

Vedanta Cannot Save the Person

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Sundari: Hello, Veronica. I am resending you the email I sent to you in reply to your first question, with a few adjustments and additions, as I don't think you understood it. You basically asked the same question again in your second email. We cannot give you the answer to what is the right thing for you to do for you Veronica, so please read this email carefully and think about it before you reply again.

Veronica: It's a long time ago that I wrote an email to you. I created a lot of stress in my life by not being happy with the job I had. Now I am going to start working in a kindergarten – hopefully, this is less stress, but also you don't earn much money... so what? Now I have the opportunity to start further education that is called "systemic counselling." It takes three years and is a possibility for extending my studies in social work. The bank will rebate part of the costs after this education is finished. But until then I have to pay monthly and I might have some money problems. Also, I have to pay for some dental health problems monthly now... Is it a mistake to do this, because financially it is little difficult and it means more stress? For more relaxation this is not good, but for more education it is good. Maybe it can give me better chances to find a job in social work in future... I don't know. So what is right here?

Sundari: Lifestyle issues are not easy to counsel within the framework of Vedanta because it is really not designed to give that kind of advice. The purpose of Vedanta is not to tell the individual how to live their life or what decisions are right for them. This depends on their *svadharma* as well as many other factors in the field, all of which are unpredictable and always changing because they are a product of *mithya*, or the apparent reality. They have nothing to do with who you really are, which is awareness.

Vedanta cannot save you, the person. It can only show you that you are not the person and how to live free of the person in the apparent reality. This is why the qualifications for Vedanta are so very important. It only applies to a mature mind that has resolved its life story and assimilated its meaning. A mind that has understood that there is no joy in objects and is tired of pursuing them in the hope of completion or to gain anything. A mind that is tired of suffering and which knows that the way it presently thinks cannot free it from suffering is totally prepared to submit itself to self-inquiry in order that it can discover the true nature or reality, which is awareness.

Awareness is the only thing that is always present and never changes. Awareness is that which knows Veronica, what she thinks and feels – who knows the one having all these doubts and asking these questions. Veronica is an object known to you, awareness, and she has an apparent existence in the apparent reality. As the *jiva*, or apparent individual, Veronica wants to be happy, to enjoy her life and to have peace of mind, so she wants to make the "right" choice for the *jiva*. The apparent reality is the world, the *dharma* field, or *Isvara*, and it is made up of the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which is called ignorance, or *maya*. The *gunas* control and govern everything in the apparent reality. What happens in Veronica's life is therefore a product of the *gunas* that colour "her" particular conditioning (*svadharma*), or *vasana* load.

We all have to work with our inborn nature and within the life situation we find ourselves, which is where *Isvara* has put us according to the *karma* we incarnate with. The choice Veronica has to make is how she is going to interact with what happens in her world, not with what happens in “her” world, because it is not “her” world. It is *Isvara*’s world. Only with self-knowledge can Veronica’s life be brought into alignment with choices that will maximise peace of mind (*sattva*), which is what is conducive to achieving *moksa*, or freedom from Veronica, not for her. Whatever Veronica’s life situation is, it is only relatively important after all. It is only important insofar as it either obstructs or assists Veronica in what she needs to do to find freedom from dependence of objects, meaning Veronica.

Even if you have to take a pay cut and make do with less for a while, at least you are planning for a future where you will have a better income and better prospects. Sometimes one has to make choices that involve sacrifice or tough times. It is fine to do so; suffering strengthens the desire for self-inquiry. In the Western world we tend to be very spoilt and want things to be easy. It cannot always be so. So practise *karma yoga*, which means before you even make a decision to act, consecrate your choice to *Isvara*, knowing that you are not in charge of the results and knowing that you will take the results that do come as *prasad*. Do this with great love and devotion, as *karma yoga* is simply surrendering Veronica to the self, knowing that she will be taken care of. Have total faith in this, get rid of doubts. If fear or doubt comes up, which it most likely will, consecrate this to *Isvara* as well.

Remember also that Vedanta is not about perfecting the *jiva*, it is about being free of the *jiva*. In order to be free of the person, we first have to understand our conditioning (*vasanas*) in the light of self-knowledge. Continue self-inquiry and gain knowledge of how the *gunas* function in the *dharma* field (the world); practice managing them. This is *triguna vibhava yoga*. Fear is *rajas*. Indecisiveness and doubt are *tamas*. Clarity and confidence are *sattva*. To repeat: the entire *dharma* field is run by a system of natural laws that are governed by the *gunas*, which belong to *Isvara*, not to the individual. As the *gunas* are always operating, it will not take long to see them in action. See what triggers them, what thoughts and feelings arise with them, as each *guna* has predictable thought patterns and feelings that arise with it. Take note how this plays out in the mind and body.

The body is inert but it is nonetheless a printout for the subconscious mind, the subtle body. If you have too much *rajas*, you need more *sattva* and some *tamas* (you need some *tamas* to sleep). If you have too much *tamas*, you need some *rajas* and more *sattva* (you need some *rajas* to get things done). Go to the website and read up on the *gunas*; James and I post emails that deal with the topic every month.

In order to manage the *gunas*, Veronica has to be vigilant, like having a little hawk sitting on her shoulder saying, “There it is again, this feeling/thinking/action is coming up in Veronica!” The *gunas* are only a problem if Veronica identifies with them as belonging to “her.” They belong to *Isvara*. To make the *vasanas* non-binding, Veronica must first acknowledge what her conditioning is, realise it does not belong to “her,” apply *karma yoga* (taking action or not, surrendering the result to *Isvara*) and then managing the *gunas* accordingly. This means that Veronica adjusts her life to make peace of mind her main goal! She will not have peace of mind any other way.

If your lifestyle is too *rajasic/tamasic*, it will NOT produce *sattva* no matter how hard Veronica tries to make it so or what decisions she makes. Take stock of everything in your life: where you

live, what you do for a living, your relationships with people, sex, money, health and diet, entertainment, all these things have to be addressed. If you want a peaceful mind, you need to live right. You have to look at what your values are because they underpin your *vasanas* (likes and dislikes). This is what it means to understand Veronica's *svadharma* (her conditioning, or nature) and doing what is "right for her": following her *svadharma*, or nature, which is following *dharma*, meaning choosing *sattva*, peace of mind.

This is the "work," Veronica; you have to do it! Apply all the *yogas*: *jnana yoga* (self-inquiry), *karma yoga* and *triguna vibhava yoga*. In this way you will find the answers to your life situation. No one can do it for you or give you the answers. It is pointless asking us, we cannot help you make the "right" choice because there is no such thing. Today the right choice is one thing and tomorrow it could be something else.

It sounds to me by your question that you are seeing things only from the apparent reality, the *jiva*, or Veronica. So decide, who are you? Are you the self or are you Veronica? If you want solutions for Veronica and you want the best of all worlds for her, then *moksa* is not a priority and Vedanta is not for you. Maybe you need to take a good look at the qualifications outlined in James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment*. There is no perfect way to live in the apparent reality. The only way to live happily there is to know that you are always free of it because it depends on you as awareness but you do not depend on it.

Are you Veronica with all her problems and with decisions to make or are you awareness? Just remember that there are no real solutions in *samsara* for the *jiva*, it is a zero-sum game, and Veronica cannot win because there is an upside and a downside to everything. It does not matter what you do. Only self-knowledge matters because the only thing that is real and never changes is you, awareness.

Veronica: Probably you can also not give me any advice or maybe you can because you are more life-experienced. 😊

Sundari: Like I said, no one can advise you, Veronica; there is no wrong or right choice. Your problem is that you do not want advice, you want to hear what suits you. Every time you ask the same question, when we answer you have a "Yeah, but..."! You take Vedanta and twist it to make it fit what you want to hear, what works with your likes and dislikes. You superimpose self-knowledge onto the *jiva*, Veronica. This is called superimposing *satya* on *mithya* (the real on the apparently real), which does not work. This is a very common trap for seekers and one the ego will attempt as a default so that it does not need to challenge its good opinion of itself or change its behaviour.

But, there are no shortcuts, unfortunately, only the long cut. You are just avoiding doing what it takes to change your behaviour – meaning staring down Veronica's *vasanas* and getting her actions and lifestyle to conform with *dharma*. There is no way around this.

I repeat what I said above: there is only the choice to live, thinking that you are Veronica the *jiva* or the choice for *moksa*, which is for freedom from Veronica, the *jiva*. You decide. But if you want *moksa* then you have to want it more than you want to hang onto your likes and dislikes. It has to be a burning desire or self-inquiry will not work for you. Maybe you have to put aside Vedanta for now and live in the world, doing what you do. If the desire to be free is still there, then you must

make a choice to commit to it.

If you want self-inquiry to work for you, you will have to have a better understanding of the qualifications. It seems to me that you need to address psychological issues that cannot be resolved without therapy. This is not to say that you cannot develop the qualifications, but first you need to address what the factors are that keep the mind in such an agitated state.

~ Much love to you, Sundari