

# Literary Vasanas

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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**Sydney:** I've been reading some *satsangs* at ShiningWorld and felt inclined to say hello. I don't want to do anything, yet I feel that I should be doing something, have some kind of regimen. I suppose the feeling will pass, as all feelings pass. All I want to do is read and contemplate Vedanta, take walks in the woods and indulge in the occasional movie and bowl of ice cream. I feel sometimes as though I'm waiting for something, but don't know what it is. I do feel grateful to you and James and wanted to say so. Hope all is lovely in South Africa and that you both enjoy a break from all the nagging, needy souls, like me, for whom you've become a help and a consolation.

Bless you both.

~ Love, Syd

**Sundari:** I can well understand what you mean, that lingering feeling of the doer wanting to engage in something that is meaningful, yet at the same time allowing stillness and silence to swallow up every last vestige of personhood. It makes me think of T.S. Eliot, his *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, and the last quartet one of my most favourite poems, *Little Gidding*.

**Sydney:** I just reread *The Four Quartets*, prompted by that wonderful quotation from the end of *Little Gidding*. I think of Eliot as the last poet of the West, and of *Little Gidding* as the last word about words. Perhaps aesthetic pleasure is the last clinging to *nama-rupa*. It exercises a powerful fascination. I sometimes wonder if I am done with it. Eliot seems to have extricated his poetry from the dying culture of the West and ended with what is a kind of commentary on some Christian *mahavakyas*: "All shall be well. And all manner of things shall be well," is from Julian of Norwich, who also said that Christ showed her that all of material creation is about the size of a nut you can hold in the palm of your hand and that God is the doer of all actions. I suppose I still have a desire for some literary indulgence and a fondness for Julian and St. John of the Cross. I am also listening to James' talks on *Vivekachudamini*, and hope to be able to follow the webinar on the *Gita* next week.

**Sundari:** Yes indeed, James and I have the same propensity for indulgence (i.e. *vasanas*!) when it comes to literary expression; we love all words, although the kinds we are mostly interested in are those which deliver self-knowledge with clarity eloquence and beauty. Vedanta is a *sabda pramana* and as such relies on words to be conveyed; the more eloquent and precise the better of course. In fact that is the one of the most important factors involved in writing or teaching Vedanta, the correct use of words. So it is interesting as both James and I are logophiles as well as *jijnasus*.

I enjoy Eliot for the same reasons you mention, amongst other poets of his ilk. Some of his poetry can be a little verbose, in my opinion (must be the influence of the dying culture of the West, as

you put it (has it ever really lived?). My father's only words of wisdom to me were, "Do not confuse Christ with the Christians," and I think that applies to many so-called great beings, the Buddha being another one. It never fails to fascinate me how steadfastly Christianity has refused to recognise the true non-dual meaning of many of the sayings attributed to Christ. As for the Buddha and his teachings on the emptiness of matter – well, why did he never teach the knower of the emptiness? *Namarupa* has some interesting connotations, and from a literary point of view, as in naming objects, well, there is no need to relinquish the aesthetic pleasure. We cannot but name things anyway, so why not do so beautifully! Once one knows that all objects are you but you are always free of the objects, there is no need to relinquish anything. And *mithya* will be here regardless of how much one denies it. This is one of the misconceptions prevailing about the nature of enlightenment, that one must relinquish objects or the pleasure one derives from them. Whatever for? You are then burdened with the one who does the relinquishing. Vedanta says that *moksa* means there is nothing to drop because the one who is doing the dropping has been dropped. Why else would anyone pursue *moksa* if it were not so that the *jiva* can enjoy the apparent reality? The only time one truly understands pleasure and can enjoy anything (in joy) is when you are free of the dependence on objects to deliver pleasure/joy to you because you know you are the source! ☺ Just as it is your beauty that makes a sunset or a rose beautiful (whether you knew what to call them or not), so it is the light of awareness, you, that creates the brilliance of name and form.

**Syd:** Just a note of thanks for your reply, which was, as always, enlightening. It helped my ongoing transition from being one of the sheeple to being, well... just being. I'm watching as much of the webinar as I am able. James is at the top of his game, so to speak. So much fun to listen to him.

~ Love and gratitude, Syd