

# The Doer Cannot Free the Doer: Vedanta Is Not Theory in Practice

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**Sundaram:** *Pranam*, Gurumata. I am following the teachings to my best ability. I need your guidance. Here is what I have to say:

When my mind/intellect is calm and keen I try to dwell on the nature of consciousness. During such dwelling, initially mostly, I try to arrive at intellectual conviction. Maybe this is called “*manana*.” After this I try to gain the direct knowledge/experience of what I have intellectually ascertained, i.e. about the nature of consciousness. Here is where I need guidance and have some questions as follows...

**Sundari:** *Manana* is “reasoning, contemplation.” This is thinking about what the scripture is saying, examining the unexamined logic of your own experience. At this point you look at your beliefs and opinions in the light of what the scripture says, NOT the other way around.

The problem with this statement you make in the paragraph above is that it is oriented towards doing. Who is it that dwells on the nature of consciousness and tries to arrive at an intellectual understanding? It is the ego that is trying to get it and to gain the experience of self knowledge.

First and foremost, the ego, or mind, is inert; it is not conscious so it is never going to get enlightened. The mind, or ego, is simply reflected awareness. The self cannot be experienced because you are already the self and no special experience is required to experience your true nature. *Moksa* is negating the doer and discriminating the objects from you, awareness. To do this you need to understand the nature of objects, what makes up the *jiva* and the *dharma* field, or *Isvara*, as well as the identity between *Isvara* and *jiva*. By exposing the mind to self-knowledge it alone will do the work of removing the ignorance, *avidya*, of your true nature. Nothing the doer tries to do will suffice because *moksa* is freedom from the doer, not for him. I think you believe that Vedanta is theory in practice, that you get the knowledge and then put it into practice. It does not work that way. It is just the complete understanding of the self and its forms. It is knowing what *Isvara*, the Creator, is and how it creates, what the individual *jiva* is and its psychology and how the self, *Isvara* and *jiva* relate to the material world. It is a complete science.

Secondly, the nature of awareness is awareness, meaning it has no qualities, *nirguna*. *Moksa* is discriminating the objects from you, awareness, that you are awareness, not the one trying to understand awareness.

**Sundaram:** 1. From one angle it seems as if this whole process actually has to be negative, i.e. it is not any gain but it is losing or getting rid of the wrong assumptions/beliefs about myself. Or in short when firm conviction/knowledge in me arises that says “I am not body-mind or any object whatsoever” then it is an indication of an errorless condition.

**Sundari:** Yes, essentially this is correct. Self-knowledge removes ignorance by negating the

doer and all the objects, which leaves only awareness upon which all objects depend but which itself depends on nothing. Awareness is self-knowing and that which gives rise to all objects, which includes knowledge and ignorance. There is nothing to gain because as awareness you are the fullness which knows no limits. One cannot become more aware or more conscious. One can only become less ignorant through the application of self-knowledge to the mind, which is really the self under the apparent spell of ignorance.

**Sundaram:** 2. Is self-knowledge just the removal of wrong knowledge about myself or is it some positive gain? I think it has to be some positive knowledge. But given the fact that our true nature, i.e. objectless consciousness, can never become an object, it alone being the subject, what is this positive gain in knowledge? I may accept that self-knowledge is a positive gain and it cannot be explained logically but I am more interested in the method to realise it.

**Sundari:** Self-knowledge, as stated above, is the removal of ignorance, not the gaining of anything because you are already the self. There is nothing to gain because as awareness you are that which gives rise to everything so how could you gain anything? When *maya* obtains and the self under the spell of ignorance apparently identifies with objects, seemingly forgetting its own nature, self-knowledge is the only means to remove the spell of ignorance and reveal your true nature to be whole and complete, non-dual, ever-present, unchanging, limitless, actionless awareness. When self-knowledge has permanently removed your personal ignorance self-knowledge is no longer required because you are known to be awareness, you are *moksa* and you will automatically follow *dharma*. Knowledge and ignorance are then objects known to you. But in order to attain *moksa* the mind needs to be prepared and purified through exposure to and application of self-knowledge. Vedanta offers the only valid and complete teaching through which the mind can gain liberation.

The one who is looking for the gain is the ego that does not want to relinquish its attachment to objects unless it understands that there is an upside. The ego fears its own demise. Even though *moksa* is not a gain in that it is already your nature it is the biggest gain: what greater blessing is there than to live free of suffering? If *moksa* is not valued above all else you are not ready to become a finder and you remain identified with being a seeker.

It is only with a dedicated and rigorous *sadhana* that the mind can be freed from its limited identity as an ego, or doer, in order to put an end to existential suffering. There is no magic formula that will make the ego feel better about this. This is why qualifications are necessary for *moksa*; if the mind is not mature and has not already seen that there is nothing to be gained in *samsara* it is not qualified for *moksa*. One has to practice self-knowledge by applying *karma yoga* along with *triguna vibhava yoga* and *jnana yoga*. Choose any one of the many *prakriyas*, like taking a stand in awareness as awareness and practicing the opposite thought whenever a thought to the contrary comes up.

**Sundaram:** 3. During contemplation my mind becomes calm and alert compared to normal circumstances. But still, some thoughts remain. And when thoughts are present then it becomes very difficult to separate consciousness from thoughts.

**Sundari:** One needs to undertake contemplation and meditation with the *karma yoga* attitude or

else there is a doer involved who is looking for specific results. This is why many meditators go for years meditating but never get anywhere. This is because they are not free of the one who is meditating. Even if they manage to calm the mind and manage their thoughts, when they come out of meditation the *vasanas* are still there, their conditioning is still there; self-knowledge has not taken place. Please see the attached email which will further explain this issue.

It is good that you are practicing discrimination, and it is true that when the mind is too busy it is difficult to discriminate awareness from the thoughts arising in it. What does it mean to separate thoughts from consciousness? The issue is whether you are using meditation to purify the mind or to discriminate the self from the thoughts – or both. Please read the attached email.

You say you are trying to separate consciousness from thoughts – this is again the doer talking. Thoughts belong to *Isvara* and are generated by the *gunas*, which are what govern and create your *vasanas*. Thoughts are not a problem unless they agitate the mind. To understand your thoughts you need to understand where they come from so that you can render the conditioning that keeps them returning non-binding through self-knowledge. Meditation will not remove the agitation that thoughts create permanently unless it is undertaken with the *karma yoga* attitude.

**Sundaram:** All these questions are from some standpoint within me. And I should question my standpoint always but still would like to gain clarity on this matter from you.

Thanks and regards, Sundaram

**Sundari:** All these questions come from the standpoint of the *jiva* who knows awareness, not the *jiva* that knows it is awareness. Indeed, it is very good to question your standpoint. Ask yourself always: Is this the *jiva* who is identified with being a person? Is this the *jiva* who knows awareness? Or is this the *jiva* that knows it is awareness?

You are very welcome, Sundaram, very good to hear from you again.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari