

The Eternal and the Non-Eternal *Jiva*

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Dean: Dear Ramji, I sincerely hope you and Sundari are well – I thought that, since a bit over a year has passed from when I first contacted you, I should drop you a brief note to say “hi” and “thanks” (sorry, it’s been a while since I wrote, but I haven’t felt the need to ask any questions). I was actually visiting ShiningWorld today and browsing some of Ted’s *satsang* replies, and I felt a great affection for you. I was actually thinking just the other night about where I might be if I hadn’t got this knowledge/experience thing sorted out – probably in the loony bin!

I’ve been listening methodically to Vedanta each day. I understand now two critical things: (1) the relationship between awareness and the apparent reality of *Isvara*, *jiva*, *jagat* and (2) that *karma yoga*, and contemplation as a consequence, should continue until that vision of reality (including *mithya*) is always present and available to me, just like any other mundane knowledge (such that it never needs to be recalled or remembered). At the moment, an applied effort is still required to cognitively resolve *mithya*, up to the knower, into pure awareness. Perhaps I’m wrong here, but I’ve deduced that the fully ascertained vision of reality implies an effortless cognitive resolution of the apparent reality into awareness (such as when one knows there is a mirage, no further effort is required to cognitively resolve it or remember it is a mirage – it is ascertained and treated as such).

James: Yes, indeed, a very good example. Self-actualization is nothing more than a permanent deeply entrenched *satya/mithya samskara*. I can see your understanding is developing very nicely.

Dean: I do have a couple of questions, actually:

(1) Concerning the subtle body and what happens when the *pranas* are withdrawn and the *sthula shariram* is left for dead: I understand that if I haven’t got *moksa* yet, then the “internal pressure” of the *vasanas* in the causal body is going to result in a further round in *samsara* (because the sense of smallness centred on the “I,” or ignorance, remains). But if instead I am already *jivanmukti* (the sense of smallness centred on the “I” is resolved once and for all and all the *prarabdha* is exhausted with the death of the gross body), is that the end of the *jiva* for good, just when I’d learned to live with him?

James: Yes, sad but true. The Eternal *Jiva* is unborn and never dies. The non-eternal *jiva* takes another birth. Birth and death are *mithya*. The non-eternal is a limited identity cobbled together out of the circumstances of one’s birth. If you die without resolving the identity of the ignorance-born non-eternal *jiva*, a new *jiva* appears in the next birth, minus the memory of the *jiva* it was in the last birth, but ignorance causes it to put together another limited identity with a new name. It will not be the same non-eternal *jiva*, because the time and circumstances are different. If the non-eternal *jiva* – Dean – does *sadhana* in this life and fails to gain *moksa*, you are doing a nice favor to the next guy. He will have a *vasana* for self-inquiry and good *karma*, and will probably finish the job in that birth.

Dean: Do I then just abide as I, pure disembodied awareness, with no particular story/identity?

James: Yes.

Dean: This is a tricky one because at its heart is the fear of death of the *jiva* and the sense of being erased (so, the essence of ignorance). Or does the *jiva* continue to shine as reflected awareness, but with the fully ascertained vision of the self-shining "I"? The fear of death persists as long as the vision of Reality is not ascertained: it's strange to be afraid of non-existence, which is impossible. But there it is, the ego is small and afraid (primal ignorance), limitless "I" apparently collapsed down into a tiny being; what's to become of "me"?!

Sorry, that seems a little self-indulgent, but I guess it is the fundamental human problem. I think I really need to investigate this ignorance a bit more to see if it comes unstuck.

James: The Eternal *Jiva* always shines as reflected awareness until the end of the creation cycle when it is absorbed into *paramatma*, limitless consciousness. It emerges during the next cycle, so it is not non-existent, i.e. is potential. Christ referred to the Eternal *Jiva* as the "son" of God. Man is "cast in the image of God." Vedanta indicates the identity between original consciousness and its reflection. The non-eternal *jiva* doesn't get free. The Eternal *Jiva* is freed of the notion that it is the non-eternal *jiva*. The point is that nothing becomes of the non-eternal *jiva* at death, because the non-eternal *jiva* is *mithya*, existent momentarily, but as good as non-existent because death removes it. In fact it is not present most of the time when you, consciousness, appear here as the Eternal *Jiva*. Where is the ego when you are fully absorbed in some task? Where is it when you are thinking of someone else? You are always only original consciousness even when you think you are the non-eternal *jiva*.

Dean: (2) This question is somewhat related to the above, but concerns the status of "higher beings": Assuming there are higher beings that enjoy a much greater degree of *ananda* than human beings (the happiest of whom only enjoy a fraction of that fullness), and assuming that their bodies are solely subtle (but material) and that they have a predominantly *sattvic* nature, wouldn't they all be liberated on account of that *sattvic* nature because of their sheer reflectivity and resultant ability to know the truth?

James: Not necessarily. *Sattva* alone does not guarantee *moksa*. Additionally, you only get *moksa* here when you have a body. Embodied qualified inquirers are "much higher beings," that is to say that their intellects are exceedingly refined and when they expose their intellects to the knowledge, they "become" immortal, i.e. are doubt-free concerning their identity as limitless consciousness. Having said that, when their gross bodies die, the structure of their subtle bodies remains with the knowledge in the causal body for some time, making them available for rebirth on the basis of collective *karma* (*samasthi vasana*), but not as typical human beings, because the force of the non-eternal *jiva's karma* has already been exhausted by

self-knowledge. Sometimes they are called *avatars*, rebirth *yogis* or *lamas*.

If there are “higher” beings – see the spatial metaphor – they are *jivas*, and if they are purely *sattvic*, they will still have *vasanas*, particularly the *vasana* for bliss, which will cause attachment to their status as enjoyers of bliss and they will not seek knowledge, because you only seek knowledge for want of bliss. They will, however, be reborn with gross bodies when the *karma* that caused them to take birth as “higher beings” (*devas*) is exhausted, in which case they are capable of resolving their doubt about their *jiva* status.

Dean: Are they just “aspects” of *Isvara* and their *raison d’être* is simply a share of *Isvara’s*? I’m finding it difficult to understand why the ascertainment of knowledge for the human being will result in the resolution of the three bodies, but for much higher, *sattvic*, beings bodies continue to subsist in *Isvara* (assuming these beings are *jnanis*).

James: I don’t think you fully understand what “resolution” means. It does not apply to the three bodies. They are eternal, appearing and disappearing at the behest of *Isvara/maya*. The bodies are just matter and are projected by *Isvara/maya*. The only thing that is resolved is the intellect’s doubt that the three bodies are real. When the three bodies are understood to be *mithya* after contemplating the logic of the teachings and the self is revealed by Vedanta *pramana*, they know they exist only as the self, which means they are immortal and no longer worried about death.

Dean: Thanks, James. I hope you have time to consider my questions. As always, I wish you much peace and happiness.

James: Sorry it took so long but- same old same old – I’ve been exceedingly busy.

~ Much love