

The Gross Body Appears as a Thought in You

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2013-11-05

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/875>

Alexander: Hi, Sundari. It sounds like you have a wonderful family, and family can be such a beautiful expression of the self. Watching my son grow has been like reading an *Upanishad!*

Sundari: I am indeed blessed to have been the vehicle for the beautiful expression of self to manifest in the form of my daughter! And I agree, being a true parent is living scripture if one does it as awareness and sees the child not as your child, or a child at all, but the self.

I have answered your questions, below.

Alexander: I do have a few small questions; please feel free to answer them at your leisure. It's been mentioned several times that the *jiva* is the self associated with the subtle body, but what about identification with the gross body? I have personally seen my own identification with the "mind" but others report identification with the body. The scientific and atheistic often see the body and mind as one mechanism, which they believe to be themselves.

Sundari: Of course, the question to ask is always: Who is that identifies with the mind or the gross body? We do not mention the identification with the gross body specifically because the gross body exists as a thought in the subtle body. When your attention is on a thought or a feeling the gross body does not exist for you. It only exists for you when you pay attention to it. The gross body is within the subtle body, and the subtle body is within awareness – you.

As I explained in our last exchange, there are apparently two types of *jivas*: awareness with a subtle body free of identification with objects and there is awareness with a subtle body under the spell of ignorance, the doer, or person identified with objects. Both have a common identity as awareness. *Jiva* is a principle, a *tattva*, not a specific person. It is actually pure awareness, *paramatma*. *Jiva* manifests as three little *jivas* according to the state that it experiences. The subtle body is a term that refers to the mind, intellect, ego, organs of action, the sense organs and the five *pranas*. With reference to your question, it is important to understand the teaching on the three states, the three bodies and the five sheaths. The five sheaths actually encompass all three bodies and can also be used as a *prakriya* to discriminate awareness from the objects that appear in it.

The Three Bodies

1. The gross body is called the *sthula sharira* in Sanskrit; it refers to the five elements because it is made up of them and sustained by them. It is basically just food. It is a means for awareness to have contact with objects and to experience pleasure and pain. The body does not experience directly because it is not conscious although consciousness pervades every atom so it appears to be conscious. To quote James, it is a counter across which experience is transacted.

2. The subtle body is called the *suskma sharira* and is made up of ungrossified subtle elements (*panacikarana*), which are also called *tanmatras*. The gross body cannot exist without the subtle body; the subtle body causes the gross body to act and also contains the conditioning, or *vasanas*, that have incarnated as a gross body and make up the apparent individual, or *jiva*. The subtle body is also called “the traveller” because it apparently travels or transmigrates between incarnations until the *vasanas* fructify and incarnate again as the *jiva*. The subtle body is the limiting adjunct, or *uphadi*, for awareness appearing as the apparent *jiva*.

The subtle body has eighteen parts:

- The five organs of perception: ears, nose, eyes, mouth, skin.
- The five organs of action: speech, hands, legs, genitals, anus.
- The five *pranas*: respiration, circulation, digestion, excretion, expelling the subtle body at death.
- The mind (*mana*), feelings, or emotions.
- The intellect (*buddhi*), or thinking function.
- The ego (*ahamkara*), the “I” identified with objects, the one who thinks it acts, the doer.

3. The causal body (*karina sariram*) is termed as “that which is inexplicable and beginningless.” It is without form. It is also referred to as *Isvara*, ignorance, the deep sleep state, or *maya*. The causal body has two apparent aspects to it: the microcosmic causal body, or personal subconscious (*jiva/avidya*), and the macrocosmic causal body (*maya/Isvara*). The subtle body is contained within the causal body in a potential/unmanifest state, or seed form, until the *vasanas* sprout and the subtle body takes another physical birth. The causal body, or *Isvara*, is without thought and free of the conditioning of the *gunas* although when the *gunas* express the creation appears. *Maya* is the limiting adjunct for awareness in the role of Creator, or *Isvara*.

Awareness stands apart from and witnesses all three bodies. It also witnesses all three states: the waking, dream and deep sleep state.

The Three States

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*) and (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 *taijasa*, the “shining one,” awareness with a subtle body illuminating the dream state. The subtle body is turned inwards 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 *taijasa*, 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 *taijasa* 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 outpicturing as dream events.

3. As the sleeper, *prajna*, in the deep sleep state. *Prajna* means “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.

The individual *jivas* and what they experience is called the *dharma* field 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. A *jivanmukta* worships *Isvara* because love is the nature of the self. He or she is totally relaxed, having understood that *Isvara* is awareness 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.

The Five Sheaths (*panca kosha prakriya*)

1. The gross body, *anna-maya-kosha*. Are you your body? Does your body know you? Or are you the witness of your body?

2. The five *pranas*, *prana-maya-kosha*. Are you your basic energetic desires and functions? Are you hungry/thirsty – do you breathe or digest the food you eat? Or are you the non-experiencing witness of thirst/hunger/breathing/digesting, etc?

3. The mind, *mana-maya-kosha*. Are you your emotions and feelings? Or do you witness them?

4. The intellect, *vijnana-maya-kosha*. Are you your thoughts or the witness of your thoughts?

5. Deep sleep, or bliss, *ananda-maya-kosha*. Are you the bliss of deep sleep? In moments where there seems no doer/experience have you been able to witness and know the joy/bliss to be coming from you? If not, how do you know joy/bliss was there in the first place? How can you say that you did not know anything while you were asleep unless awareness was there to witness the absence of knowledge? Therefore you cannot be the lack of knowledge or ignorance. Deep sleep is called “experiential bliss” because it ends, like all experiences do. The bliss you are after if you are seeking *moksa* is the bliss of self-knowledge which never ends (*anantum*) because it is your true nature.

Alexander: This leads me to my second question, which pertains to the teaching method. Does Vedanta require a belief in God (*Isvara*)?

Sundari: Who is asking this question? Vedanta is not a belief system and does not require you to believe in anything. Do you need to believe in yourself if you know that you are the self? The subject matter is you, awareness. Vedanta is both a path of action and the pathless path of knowledge in that it provides the tools with which ignorance of your true nature can be removed but it is self-knowledge, not the doer, who removes the ignorance so that your true nature as awareness is revealed in a qualified and purified mind. Vedanta is the knowledge that is the substrate for everything, it underpins all knowledge because self-knowledge cannot be disputed as it is always good.

Vedanta does not believe in God. It explains what God is. I explained the relationship between awareness, *Isvara* and *jiva* in detail in my last communications with you so I will not go into it again here.

If you believe in Vedanta then you have missed the point. Vedanta is the irrefutable logic of your own unexamined experience. When this logic is applied systematically and with great dedication to the mind through self-knowledge it destroys the notion that you are a limited entity with a limited identity, leaving only you, awareness.

Alexander: If someone was an atheist could they simply substitute the word “God” with the word “Cosmos” or “Universe” or something similar? In a previous email you stated the importance of specific words so I’m wondering how flexible the teaching can be and remain effective.

Sundari: An atheist is just another limited identity, no different from Christian or Buddhist or any other manufactured identity. Typically, an atheist is someone who eschews the idea of a Higher Power as presented by religion so yes, they could definitely refer to *Isvara* as the Cosmos or the Universe. *Isvara* is not a person, it is an impersonal agent for ignorance to manifest. Or you could say that ignorance is the impersonal agent for *Isvara* in the role of Creator to manifest. It makes no difference. Words are very important but what is more important is understanding what the *jiva* and *Isvara*, the causal body, or the *dharma* field, is.

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 *dharma* field simply means that the environment the *jiva* inhabits, which includes the *jiva*, is a lawful universe which operates certain predictable and inescapable principles which are not under the control of the *jiva*. This is why the teaching of *karma yoga* is central if the *jiva* seeks *moksa*.

Alexander: On a side note, I'm very happy to hear that some U.S. dates for events are going to be added. I am planning to attend at least one next year.

Also, I would still like to Skype with James. It would be nice to introduce myself and receive additional instruction. If possible, after 8:00 pm CST (6:00 pm Pacific time) is best for me but other times may be workable.

Sundari: That is wonderful, Alexander, we look forward to meeting you next year. James is in Portland so I think he is more or less in the same time zone as you are, not so? I am in South Africa and there is a nine-hour difference between us but I will ask him tonight (which is morning for you) to set up a date ASAP and get back to you. If you like, you can wait until we both get to Spain in early October, and we can both chat with you.

Alexander: Thank you again, Sundari. It is a real blessing to work with you.

~ Warmly, Alexander

Sundari: It is a great pleasure, Alexander, and you are most welcome.

~ Much love, Sundari