

The Carnival of *Maya*

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Lucia: Dear Sundari, I thank you once again for taking such time to craft a clear and totally relevant response.

Sundari: I am going to reply point by point, as it is easier that way – you are so welcome. Apologies if I come across as “teaching” when you are not actually asking for it! I can’t help myself – I blame *Isvara*!

Lucia: It was very helpful to be reminded of the nature of *avidya* and the experiencer. I have identified a stubborn thought pattern regarding the “someday” storybook notion of enlightenment. Even when I think I have dissolved it, it reappears in a subtle fear or idea.

Sundari: This is the thought I mentioned in my last email that keeps many inquirers stuck. I picked this up at recently from a question you asked James, something about your husband saying he wants to know when self-inquiry is going to produce “a nice person.” Whether they know or not, all *jivas* get so tired of being *jivas*; so tired of the whirlpool of *samsara* and limitation, so tired of the relentless voices of diminishment going on in the mind. It goes with the territory of being a person – *samsara* is brutal. So it is natural when the mind turns inwards towards the self and starts experiencing the reflection of the self in a pure mind that there is this strong desire to transform the *jiva*, ditch the *jiva* or at least improve the *jiva*. After all, it is a bother being tied to being a person in a meat tube! Such endless activity and experience; the belief in doership wears everyone out sooner or later.

While freedom is freedom from the *jiva*, it is also freedom for the *jiva*. Who else would it be for, seeing as awareness you are already free? And if *Isvara* made the *jiva* the way it is, why try to change it? It’s pointless. Self-inquiry is not about that, because self-knowledge makes it clear that you are not the *jiva*, but awareness. This is where the teaching starts: What does that mean to the *jiva*? If you can’t improve it, what’s the point of self-inquiry?

Well, the point is to understand the *jiva-Isvara* identity. Then you understand that freedom is freedom in spite of *samsara* because the *jiva* remains; so does *Isvara* and macrocosmic ignorance. All that changes is how the *jiva* relates to the field. It no longer pokes at it, making trouble for itself. It no longer pokes at itself or judges itself as unworthy or in need of improvement. Knowing who it is, the *jiva* follows *dharma*, so has very healthy self-esteem and self-confidence. It no longer indulges in ego flagellation or aggrandizement, because it understands the programme running the *jiva* and loves it unconditionally. It is not an ego trying to experience awareness; it is awareness making experience possible for the ego – who is only ever experiencing awareness.

That is why James, of all teachers, has emphasized the word “ordinary” to describe awareness. It is truly the most ordinary thing because it is all there is; and yet, as you say, also the most

powerful. The Royal Secret, hidden in plain sight!

Lucia: It's like that game at the carnival where you have to shoot the groundhogs as they pop up out of the holes... shoot one and another pops up in no time at all... that's the vigilance of which you speak.

Sundari: Yes, indeed. Good metaphor for ignorance. The carnival of *maya* is always going on and there is no way out of the seduction of all the bells and whistles of the game other than through self-knowledge.

Lucia: I am fully engaged in this rather interesting and strangely pleasing practice of keeping watch over the thoughts as they try to morph into old patterns and then converting them one by one over and over to the truth: "That thought is an object, it is appearing in me, it is known to me," "This is *maya* making that look real," "That is conditioning replaying an old narrative there," and then, "I am the self, the limitless substrate of all being. I am the unborn, unchanging awareness in which all of this creation is born and dies back into, I am whole, I am complete, nothing can add to me and nothing can diminish me in any way..." and on it goes. ☺

Sundari: Discriminating you, awareness, from the objects that appear in you is the essence of *moksa*, and it never ends for the *jiva*. Eventually though, the discrimination is effortless and natural, there is no elite thought about it, because you are the knowledge – there is no space between you and the objects (thoughts/experience). When self-knowledge is firm, the mind sees everything first as awareness and second as the *jiva*, and never confuses the two again.

What helps is to press "pause" every time you hear yourself say "I" or "me" and ask yourself: Who is speaking here?

I have added below a short teaching on the three "types" of *jivas*, which is very helpful for self-inquiry. I know you know most of this and I have said some of it before, but this is very helpful to keep as a FAQ.

Definition of *Jiva*

The definition of *Jiva* is "awareness with a Subtle Body." *Jiva* is a principle, a *tattva*, not a specific person. It is actually pure awareness, *Paramatma*.

There is really only one person, or Subtle Body, appearing as many; it appears as if there are individuals who are all different. However, the one individual appear as basically three types of individuals, or *jivas*:

1. The *jiva* who thinks it is a person with a name, a history and an address. This *jiva* is called the doer, or the human being, the one identified with objects (including all experience).
2. There is the *jiva* who knows about awareness, but it does not know what it means to be awareness. This *jiva* has indirect knowledge and is often called a self-realised *jiva*. This *jiva* has had an experience of being awareness, but has not actualised self-knowledge, so the knowledge

is not firm and ignorance is still present. This is the one who re-identifies with objects or still seeks experience because the *vasanas* are still binding and doership has not been fully dissolved.

3. And finally, there is the *jiva* who has permanent direct knowledge because he/she knows that their true identity IS awareness and they know what it means to be awareness – while still apparently manifesting as a *jiva*, or individual. This means that self-knowledge translates fully into ALL aspects of the person's life. This is the *jivanmukta*, the self no longer under the spell of ignorance, or the self-actualised *jiva* or person.

Another big problem in the spiritual world is that seekers believe that self-realisation, or enlightenment, will make the person limitless. It will not. As awareness you are and always have been limitless. As the person you are and always will be limited. Removing ignorance of your true nature does not mean that you change as a person or that you have to become perfect or "holy." The person never leaves the apparent reality and the apparent reality is limited. The person is fine the way they are; they do not need to be perfected. And *Isvara's* world is perfect the way it is, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. The person just has an ignorance problem.

Duality does not disappear when you know that it is just a superimposition onto non-duality, like the mirage on the desert floor, even though you know it is a mirage and you can still see it, but you don't take it to be real. Duality of ignorance is only a problem when you don't know what it is, taking ignorance to be knowledge.

To repeat: the self-actualised person has permanently discriminated what is real (that which is always present and never changing = awareness) from what is only apparently real (that which is NOT always present and always changing = all objects) AND has rendered all the binding *vasanas* non-binding as well as negated the doer: the person who thinks they are a person.

Jiva also manifests as three "little" *jivas* according to the state that it experiences:

1. As *viswa*, the waking state entity. In this state its mind is totally extroverted. It is hypnotised by duality. It chases and consumes experiences. *Viswa* appears in two forms: (a) free of identification with objects (a *jivanmukta*) or (b) as a doer (*karta*), or "person" identified with objects (a *samsari*). Both a *jivanmukta*, a liberated person, and a *samsari*, a bound person, have a common identity as awareness.

2 As *tajjasa*, the "shining one," awareness with a subtle body, illumining the dream state. The subtle body is turned inward facing the causal body, the *vasanas*. The experiences it has are just experiences of the *vasanas*. *Jiva* is not present in the dream state in the same way that it is present in the waking state. In the waking state, *jiva* identifies with the doer, so the doer is not seen as an object. It is thought to be the subject. In the dream state there is also identification but the doer/ego, can also appear as an object illumined by *tajjasa*, awareness reflected on the subtle body; in the dream you can see the waker going about its business, walking, talking, eating, etc. The doer/ego is a dream doer/ego similar in some respects to *viswa*, but with unique powers. These powers are inherent in the dream state and do not belong to *tajjasa* although in normal dreams it identifies with them. The doer/ego and the events appearing in the dream are just waking state events that have become *vasanas* that outpicture as dream events.

3. As the sleeper, *prajna*, in the deep sleep state. *Prajna* means "almost enlightened." It is almost

enlightened because it experiences the limitlessness and bliss of awareness but lacks knowledge of what it is experiencing because the intellect is not present in deep sleep.

The subtle body disappears in deep sleep state, as does the microcosmic causal body (personal subconscious). The personal subconscious belongs to the *jiva* and produces the *jiva's karma*. The deep sleep state is defined as “a state with no mental activity.” It is the same for everyone because the personal subconscious is subsumed into *Isvara*, the macrocosmic causal body. Deep sleep is the presence of *tamoguna* alone. *Rajas* and *sattva* are dormant. There is no sense of individuality (*ahamkara*) in this state, because the subtle body of the individual is not there to be conditioned; the *ahamkara* belongs to the subtle body. The macrocosmic causal body, another name for *Isvara*, is the deep sleep state.

Although the nature of both the *jiva* and *Isvara* is awareness, both the *jiva* and *Isvara* are inconstant factors with reference to awareness. *Jiva* is inconstant because it changes from state to state and because self-knowledge removes the notion that it is a limited entity, revealing its nature to be pure awareness. *Isvara* in the role of Creator is inconstant because logic and scripture – which is just science – informs us that it disappears at the end of the creation cycle; whatever is created will be destroyed. *Isvara* in the role of Creator is eternal with reference to the *jiva* but not with reference to pure awareness, *Paramatman*, the constant factor.

The dream state has two aspects: waking dream and sleep dream. It is called the *pratibasika* state, the subjective state of reality. It is *jiva's* creation (*sristi*). It is not created directly by *Isvara* but is responsible for an individual *jiva's* interpretation of reality. In the dream state (whether the *jiva* is awake or asleep) *vasanas* influence how reality is interpreted by the *jiva*. *Isvara* provides the raw material for the interpretation, but not the interpretation itself. Ultimately it is all *Isvara*, but to get to that understanding – which is tantamount to *moksa* – the *jiva* has to understand what it is responsible for and *Isvara's* role in *jiva's* creations, i.e. projections, so that it can be free of both itself and *Isvara*.

The individual *jivas* and what they experience is called the *dharma* field (*Isvara*) because it is a field of laws. It is not under the *jiva's* control, but understanding its nature leads to self-knowledge because it clarifies the relative responsibilities of the *jiva* and *Isvara*. A *jiva* that faces *Isvara* without fear and total transparency (*jivanmukta*) is liberated here and “hereafter.” The *jivanmukta* understands that although its nature is awareness, the subtle body belongs to *Isvara*, which means the *jiva's* conditioning belongs to *Isvara* because the *gunas* are *Isvara*. Therefore it cannot be the doer. Hence the importance of *karma yoga*. You will not negate the doer without *karma yoga*, and you will not fully understand the importance of *karma yoga* or render the binding *vasanas* non-binding unless you understand *Isvara*.

A *jivanmukta* worships *Isvara* even though it knows that as awareness *Isvara* has a dependent reality on awareness because love is the nature of the self. He or she is totally relaxed having understood that *Isvara* is awareness in the role of Creator, taking care of the total. Non-dual vision means that you see everything as non-different from you, even though you know that you are not what you see. Furthermore, it means that you fully understand the three *jivas* and their respective states. The three *jivas* and their respective states are known to only be appearances (*mithya*) in you.

This means that enlightened or not *Isvara srsti*, or the *dharma* field, still apparently exists. The *jivanmukta* automatically follows *dharma* because it understands that the *dharma* field is a field of natural laws that the *jiva* is subject to, enlightened or not. It is very important to understand that

non-duality is not opposed to duality; duality is a superimposition onto non-duality and not real, meaning not always present and always changing. Duality is only apparently real, and it, Vedanta says, has an apparent existence because it can be experienced. When you know that your true nature is awareness and therefore always present and never changing, you can enjoy duality for what it is because you know that YOU are the joy in it. You then see the apparent reality like a mirage: you would not try to drink the water even though you can see it and it appears real. So you can love and touch and enjoy everything without shame or guilt because you know it is all you. You would not harm anything or anyone for the same reason, and you will follow *dharma* because you want to experience peace of mind, which is the true nature of the mind.

Lucia: Seeing ignorance at play actually excites me. I'm losing interest in activities that once entertained me. Sometimes I am overcome with gratitude and a feeling of fullness that feels almost too much to bear. It feels like a really good secret – about nothing, with no one to tell. It's ecstatic and completely normal. It's all new and what has always been. I feel so fortunate!

Sundari: So happy for you, Lucia! Finding Vedanta is grace, and grace is earned. It is the greatest blessing there available for the *jiva*. You have done the work, you are dedicated and the mind is single-pointed. You are freedom.

Lucia: Love to you both, and my gratitude always for the tireless work you do!

Sundari: Thanks, Lucia, and I look forward to more time with you someday.

~ Much love, Sundari