

# Moksa or Success in the World?

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**Vivek:** So thoughtfully written. Thank you very much. I need to reflect on this for quite some time. Thank you for helping me on this journey. I'm in the U.S. in a couple of weeks for vacation, perhaps the best time to contemplate.

**Sundari:** You are most welcome, Vivek. I have been blessed to have had the knowledge unfolded for me correctly in the methodology James has developed, by one of the greatest Vedanta teachers alive on the planet today. I owe everything to him; he is my *guru*.

**Vivek:** I've been spending more and more time at your website and am just absolutely amazed and the amount of content that's there. You and Ram are doing such a wonderful service.

**Sundari:** Thank you. ShiningWorld is a goldmine of the highest-level Vedanta teaching you will find. Our aim is to serve the Lord, *Isvara*, and the scripture in the best way we can. Apart from the books and many videos and publications available at ShiningWorld, the *satsang* page has thousands of pages of Q&As, with a search function. We have many free videos of James teaching on YouTube, which I encourage you to watch. We have a backlog of inquirers we are coaching, so cannot always answer questions straightaway, but any of our ShiningWorld-endorsed teachers are every bit as qualified, thanks to James.

**Vivek:** I wanted to wait but just couldn't resist asking you this question. But since it's so fundamental to making further spiritual progress and doing honest self-inquiry, I had to ask it. I'm sorry for bombarding you with these questions.

The topic is fear. Throughout my adult there are two fears that have always dominated me.

1. Fear of failure in the sense that I'm on a journey in a difficult environment to transform my family business from a domestic one to a global one. There isn't a choice here, given the nature of the business. If we don't do this we fade away. Along the way we have setbacks. The constant worry of "what if?" keeps taking over and pulls me down. I'm able to focus more the past one year with the attitude of "do what needs to be done" but every once in a while that worry gets a wee bit overwhelming – especially when we face setbacks. I'm hoping in a year or two the numbers will do the talking but till then... Any suggestions would be useful. I know I can only do my very best and the rest is in *Isvara's* hands.

2. Fear of myself or a loved one falling victim to a deadly disease, like cancer. This was a huge worry that would send me into many panic attacks. Like other things, once my journey started in 2013-14 it has started to fade. One-and-a-half years ago my mother, who is also like my *guru*, was diagnosed with cancer. The way she has fought her battle has been nothing short of amazing. She has been a student of

Vedanta under Swamiji for 20 years, and it's been this strength that's seeing her through this period. We just lost another dear family member to cancer yesterday, so this fear is always hovering around. It's like cancer is lurking round the corner to take people away. How does one deal with this fear?

To really do relaxed and insightful self-inquiry, keeping fear in check, would be vital, I would imagine. Would appreciate your thoughts on the same. I've been blessed to not have too many other desires. I live a fairly simple, disciplined life. Fear is the only thing that sometimes makes me act in an irrational or angry manner.

**Sundari:** It is evident from what you tell us that you have had contact with the scripture through your mother for many years, even if you have not actively begun inquiry until recent years. However, it is also clear that you have not had systematic teaching on the scripture. James developed the methodology he did to address this problem. Many inquirers jump into self-inquiry without a proper grounding and unfolding of the teachings. There is a progression to the teaching which must be followed or self-inquiry will be frustrating, hit-and-miss, and ultimately will not work. You have read James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment*, which is good. If you look at the structure of the chapters, you will see how James has set up the teaching. The starting point is motivations, then qualifications, moving on to *karma yoga*.

If your motivation for self-inquiry is to succeed in the world, you have come to the wrong place. If this is the case, put Vedanta onto the back burner until you have firmly established for yourself that there is nothing to be gained from worldly pursuits. Vedanta, or self-knowledge, might make you more objective about your worldly pursuits, but its intended aim is to free you from dependence on worldly things. Vedanta is a teaching for *moksa*. That is its sole purpose. It is a valid and complete means of knowledge for awareness, not for gaining objects – success in the world is just another object. There is no real success in the world. It is a zero-sum game. You will win as much as you lose.

*Isvara* runs the field the way it is run, and there is nothing you as the person (or as awareness) can do about it. As the person, or *jiva*, you are limited and have limited knowledge, and are subject to the laws that run the field. The field is set up the way it is for each *jiva* to work out its *karma*, and then the body dies. It is not there to cater to our likes and dislikes or to make the *jiva* "immortal." Only *Isvara* is omniscient and knows what is needed for the total at any given moment. You cannot save or preserve your life or work to shore up security for yourself as the *jiva*. There is no such thing in *samsara* – the hypnosis of duality. Everything we have and everything that happens to the *jiva* is because of and thanks to *Isvara*. The *jiva* will never be in control of the results, even though it has limited free will.

As awareness, the essence of the *jiva*, you are not a doer, and it makes no difference to you one way or the other what happens in the field – because the field is known to be a dream appearing within you. It is only apparently real, that which is not always present and always changing. As awareness (that which is permanent and unchanging) there is no *karma* for you, because *karma* is not real. As awareness, you are unborn and never die, so you have neither fear of death nor desire to hang onto life.

The fear you feel is common to all *samsaris*. It is the inbuilt fear all *jivas* are born with. It comes from the innate knowledge that the results of actions are not up to us and the nature of the field is totally unpredictable. We are seemingly at the whim of

some arbitrary force that willy-nilly gives and takes away. There is nothing to be done about this. Only self-knowledge is capable of giving relief and ending the suffering and the fear because through it the *jiva* is freed from dependence on objects and the illusion of doership is negated. The *jivanmukta*, or the self no longer under the spell of ignorance, knows itself to be that from which all objects arise and depend and is in full acceptance of *Isvara* being the only doer. As awareness, one understands all the forces playing out in the field and always acts according to *dharma*.

If you are interested in *moksa* then I have a suggestion for you. Start at the beginning again. Look at your motivations and the values that underpin them. Dayananda has a brilliant book on this called *The Value of Values*. Read it. Then work out where you stand on the qualifications. James has outlined them all thoroughly in both his books, *How to Attain Enlightenment* and his more recent one, *The Essence of Enlightenment*. Without the qualifications in place, self-inquiry WILL NOT work for you.

Then, and very importantly, read the chapter I have attached on *karma yoga* from James book *The Essence of Enlightenment*. You clearly do not have a full understanding of this vital part of self-inquiry. Once again, without a SOLID base of *karma yoga* underpinning everything you do, forget about self-inquiry working for you. As I said above, if you are set on success in the world, then Vedanta is not for you right now. Put all your energy into making the world work for you until it is clear to that gaining or not gaining the objects (whatever they are) will not bring you what you seek. We can tell you right now what the reason is for this inescapable fact: you are what you seek. You cannot gain what you already have. You can only lose the ignorance that prevents you from actualising this knowledge. You need nothing to complete you. Whether you succeed or fail in building up your family business to global stature, whether you succeed or fail in your relationships or any endeavour in the life of the *jiva* makes not one bit of difference to you, awareness. Irrespective of the limited *jiva*, you are whole and complete, non-dual, actionless, ever-present, unchanging, unconcerned, unmodified, ordinary awareness. You are not the *jiva*. Nothing the *jiva* does or does not do can add or subtract from this.

However, *moksa* is for the *jiva* – ONLY. As awareness, you are already free. To live free while still appearing as a *jiva* is the whole point of *moksa*. It is not up for discussion what your true nature is: you are awareness, end of story. Now, the tricky part is: What does this MEAN for the *jiva*? This is where all the “work” of self-inquiry takes place.

If you are serious about self-inquiry, I strongly recommend that you follow my suggestions, read the chapter on *karma yoga* from James’ new book. Make use of the *satsang* section at the website. Write to the other teachers if you want another slant on your questions. We are here to help you with your inquiry, but we cannot do it for you. Feel free to write when you get stuck, but first, start at the beginning again. We have a twelve-month teaching course at the website based on James new book, *Essence*. Each chapter has important questions and answers relevant to the inquiry in that chapter. Read them slowly, sign on to the logic and do not skip steps.

Ask yourself every time the mind wanders and you find yourself identified with the doer again: “Do I want to have a fabulous life as the self, free of the *jiva*, or do I want to struggle along believing I am the *jiva*, deluded by *maya*, trying to protect myself from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, doing battle with my ever-present and ever-growing fears, ever wary of the unpredictable nature of the field, trying to

win but never quite making it – or do I want to free the mind from dependence on objects to be happy and secure by understanding the undeniable logic of the existence, the forces that make up the *dharma* field and the conditioning that runs the mind of the *jiva*, how it relates to the field of which it is an intrinsic part and to live as the self, unconcerned and full?”

It’s a no-brainer, but then again – the majority of people try to make the world work for them. The evidence of the weariness of the ever-hopeful *jiva*, worn down by existential suffering brought on by the belief in doership, is everywhere to be seen. If your answer to the question above is yes to the latter, then you have come to the right place.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari