

Who Is the Knower?

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2015-10-12

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2360>

Cameron: Hello, Sundari, Cameron here, from London. I have a question, please, if you wouldn't mind answering. In *How to Attain Enlightenment* Ram says that discrimination works when the three bodies – gross, subtle and causal – are seen to be apparent and when one experiences freedom because of this knowledge.

Sundari: Hello, Cameron, good to hear from you. Yes, that is the essence of discrimination. If one truly does see the three bodies/five *koshas* as only apparently real, then one is discriminating you, awareness, from the objects that appear in you.

Cameron: Now, would it be correct to say that once a *jiva* knows that it actually is that freedom/basis of everything/field, then that is the self?

Sundari: Yes, but that is also indirect knowledge. For knowledge to be direct and for freedom from the *jiva* and for the *jiva* to be experienced, the *jiva* has to be understood in light of self-knowledge. This requires a full understanding of the *jiva's* identity with *Isvara*, the field of existence, and how it relates to it. There is no way to jump over the *jiva* straight to awareness, which is why we make such a big deal about self-actualisation, or *nididhysana*, which is basically the contemplation, assimilation and transformation of emotion into devotion to the truth.

Cameron: It's just that this is my experience all the "time" now and yet I am simply the knower of this as well... So there seems to me to be a slight duality between knowing and being. Hopefully you can understand this, as this is my knowledge/being right now, and I'd basically just like your expert take on the matter.

Sundari: If you are the knower of the duality, the experience of knowing that you are awareness and not the experiencer, that is non-dual vision. You are that by whose presence duality exists and experience takes place. Duality is not in contradiction to non-duality and is only a problem if you don't know what it is and take it to be real. And duality does not disappear when you know what it is; it is still experienced by the *jiva* but the *jiva* does not identify with it, because it knows duality is a superimposition onto non-duality. At this point you get to enjoy duality for what it has to offer – temporary bliss – as a *jivanmukta*, or the self no longer under the spell of ignorance.

Cameron: Thank you, Sundari, for listening. I am a very happy *jiva* because of *ShiningWorld.com*. This isn't really a doubt at all. I think it's maybe just a subtle point.

Sundari: We are so happy for you, Cameron. Vedanta is like hitting the biggest jackpot of all time – and to find a teacher like James is a double whammy! Vedanta is the only way to truly

experience happiness as a *jiva*.

Cameron: Now, “merging” is a problem word, I know... but that is what it “seems” like to the *jiva*, that he is being purified by the knowledge and is merging/sublimating into *Isvara*.

Sundari: Yes, correct. It seems like the *jiva* is merging into the knowledge, but actually self-knowledge purifies the mind of ignorance so that it rests in the knowledge of its true identity as awareness, which it has always been. “Merging” implies that the *jiva* was separate from awareness, but of course it never was. At this stage there is no merging or sublimation, because you know you are the knowledge. Self-knowledge is not something you gain and it is not a feeling or an idea – self-knowledge is you. When this knowledge is firm the subject-object split has been permanently dissolved.

Yes, awareness does not actually “watch,” “see” or “know” anything, because that implies doing – and there is nothing for it to watch see or know, because it is all there is. Nothing is happening or ever happened for awareness, so what is there to watch? *Isvara* (awareness in association with *maya*) is really the all-seeing “I,” the knower and watcher. Awareness is that which makes knowing, seeing and watching possible. When *maya* is operating, *Isvara* in the role of Creator manifests and there is (apparently) something for awareness to be aware of, i.e. objects.

The discrimination is between *satya* and *mithya*, the real with the apparently real, or the experiencing witness with the non-experiencing witness, the seer and the seen, *nirguna brahman* with *saguna brahman*.

The seer and the seen is also called the witness and the witnessed. There are two witnesses, what is called the “opaque witness” and the “transparent witness.” The opaque witness is the *jiva* with qualities looking at awareness through its conditioning (*vasanas*). The transparent witness is pure awareness with no qualities conditioning it – and it is the witness of the opaque witness.

The self is a seer that never began or ceases and is the all-seeing eye, or “I” that sees only itself because there are no objects for it to see. It is self-effulgent and there is nothing but itself. *Saguna brahman* is apparently influenced by *sattva*, and as the mind gets *sattvic* the witness seems to be clear, and this clarity, or purity, is what people assume to be holy. One eventually has to drop all these terms, even *nirguna brahman*, because *nirguna* implies *saguna*.

It would be more appropriate to say that the self, seeing only itself, is that which knows the seer with reference to the seen only when *maya* is operating. The self-aware self appears as a seer, but it never actually is a seer, unless seeing refers to its own self. When ignorance is operating the *jiva* thinks that the seer is different from the seen: the subject and object are different. The macrocosmic seer, *Isvara*, is also known as *saguna brahman* because it operates *maya* (the *gunas*) but it is never deluded by them, i.e. *maya* is pure *sattva*.

Cameron: But being the light (I am the Light), and the light simply IS everything and free (of ALL) at the same “time.” Perfection at last, I feel. I think I’ve answered my own question here, by the way.

Sundari: The self is the non-experiencing witness, pure awareness (the imperishable) and does not know or not know. It is IS-NESS, *sakshi*, existence, *sat*, consciousness, *chit*, limitless bliss, *ananda*. Awareness is not conscious in the way *Isvara* is conscious. Awareness appearing as *Isvara* is the macrocosmic knower. Awareness is simply consciousness and does not become “conscious” until *maya* appears, because awareness does not need objects to be conscious. It is purely a witness. When *maya* appears, the objects appear so there is something for awareness to be conscious of. When *maya* is operating *Isvara* appears, reflecting awareness, called *pratibimba*. Awareness “becomes” *Isvara* the knower, but *Isvara* needs instruments of knowledge (the subtle body) and objects of knowledge (the world, gross and subtle matter). The knower – *Isvara*, the instruments and the objects are all *mithya*. The self, *satya*, is the witness of both the unmanifest knowledge and the manifest knowledge.

Cameron: Sundari – “the beauty that makes beauty itself possible” – xxx. Life goes on though of course and I still continue to experience little blips, like when I am in *tamas* company. James, your GREAT husband, always says that he “hates *rajas*”... well, for me it is *tamas*, I’m afraid. When I am speaking or interacting or even near a *tamas* person (I know they aren’t “always” so), then I tend to get frustrated with “them,” I’m afraid. I was wondering if you have any spiritual advice?... Love them is what I say, no matter what, as they simply cannot “be” any different, no? Oh, dear, I’ve done it again! Never mind, as I’m sure you can clear up any slight puddles here of apparent ignorance... xxx. ☺ ☺ ☺

Sundari: I commiserate with you, as I feel the same way about *tamas* – to this *jiva* it is more difficult to deal with than *rajas*. The great Ramji loves *tamas* and has a cool saying: “Obey your *tamas*,” – ha, ha! Both *rajas* and *tamas* have an upside and a downside, and they can be equally damaging. *Tamas* takes longer and is less obvious, but its powers of destruction are just as lethal as out-of-control *rajas*. All *jivas* have dominant *gunas*; mine are *sattvic rajas*, so *tamas* is more painful to the mind. Most likely this is true for your *jiva* too.

The thing to understand is that the *jiva* is made a certain way by *Isvara* and that is not going to change. Freedom is only actualised when the *jiva*’s stuff is seen, understood and dissolved in the knowledge – but this does not mean that the *jiva* becomes unlimited “after” enlightenment. Freedom means that the *jiva*’s conditioning is understood, appreciated and neutralized in light of self-knowledge; it means that because peace of mind is always the main aim, *dharma* (personal and universal) is automatically followed – and it means that the *jiva* no longer projects its subjective reality onto *Isvara*, so lives in harmony with *Isvara*.

The bottom line that most people miss is that self-actualisation, or *nididhysana*, never really ends as long as the *jiva* is alive. The *jiva* is always interacting with *Isvara* in the form of objects and the field of existence it is a part of, so it has to respond appropriately in every instance. The difference once the knowledge is firm is that you know you are not the *jiva* but awareness. The interaction becomes a dance where one no longer has to worry about the steps or the outcome, because you have complete knowledge of the essence and complete trust in *Isvara* – even though you don’t have knowledge of all the facts that run the field of existence. Only *Isvara* is omniscient, but as awareness you understand the essence of everything to be you. So you know the dance is taking place in you.

~ Much love, Sundari