

The Voice of Isvara

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Michael: When I started acting, the decision was rooted in my spiritual quest for knowledge of myself. I was inquiring as to what to do with my life and asked the simple question: "What am I (Michael) most afraid of?" The answer was to speak, or more correctly, to be heard. I was reading Khalil Gibran at the time, and his saying "keep death as thy council" for me translated to "your greatest gifts will be found in what you are most afraid of." I started with voice training which led me to the stage and one of my deepest regrets that Michael did not carry that to its fullest potential.

Sundari: As the *jiva*, it is true that there is great benefit in doing inquiry into what we fear most. This is an effective strategy to process our psychological issues. However, Vedanta reveals that all fear is the result of either *rajas* in the form of consuming desire or its flip side, *tamas* in the form of strong aversion. When one subjects the mind to self-inquiry using a valid means of knowledge like Vedanta, there is no need to delve into or overcome any specific fear, because one understands that all FEAR is just an acronym for False Evidence Appearing Real.

The greatest gift is not to be found in what you are most afraid of. It is found in the understanding that anything the mind fears is not real - only YOU, the self, are real. And no fear can touch you.

Michael: I have gone back to voice training prompted again by inquiry into self. The impulse also came from the grips of deep, dark and all-consuming depression, which paralyzes my mind and is an affliction which is intensely painful and takes over all positive thought. Depression has been a constant companion for Michael. I refuse to take antidepressants, and find psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and healers totally ineffectual, and with this recent bout after the break-up with Catherine asked *Isvara* for help. The idea of recording my own scripture came from various (*Isvara*) inputs, the effect of reading scripture aloud had on my mind, I am auditory, and sound has a profound effect on my mind, that there were no short audio files of Vedanta available - I often wanted to hear a specific teaching based on what was in my mind at that time - and when I did find it and created a clip out of it the effect was quite astounding. So using my voice was one of the many arsenals *Isvara* suggested for me to engage with to help combat depression and to reclaim my mind, to allow my mind to assimilate the teachings. Other techniques in my arsenal are reading/listening to scripture, sleep, *karma yoga*, meditation, diet, exercise (*jivamukti yoga*), prayer, service, altar work and the list continues...

Sundari: As I said in my last email to you, we commend you for the dedication you have to your *sadhana*. There is no doubt that in many ways the suffering the mind has endured as a result of its conditioning has born fruit in that it has spurred you on in your commitment to freedom. When the mind is that single-pointed, the self responds in like kind and the knowledge will work to remove the ignorance. You may never be free of the basic temperament, or *Isvara*-given character, that is unique to Michael, but the knowledge will remove suffering by dis-identifying with it.

A small point: a *jivamukti* is a *jiva* free of ignorance, the self no longer under the spell of ignorance. A *jivamukti* does not have to practise any *yoga*, because all the *yogas* have been transformed to knowledge. Although *nididhysana* for the *jiva* whether enlightened or not never ends, because as long as there is a *jiva* walking around it is reacting to its environment, so application of the knowledge is constant. But it is from a mind that responds in every situation first as awareness and second as the *jiva*, never confusing the two. If this ability to discriminate between *satya* and *mithya* is not immediate, fast and firm, you cannot use the term *jivamukta*, because the *jiva* is still bound by ignorance. Although the *jivamukta* usually does continue to meditate, pray, read the scriptures, apply *karma yoga*, etc., it does so as the self and not to gain anything.

Michael: It is my contention that a person rooted in self-knowledge will have a voice that mirrors that fact. In the same way that a *vasana* will impact the *jiva's* mind, so will it impact the *jiva's* voice, filtering it with an untruth. In effect, for me voice training is part of my *sadhana*, and my voice sessions have a most profound effect on my mind and ability to assimilate this knowledge.

I have gone to some depth on the context of this for me, as I feel this is important to articulate.

Sundari: Thanks for reiterating the background to your *sadhana*, we both heard what you were saying and understood what you were getting at when we talked over Skype. Depression is a very difficult affliction for the mind to contend with, as it makes self-inquiry/discrimination almost impossible. Apart from very deep *pratibandikas* that cloud the mind, mental health issues are probably one of the hardest things to objectify. It is a credit to your commitment to freedom for and from Michael that you have managed to stick to your *sadhana* without trying to take the easy route through drugs.

You are right about developing “your” voice, both physiologically and spiritually. In order for self-knowledge to obtain in the mind, the mind has to be purified. This is why the qualifications for *moksa* are so important, which you are well aware of. The intellect is a very rarefied and subtle instrument, but in order for self-knowledge obtain in the mind the intellect has to become even more refined. This is why self-inquiry can be the most difficult thing the mind can do, because by subjecting the mind to Vedanta, self-knowledge forces the intellect to expand and change.

When self-knowledge obtains in a pure mind it definitely changes how the intellect functions. It actually rearranges and builds new neural networks that are capable of understanding something that it is subtler than the intellect, i.e. you, awareness. This is the power and beauty of Vedanta and why there is nothing like it. When the mind operates naturally as the self and no longer as an independent intellect identified with the person, the thoughts that appear in it still operate as “before” *moksa*: (1) random or *jiva*-related thoughts that originate from *Isvara*, (2) causal body and personal unconscious, or microcosmic causal body, but they are then known to be not-self, so one does not identify with them; deliberate thoughts that are now known to originate from you, pure awareness (*Isvara* 1), which one does not identify with as the *jiva* either. Thirdly, and mostly typical of *moksa* only, thoughts/words that are simply the self thinking and speaking, no deliberation on the part of the *jiva* at all, as the *jiva* one is then just a mouthpiece for the self and totally absent.

The latter thoughts and words that are expressed are extremely powerful; they will have an effect on the timbre and cadence of the human voice as well as on the minds of people who hear them because they have the authority of the self in them. The self always responds to itself. This is why Ram's voice has the gravitas and power it has: years and years of talking about the self as the self. He never knows what he is going to say nor prepares for teaching. Teaching happens. A good analogy is the radio: you hear the voices coming from the radio and you know someone spoke the words, but you know they are not "in" the radio. In the same way, when the *jiva* has been totally subsumed by the teachings, the person may look like they are still there and talking, but the person is gone.

As for the audio books and sound bites idea, we are very happy about the co-venture that is transpiring between us. We trust that the work we do together will be of the highest integrity. As you know, many people once they realise how powerful Vedanta is, and in particular how much pure gold is to be found at ShiningWorld, want to "mine" this as a resource to profit from personally. We can't stop people doing this, as the material is freely given and belongs to the self, but it will not work for them. Vedanta cannot be sold.

~ Much love from us, Sundari