

Who Is the *Jiva*?

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Ted: I'm engaged in good-natured give-and-take with a Swamini Atmaprakashananda disciple over my interpretation of who exactly is being referred to and meant to be protected in the first verse of the *Isavasya Upanishad*.

What are your and the maestro's thoughts on this issue?

Sundari: I sent this guy your commentaries on the *Upanishad* and told him to get in touch with you, as we could tell he was rather adamant about his point of view!

Ted: I wrote that it is the self that is to be protected by renunciation of identification with the apparent individual and his/her *vasanas*.

Sundari: There is only the self but it is the self under the spell of ignorance that has to be protected, and the protection is self-knowledge. There is only the self with apparent knowledge and apparent ignorance but when it does not know this it has to renounce the need for objects.

Ted: The SA disciple says the correct interpretation is that it is the *jiva* who is to be protected from the cycle of rebirth (i.e. *samsara*) through renunciation of ignorance.

Sundari: Yes, but who is the *jiva*? Does the disciple think the *jiva* is real? If the *jiva* thinks he is real, then he needs renunciation. The problem is of course that you cannot renounce anything without knowledge. The *jiva* is self under the spell of ignorance. So both views are correct, provided you understand and appreciate the relationship between the *jiva* and the self.

The word "*jiva*" has two meanings: one is "pure awareness, associated with a subtle body," but the conventional meaning for *jiva* is also just "a person, or individual." So that would be *jiva* with a small "j" and it is important not to confuse the two. When people say "individual" they often think that awareness belongs to the person, not to awareness. Of course it cannot belong to the person because the person comes and goes (think deep sleep). Perhaps this is where the confusion lies with the AS disciple.

As for rebirth, who is it that is reborn? Vedanta says that rebirth is simply identification with *vasanas*, which also come and go. The subtle body is called "the traveller" because it is believed that it transmigrates "between lives" as the *vasanas* that are stored in the causal body sprout. Identification with objects can only take place when awareness has a subtle body. No thought happens without the subtle and gross body being present. Outside of the *dharma* field there is no causality and no influence of the *gunas*, as all is in seed form waiting for the right moment to sprout. And the right moment is determined by the *dharma* field and all the forces and laws that run it.

Ted: I agree that the real culprit is ignorance, but that is what is dispelled through the practice of self-knowledge...

Sundari: We agree too.

Ted: To me it is a “six of one, half dozen of the other” issue, but he points out that it makes a big difference in terms of the *sannyasin* who has yet to become a *jnani*.

Sundari: He is right in that it does make a difference because the *sannyasi jiva* thinks he is a *sannyasi jiva* and wants to be a *jnani jiva* when in fact neither *jiva* really exist, as there is only awareness with or without knowledge or ignorance.

Ted: I acknowledged his point but said that at some point the *sannyasin* has to apply the teachings by taking a stand in awareness and perhaps faking it until he/she makes it.

Sundari: We are with you too, this is correct. How will the *sannyasin* ever make that transition without the faith in the scripture that gives the confidence to stand in awareness as awareness? Faith in renunciation is good but one needs to understand why renunciation is good. Perhaps the disciple is not clear about this either.