

Self-Realization Is Not *Moksa*

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Jonathon: So once I know who I am and have self-knowledge, do I then, at that point, have true free will to do what I'd like in the world or is it the exact opposite and I, as awareness, do nothing and simply see or watch what happens?

I ask because I'm struggling big-time with my work/career situation and am 44, a single dad of a seven-year-old, living with my parents and no money in the bank account.

Is this just what's happening and supposed to be happening or am I to "get after it" and go for whatever?

Your reply is greatly appreciated!

~ Thank you, Jonathon

Sundari: Have you read any of James' books, particularly *The Essence of Enlightenment*? Let me know what your *sadhana* consists of. We strongly advise everyone who writes to us for the first time to read James' books, read as many of the *satsangs* at the website and watch as many YouTube videos as possible. You will find many free videos there. Self-inquiry is the toughest thing you will ever do and, as ignorance is hardwired, it will not just disappear with self-realisation.

As for free will, if you think you are the doer (the person, or ego) you have limited free will in that you are seemingly free to choose one thing over another, according to your nature, or conditioning. The *dharma* field operates according to certain laws, and if they are understood and followed, it is possible to achieve success from the standpoint of the *jiva*. If that were not the case, *moksa*, or freedom from the apparent reality, would never be possible. The apparent reality is not real, so it is possible to "take action," i.e. self-inquiry, to be free of it. If it were real, no one would ever be free of it. So if one applies this rule and takes the appropriate action at the appropriate time, desired results are usually, but not always, achieved. There are no guarantees in the apparent reality, because *Isvara* runs the *dharma* field and takes care of the needs of the total first.

The other side of this is that the choices that people make, although they seem to be volitional and individual, are usually pretty predictable and repetitive. This is because most people, who have no or very limited self-knowledge, behave like automatons, although they don't think that they do. They think that they are doing the choosing, but actually, their conditioning (*vasanas/gunas*) is doing the choosing. Still, it does look like one has free will, and in a way, the person does. From this platform free will gives the person the choice to "make the best" of their lives, and relative success is thus possible in the apparent reality.

When ignorance has been completely removed by self-knowledge and you know that your true nature is whole and complete non-dual awareness, what is there to choose? It is all you, awareness, and it is all good. This means that the doer has been negated and the binding

vasanas rendered non-binding. *Samsara* then no longer exists in “your” mind and you see everything from the perspective of the self, which means that you have non-dual vision and see everything as non-different from you.

You will still function as a *jiva*, or person in the “world,” but you will know that the person and the world are only apparently real. As awareness you will know that everything arises out of you and depends on you, but you are always free of everything and depend on nothing. As a liberated *jiva*, you will have understood that the *dharma* field (or *Isvara* wielding *maya*) is made up of the *gunas* and it runs the way it runs whether you are enlightened or not, for the good of the total. *Isvara* does not care if you are enlightened or not. *Isvara* sees you as whole and complete, non-dual awareness.

Every action you take will be with the *karma yoga* attitude, consecrating the results to *Isvara* with the knowledge that you are not in control of the results of action.

The *dharma* field is like a computer game: all the possible moves are programmed into the game before you play it. Although it appears as if you are making independent moves and playing the game to win or lose, but in actual fact it is already predetermined, as you can only make the moves that are already in the program. *Isvara*, or the *dharma* field, is playing the game.

That is why *karma yoga* is such an important teaching and the only way to negate the doer. It is the most sensible way to live because it relieves the pressure of getting the “right” result or any particular result for that matter because you understand that the *dharma* field is out of your control; only *Isvara* has knowledge of all objects and controls the field for the good of the total. You get the results that are best for you at any given time. There is no way to step out of the *dharma* field. And as a *jiva* you never do, other than through *moksa*, which is liberation from the person, not for the person.

With regards to your statement that you have self-knowledge, it is one thing to know about the self (indirect knowledge) and quite another to know what this means for the *jiva*, the person living in the world (direct knowledge). Unless self-knowledge fully translates into the life of the *jiva*, it will not free the mind from suffering. There is a world of difference between direct and indirect knowledge.

Self-realisation is an experiential term. It is also where the work of self-actualisation begins. Self-realisation is an experience, and because all experience occurs in time no experience can become permanent, all experiences will end. Experience is therefore not real in the light of Vedanta’s definition of what constitutes real: real being “that which is always present and never changes.” Only awareness fits that definition, meaning one can “lose” one’s self-realisation if the knowledge “I am whole and complete, actionless, unchanging, unlimited, ordinary awareness” is not fully assimilated and you understand what that means for the *jiva*. As stated above but bears repeating, it is one thing to know that your true nature is awareness it is quite another to live free of the person and as the self.

Self-actualisation is the consistent, total application of self-knowledge to one’s life. To be self-actualised means (1) that one has fully discriminated the self (consciousness) from the objects appearing in you (all objects, meaning all gross objects as well as one’s conditioning, thoughts and feelings – all experience) and (2) that that knowledge has (a) rendered the binding *vasanas* non-binding and (b) negated one’s sense of doership. Unless self-knowledge translates fully into the life of the person, you cannot claim that self-actualization has taken place. As the person, you

are still be identified with certain aspects of being a person. In other words, binding *vasanas* and the sense of doership, or egoic belief in separation, will still be causing agitation in the mind.

One can only fully actualise self-knowledge when you have understood the identity between awareness, *Isvara* and the *jiva*. This is where many inquirers get stuck (or come unstuck) in and it is why many self-realised people do not self-actualise. Understanding *Isvara* is the key. This is probably the most important teaching in Vedanta. *Isvara* is your environment and everything in it, including you as the person called Jonathon, your conditioning and your *karma*. There is no fast track to living free, and freedom is not freedom unless you have fully assimilated all the teachings and they translate into every aspect of life for the person. *Moksa* is only for the person, after all. As awareness, you are already free and always have been. What is the point of self-realisation if the mind is still under the tyranny of its likes and dislikes (*vasanas*) and dragged down by its *karma*?

And lastly, what do you mean by your last question, “Is this just what’s happening and supposed to be happening or am I to ‘get after it’ and go for whatever?”

Moksa, or enlightenment, is realising your true nature as the self, i.e. of reality as non-dual consciousness. It is not something you can gain, because it is and always has been who you are: actionless, whole and complete, non-dual, unlimited, ever-present and unconditioned pure awareness. It is not a fix-all remedy for your psychological or worldly problems. What stands in the way of you appreciating this fact is ignorance of your true nature. Nothing you do will remove it other than self-knowledge. The minimum requirements for self-inquiry are that you have established that the joy is not in the object and also that the mind is sufficiently cleared of its psychological issues at least enough for it to have the ability to focus. If you desire freedom from limitation, or *moksa*, more than anything else, then you have to understand what all the requirements are and develop them, if they are not present. If you do not, self-knowledge will not stick in the mind. There is no shortcut to this. You have to do the work; no one can do it for you.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari