

On Ramana

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Tammy: Dear Sundari, thank you for the reply. Yes, it does help and it's good to have as a reference. The subtlety of this teaching is amazing. My references for reading and listening have narrowed down to Ramji and the *swamis* at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, but there is still such a mountain of material. The "opaque and transparent witnesses" is also a very helpful concept.

Sundari: I am very happy to be of help to you.

Tammy: It has been a while since I read Ramana. Thank you for that quote. I have several books on Ramana and was often put off by the "cherry-picked" nature of them. Now I understand the reason that is he was not teaching in the traditional sense. Is there a particular book of Ramana's words that you like? I may already own it and can revisit it with my new "post-ShiningWorld perspective"... ha, ha!

Sundari: I am afraid, like you, I had the same reaction to the Ramana material. And since James is my teacher and there is not a better Vedanta teacher alive today, I have not looked much further. I have an instinctive love for Ramana, and there is no doubt that he was enlightened, but James would be better versed to point you towards what to read. Don't feel that you have to study the scriptures - that is indeed overwhelming - and not necessary. It is very helpful to read as much as you can of course because any genuine Vedanta literature keeps the mind on the self. As you are the subject matter, you are reading about yourself, which is why you cannot study Vedanta. James has done for Vedanta what has never been done before by laying out the methodology for the means of knowledge as clearly as he has. If you stick with it, you will not go wrong. I only read other scriptures for inspiration because they make me feel good. They do not teach me anything new; firstly because all Vedanta literature basically says the same thing: you are unborn, undying, unlimited, ordinary (James' addition), limitless and unchanging awareness. You cannot do anything to get what you already have. You need only to remove the ignorance that is standing in the way of the hard and fast knowledge of what your true nature is. To do this Vedanta provides the only valid and independent means of knowledge to remove ignorance. If the mind is qualified and has the good grace to find a qualified teacher, *moksa* obtains in the mind and one lives free of the person and free as the person who knows they are really the self. It sounds simple of course, but it is not, because ignorance is hardwired and very tenacious.

Consistent application of the knowledge by exposing the mind to the scripture, discriminating by facing, understanding and negating all the objects - the tough ones being of course the *vasanas*, is what it takes.

Tammy: In the first line you wrote: "Only one witness - always the self - you, witnessing either in self-knowledge or self-ignorance." This is most helpful. It reminds me of the analogy of a swinging door: it can swing "out" or "in," but the door never really moves from the hinges. Does that apply? I think that was from Sri

Nisargadatta, but I may be mistaken.

Sundari: I am not sure who the quote comes from, but yes, the metaphor does apply. How one perceives life will be dictated by the *vasanas* until such time as they have been seen, understood and rendered non-binding. However, what makes seeing possible is the light of awareness shining on the mind, ignorant or not. This is what perception “hinges” on – duality, or ignorance, does not disappear when *moksa* has obtained in the mind; one still sees it. Ignorance is only a problem if you do not know what it is and take ignorance to be knowledge.

Have you read my article on System 1 and 2? I have attached it for you. It is a summing-up from a Vedantic perspective the brilliant work done by experimental psychologist and Nobel Prize-winner Daniel Kahneman. He describes these systems and many other fascinating insights very beautifully in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.

Tammy: Thank you again. I want to express how nice it is to have the opportunity to email you with a question now and then. This kind of direct contact with another in relation to an “impersonal teaching” is what I so wanted during my seeking years. It’s my intention to come to see you and Ramji in Santa Fe in August.

Sundari: So happy you did write, Tammy, it is very important to do so if you are stuck. We are all here for you any time. 😊

I hope you make it to Sante Fe and look forward to seeing you again.

~ Much love, Sundari