

Do Not Confuse the *Jiva* with Its Conditioning

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2014-11-04

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1882>

Gabriel: (June 27, 2014) I am ever-shining, radiant being. Mountains, planets, stars and universes cannot fill me. I am limitless. Time begins and ends in me. Unmoving, I watch the procession of centuries go by. My *maya*, untiring, creates all things, all places, all times. Who can find my beginning or my end?

(October 4, 2014) I am the being of all things, all people. I am not Gabriel, though I am apparently operating as Gabriel and Patrick and Kevin. I am the same being, the same existence and awareness, as they are, so we are one. We three are just different waves, with different shapes. Why make a big deal about shifting shapes? There is nothing to talk about. Waves endlessly describing their changing circumstances, mesmerised by the ephemeral.

Sundari: How beautifully put, Gabriel, very moving and so true!

Gabriel: Thank you for your email. Apologies for the delay in replying, but I'm having to do some very hard work and it's taking time. Here is a reply I wrote a while ago:

I found your email very comforting and inspiring. You've hit the nail on the head with your comment about the *samskaras*: "As the *jiva* you need to see and feel all that is associated with the *samskaras* to be free of them; this is the "work" of self-realisation..." This is what I've been doing in my analysis and it's hell at times as I become aware of how early psychological neglect has warped the whole course of my life. This is not just *dukkha*, or "dissatisfaction," it's the trauma that can cause serious mental illness, the stuff of horror films and nightmares. It's very disorientating too, as there was no language at the time of the original trauma, so the language has to be discovered and applied to the whole of life. It's like a tree that's had to grow round a boulder and sets in a crippled form that bears no resemblance to its natural shape. The pain of that is unimaginable to most people.

Sundari: My turn to apologise for the late reply - I have been travelling from the United States to South Africa (it was a nightmare trip!) and settling in to life here, sorting out an apartment and trying to get internet linked up. SA is not as jacked up as the US and Europe with regards to communication services, so almost two weeks later I still do not have a connection. *Karma yoga*!

You write beautifully, Gabriel, your tree growing around a boulder metaphor is very apt. The seed that gave birth to the tree, the earth the tree rose from and the conditions the tree grew in, the boulder in its way and the growth around it as an apparent cripple: all *Isvara*. From this point of view - is the tree really crippled? - or is it just adapting to its environment? What makes a cripple a cripple? Only the idea that one should be different from the way one is - more like some ideal of what one should look or be like. What if the beauty of the tree is the strength and determination it took to grow despite the obstacles in its way, to become a tree no less, just a different shape? The so-called crippled tree is unique and beautiful the

way it is.

Seen from this view, the horror of Gabriel's life story can be seen in a very different light. Without minimizing the graveness of what he endured, the only language that can make sense of and dissolve what Gabriel experienced is self-knowledge. Therapy has its place up to a point but it does not result in freedom as it does not have a valid means of knowledge – nor does Buddhism, as you know.

It is true that in order to dissolve the conditioning that caused the *vasanas* and *samskaras*, one has to understand what gave rise to them to be free of them. One cannot deny the *samskaras* but very often one cannot work directly on them. *Isvara* reveals what we need to see when we are ready to see because the unconscious mind has a drive for wholeness as its nature is awareness. Even if we do try to deny or hide from our inner demons, they will come out sooner or later presenting themselves to the conscious mind; that is a given. And we have no control over when this will take place. But it will. *Isvara* makes sure of that. The answer is not to get lost in the feelings associated with one's wounds (and what triggers them) but to understand what gives rise to the thoughts and feelings in light of self-knowledge. Thoughts and feelings are just objects known to us – they are a very unreliable means of knowledge.

If feelings become your way of thinking, your intellect is in the employ of a very unstable mind which does not bode well for self-inquiry or for *moksa*. I call this "woundology" and it is very prevalent in the therapeutic as well as the spiritual worlds.

Gabriel: Your email helped me to dismiss the shame which comes from the delusion that I (the *jiva*) am somehow responsible for this disaster and my subsequent behaviour instead of remembering that, as you say, "the microcosmic causal body, which is what the subconscious is, belongs to the macrocosmic causal body, *Isvara*." This was a great relief, as it validated what I already knew, that I didn't do this and I don't have to own it. Typically, after a while the global experience of and identification with the *samskara* ("complex" in Jung's language) subsides and I can then apply self-knowledge to it and remember that I, awareness, am always free of it. I am this, the eternal subject, free of the *jiva* and the *samskaras*.

Sundari: Yes, *samskaras* are a conglomeration of *vasanas*, so "complex" is a good term for them. Guilt is the most useless of emotions in that it really has no positive side to it, unlike all other emotions. Along with the guilt felt as a result of life experience or actions taken, nameless guilt and its cohort shame are built into the causal body. Think of the Biblical "original sin" idea – how ludicrous that is! That we are born flawed, what nonsense! We may be born into ignorance but we are not flawed. How can we be if our true nature is awareness? Of course, guilt and shame are used to great effect by religions of whatever origin. James says guilt and shame originate from the shame of ignorance, duality. That makes sense to me. They are very similar to and associated with free-floating anxiety which, like guilt and shame, are also *samasti vasanas*.

Gabriel: Until fairly recently I thought that self-realisation would somehow remove the *samskaras* without any work on my part.

Sundari: A common misconception and enlightenment myth. As we have discussed before, self-realisation is where the work involved in freeing the mind from bondage begins. And it is not work as in “work” – but it certainly is the tough part. Facing one’s demons, even though they are really paper demons, is not for the feint-hearted. It is only for those who want to be free more than anything else. Clearly this is true for you.

Gabriel: One of James’ great achievements has been, I think, in pointing out that self-realisation doesn’t mean perfection for the *jiva* but freedom from the *jiva*. That confusion had me thinking that I wasn’t “getting anywhere” because I was obviously still the same old person. And it has even made me fear being thrown off the Vedanta bus because I wasn’t worthy, I wasn’t good enough.

Sundari: Where is there to get to, knowing there is nowhere you are not? This is another enlightenment myth, that there is a journey from A to Z in order to “get enlightened.” Vedanta says you are and always have been the light. You cannot become something you already are nor get to where you are already. You only have to remove what prevents you from knowing and living the truth of who you are. And who or what has the power to throw Gabriel off the Vedanta bus or proclaim him unworthy other than ignorance – identification with Gabriel’s story? How could he be unworthy if he is the self? My mother told me once not to confuse Christ with the Christians. So never confuse Gabriel with his conditioning.

Gabriel: In this respect, I was encouraged by something that I read by James this morning in the July 2011 *satsang Enlightenment is Freedom from Experience* which describes what happens in my analysis: “When you become conscious of something, you objectify it. What is objective is not you. So you fall back into your real nature as awareness when you objectify something.”

Sundari: You are so right; freedom is not about perfecting the *jiva*. Whatever for – if they are not real? And there is no way around the “work” involved in understanding our conditioning in the light of self-knowledge if freedom is what we are after. However, the *jiva* will always be limited as the *jiva*; this is not going to change with *moksa*. But as its essence is *atman*, the *jiva* is not the *jiva* but awareness, and as awareness it is limitless. For people who have had extremely traumatic *karma* to live through, this is a tough one to get one’s head around as one so wants to “heal” the *jiva* and make things better. The only true healing is self-knowledge because it alone sets you free of bondage to the *jiva*. The *jiva* will always have its kinks and quirks – but as long as you know that the quirks and the *jiva* belong to *Isvara*, one can live with them unaffected. There will always be an upside and a downside for the *jiva*; this is the how the fabric of this apparent reality (the *gunas*) plays out. The *gunas* do not disappear when you know what they are but how you relate to them makes the all the difference. What a relief that is. I feel for you because to have had such a difficult past to free yourself from must have been very painful. But you had the good grace to find Vedanta – and grace is earned.

May you live out this life as Gabriel taking the bitter with the sweet in the firm and fast knowledge that Gabriel is truly fine the way he is.

Gabriel: Here is something from my spiritual history: when I was a teenager, I was an altar boy in the Catholic Church. For a while, I had the job of opening the church on dark winter mornings during the exposition of the blessed sacrament. I remember becoming absorbed in the beauty and peace of the silence, the candlelight and the flowers, and dedicating myself and my life to “God.” I avidly read the biographies and autobiographies of the saints, and my ambition was to become a saint too. Unfortunately, I soon realised that the Catholic Church couldn’t deliver “salvation.” I now think that this sense of vocation was the call of the self, so to speak, and that *Isvara* accepted my dedication and has led me to Vedanta after all this time, through all the vicissitudes of life and the search for freedom via psychotherapy, meditation and Buddhism, which was really all that was available until very recently. I can look back on the synchronicities that have punctuated my life like milestones, indications that I was “on the path,” an invisible hand bringing me back again and again from wandering lost in *samsara*.

I’m aware that this is a bit of a hotch-potch, but I’ll send it all the same. Please give my love to James. I hope you are both well.

~ Love, Gabriel

Sundari: I loved your emails and I am so happy for you, Gabriel. You have put so much into your *sadhana* and you are coming through now, Gabriel is fading and so is the suffering that identification with him caused.

~ With much love, Sundari