

# The Language of Identity

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**Steven:** Dear Sundari, are any of these terms of any help at all, or do they have any validity at all, as ways of thinking about that which appears in limitless non-dual awareness? (If not, I will exorcise these words from my thoughts and from my vocabulary.)

1. Thought
2. Dream
3. Illusion
4. Mirage
5. Holographic projection

I trust you, Sundari. Just say the word and these are gone. Or say the word and they are retained. It is enough that I be told yes or no. If these words are unhelpful and/or untrue I will replace them with truthful words for my affirmations. Thank you, Sundari. ☺

**Sundari:** Hello, Steven. You do not need to exorcise any of the words you mention above, just bring awareness to how you use them. The thing to bear in mind when we talk about words in any language is that all language is dualistic by its very nature. It cannot be otherwise because words originate from and remain in the apparent reality.

Even awareness implies non-awareness, pure implies impure, conscious implies unconscious – and so on. All words are open to interpretation and have implied meanings as well as ostensible meanings. Two people can use the same words and mean two different things. Most problems arise because of the way one interprets words, which will be according to the way the mind is conditioned by the *gunas*. All words are thus limited and can only point to awareness. No words can adequately describe that which is without qualities, has no parts, never changes and is always present. Awareness is above the line, so to speak.

Although the apparent reality reflects awareness and would not exist without it, it does not exist in the same order of reality as pure awareness because the apparent reality is only apparently real (below the line) and awareness is real. The discrimination of the real from the apparently real, or awareness from the objects that arise in awareness, is the basis of *moksa* and non-dual vision.

One has to use words to express oneself, and in Vedanta in particular we use words as carefully and as accurately as possible, knowing that they are the finger pointing at the moon, they are not the moon. Non-dual vision or Vedanta is not open to interpretation; it is not based on opinion or belief and does not belong to anyone. It is called the science of consciousness because it is the very foundation of life itself. It is the knowledge that underpins all other knowledge.

Vedanta is called *apaurusheya jnanam*, meaning “of divine origin, beyond or independent of the mind of man and revealed to the mind.” Great confusion, misunderstanding and suffering is

caused by the way words are used when they are based in duality or ignorance. When *moksa* is the goal, eternal vigilance is required if one wants to be totally free of ignorance.

Sanskrit evolved as the language of the *Vedas* and is less susceptible to interpretation if properly used and understood. The problem is it is not properly understood and is difficult to learn for we Westerners. Some terms do not have a good equivalent in any other language but James has moved away from using Sanskrit unless absolutely necessary because it can be confusing. We stick religiously to the original meanings of all the terms used in Sanskrit though.

Traditional Vedanta is very careful about its use of words for one reason only.

When *maya* is operating, the self under the spell of ignorance identifies with the subtle body, the experiencing entity and thinks it needs objects to complete it. It has forgotten that it is really the non-experiencing witness. You can really lump all objects under one word: experience. So the *jiva* who thinks it is a doer and can do something to gain completion chases experience.

Vedanta scripture (*sruti*) agrees on the fact that it is not describable by words but not with the conclusion that it is impossible to gain direct knowledge using words. Vedanta scripture states that awareness cannot be described by words; however, Vedanta can give you direct knowledge by the implied meaning of words when they are unfolded through a specific methodology as laid out by the *sampradaya*, the great tradition of Vedanta.

We can refute this statement by objecting that something that cannot be described cannot be known. The taste of sweet cannot be communicated by words therefore it is indescribable. If somebody does not know what sweetness is, no words will be able to describe it. However it is very easy to know sweetness because it can be objectified. If you eat a sugar cube and taste sweetness, you will know sweetness. The problem is that for self-knowledge this will not work because awareness is the ultimate subject and cannot be objectified. So how do we teach the self? We can only point to it with words.

Scripture is very precise and uses only words of truth, knowledge and limitlessness combined. They are all needed to precisely imply and point to the true nature of reality, which is that it is non-dual. Since Vedanta as a teaching is pointing to you, awareness – and you actually already know yourself – but because of *maya* you have a superimposed notion about yourself as body-mind, scripture is able to give you direct knowledge of yourself by implication. Only knowledge is capable of removing ignorance, not experience.

As you know, the very foundation of Vedanta is that no experience will give you completion for the simple reason that you are already complete, non-dual, unchanging, ever-present awareness. And you are only ever experiencing awareness.

As long as you think you are a doer you speak the language of experience; Vedanta speaks the language of identity.

This is why a very good *prakriya* (teaching) is to press “pause” every time you find yourself using the word “I” and ask yourself, “Which I is speaking here?” We encourage taking a stand in awareness as awareness and negating the opposite thought as it arises in the mind as essential teachings for anyone seeking *moksa*.

There is nothing wrong with experience per se, and as long as awareness is apparently associated with the subtle body, experience only ends when the body dies. The problem arises

when the knowledge that experience is meant to deliver is not assimilated: this is the knowledge that you are already whole and complete and do not need any particular experience to experience this truth. You are always experiencing this truth but you don't know it, so you have a knowledge problem, not an experience problem.

It is essential as part of one's *sadhana* if one is seeking *moksa* to track how words are used. This requires great discipline; once you bring your attention to this practice, you will be astounded to see how inherently programmed language is to reinforce duality. It is not that there is anything wrong with duality; non-duality is not opposed to duality. Duality still apparently remains when self-knowledge has removed *avidya*, your personal ignorance. This is because *maya*, or macrocosmic ignorance, *Isvara srsti* (the *dharma* field), still remains and operates as it always has whether or not you know what your true identity is. This is also why we are so insistent that if a seeker of *moksa* wants to actualise self-realisation, one will need a full understanding of the common identity between *Isvara* and the *jiva*.

Self-realisation is where the work begins.

Duality, or the hypnosis of materialism, i.e. ignorance, is only a problem if you don't know what it is. All suffering is caused by the identification with duality as reality. Duality is what Vedanta calls a conditioned superimposition onto non-duality. It appears real but it is not real. So when you know this, you can enjoy duality for what it is without being deluded by it. The word "mirage" is a very good analogy for conditioned superimposition because when you know that a mirage is a mirage, you will not try to drink the water. But you will see the mirage. This is how duality then appears once all *samsara* (the identification with duality) has been removed from the mind by self-knowledge. An unconditioned superimposition is the snake and the rope: once you know that the rope is not a snake you will not see the snake again.

In Buddhism one is taught that desire is the root cause of all suffering and in order to find *nirvana* one must extinguish all desire. Of course, there is truth in this but it is impossible to extinguish all desire and it is not necessary (or possible) to do so for *moksa*. Some desires are very good; one needs a strong desire for *moksa* or one will not go the distance, for instance. Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* says: "I am the desire that is not opposed to *dharma*." Vedanta simply asks: who is it that knows the desire/desirer? When you can identify the knower, you are free of the desire, whether it is fulfilled or not. This is self-knowledge and knowledge is the truth that sets you free.

With regards to the other words you asked about:

1. **Thought.** This word describes electrical impulses in the brain called synapses that seemingly produce thought, intuition, memory and feeling. All thoughts/feelings/memory/intuition originate from the *guna* generated-*vasanas*, or your likes and dislikes, so they belong to *Isvara* and not to the *jiva*. Purifying the mind means aiming for *sattva*, or peace of mind, which means that excess *rajas* and *tamas* and the binding *vasanas* they produce have to be rendered non-binding. Buddhism and many other paths teach that thoughts have to be controlled or removed, that a state of no thought is *moksa*. This is not true because firstly awareness is prior to thought and is not opposed to thought; not all thoughts create agitation in the mind and thoughts are not under the control of the mind, they appear in the mind. Secondly, thought, feeling, intuition and memory are not the problem in and of themselves. Identification with them is the problem.

2. **Dream.** This word can refer to the dream state or to the waking state as both have the same degree on apparent reality. Here is a brief synopsis of the three-states teaching again:

There is only awareness which when *maya* is operating manifests as a *jiva*, which is awareness identified with the subtle body. The *jiva* is the generic individual. There are three states or roles that the *jiva* experiences: the waking, dream and deep sleep state.

These three states are always present for the *jiva*. The *jiva* or waking state entity can be extroverted and aware only of objects outside (this is called *viswa*), it can be introverted and aware only of its thoughts and feelings (this is called *taijasa*) and it can be aware only of the bliss of the causal body (this is called *prajna*), all while awake. In this way, for the *jiva* there is the waking state of the waking state, the dream state of the waking state and the deep sleep state of the waking state.

The *jiva* as *viswa* refers only to the waking state entity, with its attention totally externalized and directed towards objects.

The *jiva* as *taijasa* refers only to the dream state whether the *jiva* is awake or asleep because the subtle body is turned inwards observing the thoughts and feelings as they arise from the causal body.

The *jiva* as the deep sleep entity, or *prajna*, only refers to the *jiva* who is experiencing undifferentiated consciousness or the bliss of the causal body and the absence of objects.

Lucid dreaming can happen when the *jiva* is awake or asleep because neither the waking nor the dream state is real. When your thoughts are completely *sattvic*, you are lucid, clear. You don't call it lucid dreaming in the waking state because your gross sense instruments are operating and you think you are awake, whereas in the dream the external senses are not present. If in the waking state you are lost in your thoughts and your attention is turned inwards, only aware of your thoughts and feelings, then you are in the dream state. In the dream state the doer directing the dream or enjoying the dream state is the reflected self, the *jiva*, because awareness is not a doer or enjoyer. But the knowledge of the directing means that awareness is present illuminating *taijasa*, which is how you are conscious of the dream.

**3. Illusion.** This is not a good word to use with reference to the apparent reality because it implies that it does not exist. Although the apparent reality is not real in that it is not always present (such as in the deep sleep state) and is always changing, it does have an apparent existence because you can experience it whether we are talking about the waking-state dream reality or the dream-state dream reality. So we use the term apparently real instead of illusion as this is more accurate.

**4. Mirage.** A good analogy for the conditioned superimposition of duality onto non-duality, as described above.

**5. Holographic projection.** This is a good analogy for the apparent reality, or *maya*, a holographic projection; the image changes as the position and orientation of the viewing system changes (just like the interpretation by the *vasanas* creates the *jiva's* apparent individual reality) in exactly the same way, as if the object were present, thus making the image appear three-dimensional. This is exactly how *maya* functions; it is all a trick of light which is reflected awareness.

The holographic projection (or *maya*) itself is not an image; it consists of an apparently random structure of varying intensity, density or profile. If you take the projection apart, any part of it will

reflect the whole. This is a good description of *Isvara*. I highly recommend that you read through all three articles I sent you, with particular emphasis on the one on *Isvara-jiva-jagat* and the *gunas*. I have attached all three articles for you here for you again; study them, don't just read them.

It takes great dedication and commitment to de-programme the mind and remove ignorance, Steven; ignorance is tenaciously resistant to change. But it is no match for self-knowledge, so if that is what you want more than anything else, then there is work to be done. I am happy that you trust me as your teacher, Steven, but remember that although it is very important to have a qualified teacher unfold the teaching, what you need to trust is Vedanta, not me. I am just an instrument for *Isvara*, and like I said previously, you are talking to yourself. The self is the only teacher and the only student. Remember that; it is important.

*Om tat sat.*

~ *Namaste, Sundari*