

The Self Attached to Itself

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Deirdre: Dear Sundari, strange happenings as of late... sometimes I wonder if there is a collective shift. Aurora and I got into a very hurtful argument after the retreat - the only one of our 20-year friendship - and two other friends I saw last night are having similar situations with relationships.

Sundari: It might be the case, perhaps just in your field of reference, reflecting issues closer to home for you. Relationship issues are always the big test for the *jiva*. It is one thing understanding non-duality as an inquirer and quite another to live it and see everyone and everything in your field of experience in the light of non-duality. I am sorry to hear about your disagreement with Aurora; we picked up an unconscious tension between the two of you. You both have *jiva* issues to resolve, it seems.

Deirdre: What good timing for the *Bhakti Sutras* to take root in our lives! Sometimes we must love from a distance.

Sundari: As the self we never love from a distance, because time and space does not apply to the self. But as the *jiva*, yes, at times when ignorance is involved, it is only possible to love from a distance.

Deirdre: As I understand it, one of the literal translations of *bhakti* is "attachment." As we love *Ishvara* in all forms and all the gifts we have been given, we also have to continually let go of our attachments, even to people we love deeply.

Sundari: Yes, true. As the self we see everyone as non-different and love them as the self, but as the *jiva*, in order to be true to one's own *dharma*, it may require removing ourselves from certain attachments. There is no essential right or wrong about whom we associate with; there is only what works with regards to peace of mind. If a situation causes constant agitation in the mind then we have to look at what serves us best. The life of the *jiva* has to serve the truth, not the other way around.

As *jivas* we are always attached to something, and there is nothing wrong with that, as there is only the self. James and I are very attached to each other even though we know who we are. It is the self attached to itself. The problem arises when ignorance, or duality, is in the mix. Then attachments become painful and burdensome, full of expectations, making peace of mind impossible.

Deirdre: Thank you for such a thorough response. And for clarifying. It is helpful to have pointed out the *jiva's samsaric* point of view versus the self seeing itself in all things. Ah, I hope to one day be conscious of this self seeing self in all - *aparokshanubhuti*.

Sundari: *Moksa* is the ability to discriminate you, awareness, from the objects that appear in you – in the moment, 24/7. Non-dual vision means you see everything as the self first, second as the *jiva*. Seeing as the self does not mean that the *jiva* ever disappears; it's just that non-dual vision makes it possible to see your *jiva* and the "other" clearly. Which means you pay attention to the way the other person is made: their likes and dislikes, their needs; not because you feel obligated to do so, but because you understand, so you want to.

Deirdre: Humbling also to see how quickly the subtle body reacted negatively to what was happening in the field, just hours after hearing the teachings on *bhakti*. Yes, I have work to do. It is all *prasad*, and I have been giving thanks for all of it – I see that one does not cancel out the other. *Isvara* knows exactly where my intellect is stuck, and a swift kick now and then is called for. I will take it like a man! What does Ramji say? – "Man up!"

Sundari: You don't have work to do, because you are not the doer. Commit the mind to self-inquiry 24/7 with single-pointed concentration and trust that self-knowledge will "do the work" of removing ignorance. You can count on *Isvara* to make it glaringly obvious where *tamas* and *rajas* hold sway in the mind. Once self-knowledge gets to work in the mind, ignorance becomes much more painful. And one does have to "man up" and take it on the chin as the *jiva* if freedom is what you are after. After all, it's what you can't see about the *jiva* that needs to become obvious. Once you do see the blind spots, the conditioning that is holding it in place is understood in light of the *gunas* that underpin those *vasanas*, so one can then dis-identify with it as not-self. But to heal it you have to see it first.

You have the right attitude, which is *karma yoga* – leave the results up to *Isvara* and take what comes as a gift – is just what the *jiva* needs. *Bhakti* is another word for self-knowledge because love is your nature and there is no real love without knowledge.

Deirdre: I feel less tolerant of other *jivas'* stuff: anxiety, neediness – (and my own stuff!). I want more and more to stay in the quiet and be around people less. Maybe this is appropriate and maybe not, if it's causing me to argue with a friend or remove myself continually from people that I love – which is what the *jiva* has been tending to do. The *Bhakti Sutras* charge us with the challenge of loving everything you see as your self. And maybe it's healthy to reduce social activity and protect my peace more and more?

Sundari: Yes, the answer is always both/and, not either/or. Discrimination is the key in every situation. It is a natural tendency of inquirers to want to quiet the mind and remove it from all outside agitation. We basically live a monastic life, limiting our contact with people as much as possible. Our minds are so quiet it is painful to have to condition to *rajas* or *tamas*, so whenever possible we don't. It is not easy to do this in your case, because you are a householder and need to take care of the needs of your family. *Karma yoga* is the answer, as always – converting emotion into devotion. Consciously see the "other" as the self and serve them as such. Whenever possible, make time for you. Avoid those people whose needs you do not need to cater to as much as possible. Yes, see them as the self, but all the same, you do not

need to cater to their ignorance. We call that keeping the company of like minds – *satsanga*, as opposed to *kusanga*, the opposite. *Rajas* and *tamas* are contagious. The nature of the mind is *sattva*, so you cannot become more *sattvic*; you need to balance *rajas* and *tamas* so that the mind does not have to condition to the terrible twins, as we call *rajas* and *tamas*. Again, use your discrimination. If this means losing friends, well, so be it. You did not come here to make or keep friends; you came here to realise the self. Loving everyone does not mean putting up with their demands. Love has a tough face too and it says NO when it needs to.

Deirdre: Yes, the experience with Aurora was a great *prasad*. Seeing all the *jiva*'s stuff, I was able to communicate with her in a very clear way, cleaning up my side of the street, so to speak. I focused purely on my thoughts and actions rather than project any needs or desires onto her. It was very good ego-puncturing. *Isvara* answered prayers for clarity – and it became wonderfully clear that I want freedom above all else, especially above being “right”!

Layers of ignorance seem to unpeel by looking carefully and honestly. Also, the lesson of letting go of the need for everyone to like this *jiva*. So what?! Who is the one that cares?? Who is the one that was “hurt”? Laughing, as in retrospect it's like a scene from a movie you saw long ago. Thank you so much for assisting with the clarity there, I greatly appreciate it. Lovely to feel that there are friends beside me on the apparent journey. 😊

Sundari: Your attitude to the *jiva* is *nididhysana* at work – facing the less than fabulous parts of the *jiva* and seeing it all as not-self. Without understanding everything in light of the knowledge it is not possible to resolve anything. And as you say, who cares anyway? You never made the *jiva* like she is, what comes up comes from the unconscious – the causal body. How ridiculous to own it! Seeing and understanding is all it takes, although one might still have to cycle through negative patterns. Well done to you for “doing the work.” The essence of non-dual relationships (and of course this applies to all relationships) is the ability to see the *jiva* projections, identify the patterns by tracing them back to the *gunas* that gave rise to them in the first place, then dis-identify with them as the self.

And poor little *jiva* gets loved “as is,” even though the upshot is without the pressure of the like or dislike, *jivaji* gets to be much happier. Win-win!

I am so happy for you, well done for doing “the work.” James can't live with bad thoughts about anyone or anything; he just refuses to do it. He always chooses love and compassion. I take longer to come around, as this *jiva* has a different nature, but he is right. It is better to have only good thoughts no matter the situation and let love do the teaching and healing.

~ Much love, Sundari