them as such, I know. This is truth inside me. It was always there, just obscured, so what others say about it does not matter, really. And there is no drama in that at all. Still, I find myself writing! Isn’t that a lovely contradiction? And it is really cool! Are things meant to make sense? Maybe not.

Sundari: You are right, I definitely do not take them as flippant! And yes, it does all make sense, but not in the way you think it does. This truth is not inside you; you are this truth, because there is nowhere that you, awareness, are not. I know what you mean though. And of course this awareness was always there. Can you think of time when you were not aware? It is not possible, firstly because if you are not aware, you are six feet under. And secondly, if it were possible for you to be unaware, you would have had to have been there to know that you are not aware. Who would be unaware?

It is not a contradiction that you are writing to “me.” As I said, Weyland is a name that refers to the self under the spell of ignorance, seeking freedom from the bondage of ignorance.

This is why you are writing – to yourself. The self wants to understand and assimilate what it is experiencing.

The self is that which is always present and never changes. Awareness, you, are whole and complete, non-dual, actionless, unchanging, unconcerned, ordinary awareness.

Weyland: This is different. There is a clarity, a joy, a peace, a calmness, an aliveness. I walk down the street and feel a connection to strangers as if they were my close relatives. I am being honest; inside me there is a connection to all things outside. No, that is not totally accurate. It is

more. I am the chair in front of me now. No, I am not mentally ill or on drugs! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, I could write for hours on this. Please feel free to ask me anything at all. Any response is most welcome. It has been like this for eight days now. There is no effort. Sitting in meditation looking inward heightens it, but it is constant in all I do. I am it, so how could it not be present at all times? It is the only thing I truly am. There is no truth besides it/myself.

~ Warmest wishes, Weyland

Sundari: Yes, this is how it really is; you are seeing you, the self, because there is only you. The joy you are experiencing is you, awareness, and it comes from you, not the objects. It is the greatest high there is! Nothing takes you higher than this. As they say in the classics, this is it, man!

I do not need to ask you any questions; you describe your epiphany and *savikalpa samadhi* perfectly. The thing is, as with your epiphany, although this “state” (awareness is not a state) is seeing how the self sees, it is nonetheless a state of mind. States end, meaning they are not real. What is important is that you assimilate the knowledge that this experience is meant to deliver, so that it becomes pure knowledge and permanent. You will need a valid means of knowledge for that, which is why *Isvara* has brought you to Vedanta. When the “student” is ready, the teacher appears. The teacher is pure awareness and the student is awareness under the spell of ignorance.

We have this situation very often with inquirers; the people who come to Vedanta are usually ready for it, i.e. they are qualified (read up on the qualifications, very important). Many have had identical experiences to the one you describe. By the time Vedanta comes to them, they are sick of these experiences. That is how it was for James, and how Vedanta entered his life. He finally gave up on experience.

To do this, one needs a thorough understanding of how the apparent reality, *dharma* field, or macrocosmic mind, functions. I have attached a very brief email I wrote to an inquirer on this very important teaching. It is called the *Isvara-jiva-jagat aikyam*. This is the identity between pure awareness, awareness operating *maya* (*Isvara*), the individual (*jiva*) and the world (*jagat*). It also describes how the *gunas* govern the apparent reality. This simply unfolds the meaning of the individual, the world and awareness, and the connection between all of them.

To have self-knowledge permanently remove the ignorance of your true nature as awareness, you will need a thorough understanding of and the practice all the *yogas*: *jnana yoga*, *karma yoga*, *triguna vibhava yoga*.

The number of seekers who have had mind-blowing epiphanies (James included) is legion. Not many gain permanent self-knowledge from them. More often than not, they are not understood, so become more of a hindrance than a help. What is very important to understand is that these kinds of experiences are not necessary for enlightenment.

Even if they do produce self-realisation, self-realisation is not *moksa* because it is an experience and happens in time. For *moksa* to happen, self-actualisation has to take place, which is the understanding of what it means to be self-realised in the apparent reality. And although it is only apparently real, the world exists and functions according to certain built-in rules, which the individual is subject to. There can still be considerable “work” to be done “after” self-realisation

for *moksa* to be permanent.

Very often these *adhikaris* (highly-qualified seekers) get stuck or even “lose” their self-realisation. This is why James and I focus not only on what is required for self-realisation, but also on self-actualisation.

Enlightenment, or *moksa*, means that you know that you are the light which illumines the objects, giving them their apparent existence. It means that you have rendered all the binding *vasanas* unbinding by discriminating the self from the objects appearing in it, i.e. you have negated all the objects as not you, then understood that all is made up of you and has a dependent existence on you, yet you, awareness, are always free of the objects. This is freedom from Weyland, not for him, freedom from *samsara*, the notion of duality, and the wheel of *karma*, existential suffering.

I am very happy to engage in further discussions about this, so please feel free to write any time!

Thanks again for sharing your story, very touching. ☺

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari