

Who Gets Enlightened? Nobody

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James: This excellent *satsang* was recently written by one of my friends, Arlindo, to one of his friends.

Arlindo: Dear Carlos, sorry for the unsolicited *satsang*, but since you have brought up this conversation today, I will take the liberty to elaborate a bit more on this subject, which is very difficult for the *jiva* to understand.

For self-knowledge to take place, it is not enough that the *jiva* understands the teachings of the *Upanishads* mentally or theoretically. The world is filled with thousands of scholars of the scriptures – they know them back and forth many times over, but that kind of knowledge does not bear fruit. Intellectual knowledge alone will not do the job, because it does not cancel the *jiva*'s sense of doership and authorship. On the contrary, it reinforces the *jiva*'s independent sense of identity as someone who knows.

When Vedanta affirms that the self cannot be known, perceived or objectified by the five senses and the mind, it really means that. The mind cannot realize the self, because it is an effect of ignorance, or *maya*. Then who does realize the self? The self cannot realize itself, because it is ever always realized. The *jiva* cannot realize it either, because it does not possess the proper instrument to do so. Its mind is dense – it is made of subtle matter, and cannot perceive its source, which pure subtlety. Since the *jiva* cannot do it, and the self is already free and realized, how can we explain self-knowledge?

Knowledge itself realizes the self! And it does so in a very unusual way, by simply canceling or neutralizing *maya*, or ignorance. This way the self appearing as the *jiva* frees itself of knowledge and ignorance altogether. And it is not that you get something new or the knowledge/consciousness that you did not have – it simply happens that you have your ignorance removed. But not by you, or the *jiva*, but by knowledge!

The work of the *jiva*, provided he/she really wants *moksa*, is to keep his/her mind exposed to the knowledge of Vedanta as often as possible until it becomes an “all the time” obsession. Of course the mind of the *jiva* needs to be purified first, meaning it needs to be freed from excessive extroversion and agitation: desires, fears and aversions. Having said so, the only work left for the *jiva* as far as self-knowledge is concerned is to cultivate a contemplative, calm and relaxed mind. The study and application of *karma yoga* will greatly accelerate this process.

The *jiva* cannot directly produce self-knowledge; every effort he does will reinforce his sense of doership, but he can develop the *karma yoga* attitude that will allow him to cultivate and produce a pure instrument in which knowledge can work its magic. Knowledge/Vedanta alone will do the work! All that is required is a mature, *sattvic* mind with a contemplative quality and the necessary patience and perseverance to allow Vedanta to do its work. The *jiva* cannot and will never realize the self, because only knowledge does, but the *jiva* will surely enjoy life once its self-ignorance is neutralized.