

# Understanding the Jiva

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**Samantha:** Hello, to you both. I just felt the need to connect, and in fact ask a question. But first, we hope you two are doing well after a fabulous *satsang* at Trout Lake. Thank you for providing such a wonderful six days of complete immersion in Vedanta. I wonder if I was immersed in that way every day how quickly would all of this knowledge seep into my little *jiva*-mind.

**Sundari:** Yes, if one could subject the mind 24/7 to self-knowledge and not have to deal with the world at all, inquiry would move along much faster – but understanding the world and how the *jiva* relates to it is the crux of liberation. What good is knowledge if it does not translate to the life of the *jiva*? It is very easy to live as awareness with no distractions; living as the self in the world, especially as a householder, is much more heroic!

**Samantha:** Okay, speaking of little *jiva*-minds, here's my question. If *jiva* "Samantha" knows she's ever-present, unchanging, non-dual awareness, and back in the order of *maya*-reality something happens that would produce a "negative" feeling in "Samantha"-*jiva*, but upon discrimination she holds fast to the knowing that she is awareness, would *jiva*-"Samantha" still suffer those feelings or, by giving up those feelings to *Isvara* would she neutralize the "negative" feelings and hence not be confronted with *jiva*-suffering? After all, isn't this the prime motivation for knowing my true nature? I hope I'm clear with my question.

**Sundari:** This is the million-dollar question of course, and one which many inquirers get stuck on. This is the *Isvara-jiva* identity that is at the core of self-inquiry. It is also called discriminating *satya* (ever-present, unchanging awareness) from *mithya* (not always present, always changing *jiva*). First off – it is not "*jiva*-Samantha" that knows she is ever-present, non-dual awareness – Samantha does not know anything. It is the light of awareness shining on Samantha making it appear as if she is conscious and aware that knows that Samantha is really ever-present, unlimited, non-dual awareness. Samantha is an object known to you, awareness. When *maya* is operating, the self (apparently) under the spell of ignorance appears as a subtle body, or *jiva*, and believing it is something other than awareness, identifies with the subtle body and its life story, thinking that awareness is something to gain. This is the cause of all existential suffering.

We have to address the *jiva* and its conditioning to be free of it. To address it, one must understand what creates it (*Isvara*) and what governs its *vasana* load (the *gunas*). *Isvara* and the *gunas* can also be referred to as the causal body, or System 1. The *jiva* and its microcosmic causal body, or unconscious (*vasana* load), is System 2. Unless the *jiva* understands System 1 it cannot make changes to System 2 that will permanently change how it relates to System 1, i.e. for *moksa* to obtain, the *jiva*-conditioning needs to be rendered non-binding and the doer negated.

While it is true that there is a definite "shift" in how one sees life and relates to objects once self-knowledge is firm, it is also true that the *nididhysana* stage never

really ends for the *jiva*. *Nididhysana* is the constant contemplation/assimilation and transformation of negative emotions/psychological patterns in the light of self-knowledge, not in the light of one's own beliefs or opinions.

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Macrocosmic ignorance (*maya*) does not end when personal ignorance (*avidya*) ends. Duality does not disappear when you know that it is just a superimposition onto non-duality, like the mirage on the desert floor, even though you know it is a mirage and you can still see it, but you don't take it to be real. Duality of ignorance is only a problem when you don't know what it is, taking ignorance to be knowledge.

Even when *moksa* obtains in the mind the *jiva* is always limited by *maya* (although no longer conditioned by it) even though its essence is known to be limitless awareness. The fine print on the enlightenment certificate is that there really is no "post"-*moksa* stage for the *jiva* even though you are *moksa* and not the *jiva*. A common myth in the enlightenment game is that enlightenment is another object to obtain and when it has been the *jiva* will be different, better. But it won't be. It will still have its *Isvara*-given character and tendencies, it will still be a pain in the ass sometimes and it will still suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, feeling joy, pain, loss, grief as well as the constant bliss of self-knowledge.

Secondly, to answer the next part of your question, if *jiva*-"Samantha" knows she's ever-present, unchanging, non-dual awareness, and back in the order of *maya*-reality something happens that would produce a "negative" feeling in "Samantha"-*jiva*, but upon discrimination she holds fast to the knowing that she is awareness, would *jiva*-"Samantha" still suffer those feelings or, by giving up those feelings to *Isvara*, would she neutralize the "negative" feelings, and hence not be confronted with *jiva*-suffering?

Self-knowledge is not a magic pill for the ego. The difference is that when *moksa* has obtained the *jiva* does not identify with the thoughts/feelings, because it knows they are not real - i.e. not always present and always changing. Only the knower of the thoughts and feelings, you, awareness, is real. Knowing this makes all the difference because the mind does not suffer over the suffering. It has a way to objectify suffering, knowing it passes, as do all things in *samsara*. So, yes, definitely, in responding to all situations as they arise in the mind as awareness and not as the *jiva*, the suffering is ameliorated, although events will still play out.

As awareness one does not need the experience of bliss or happiness to be present, because one knows that you are the happiness, the bliss. And the bliss of knowledge does not feel like anything (even though it makes feeling possible). So you can be happy and blissful not matter what is going on for the *jiva*. Knowing this one does not try to change *Isvara* - System 1. Even knowing that as awareness you are beyond *Isvara* does not alter the fact that the *jiva* is subject to *Isvara*. What makes the world of difference to the *jiva*'s experience is the hard and fast knowledge that none of it is real: not the empirical world as it is (*Isvara srsti*) nor the *jiva* and its subjective world of experience (*jiva srsti*). The *jiva* never stops experiencing, but when it is not longer under the spell of ignorance, what changes is how it relates to objects and its field of experience (*Isvara/System 1*). Self-knowledge reverses and ends the experience-experiencer (subject-object) split.

Inquirers still identified with the body-mind (ego) think that awareness is something they will experience "one day" when knowledge obtains. As a finder you know that you are here and now the non-experience witness, or awareness, making it possible

for the ego (Samantha) to experience awareness - 24/7. Life in the apparent reality is all awareness apparently under the spell of ignorance, experiencing itself but ever-free of experience, full stop. There is only one experience seemingly broken up into many discrete experiences. There is only one eternal *jiva*, and it never leaves the apparent reality. Awareness gives rise to and enlivens all objects, but is always free of them.

As Vedantins we never stop “working” on the *jiva* even though we do not censure it or expect it to change. Of course we follow *dharma*, personal and universal, without question, but not because we want to improve the *jiva*. We follow *dharma* only because we want a peaceful mind. All the same, *jivas* enlightened or not can still get up each other’s noses! James and Isabella irritate each other at times, but they know they are not doing anything. It’s just how the *jiva* is made, no doer doing anything. Although accommodation is the key issue in relating to objects because to be free you have to manage likes and dislikes and serve the total, one cannot change the fundamental nature of the *jiva*.

So one could wait forever to take a stand in awareness as awareness if you are waiting for *nididhysana* to end. Ask yourself when an issue arises for the *jiva*: If the *jiva* is projecting, and I know it is projecting, is it projecting? The subjective reality is always operating for the *jiva*. It will always have its particular way of relating to *Isvara* which will be unique to its *vasana* filters. The difference will be that a *jivanmukta* knows when it is projecting, instantly dissolves the projection in the knowledge and is instantly free of it. Thus it does not create “new” *karma*. It keeps its *karma* like a little dog on a very short leash, right up front. No *karmic* drag, ever. No unfinished business, no drama and no existential suffering. There is never another person involved in its interactions and transactions in the world of objects/experience. The *jivanmukta* knows in the moment that it is transacting only with itself because there is no “other.” There is only awareness.

**Samantha:** It’s rather funny I haven’t yet thought of this question before, as it seems so elementary. Anyway, off to bed now. And just to put it in writing.

**Sundari:** Understanding the *jiva* is where all the teaching takes place. It is easy to understand that you are awareness, after all - it is obvious that you are aware. But understanding what that means to the *jiva* identified with being a *jiva* is the hard part. Ignorance is hardwired and tenaciously resistant.

~ Much love, Sundari