

Pure Existence, Name and Form

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2016-09-17

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2922>

Michael: So what you are saying is that I, consciousness, don't actually experience anything ever. I am aware of this mind experiencing this body, but I am not experiencing it, and it cannot know or experience me?

Sundari: Yes, correct.

Awareness (consciousness/self) does not directly experience, but it makes experience possible for the subtle body. Without the presence of consciousness, no experience can take place. The *jiva*, or experiencing entity, appears to be conscious and to experience, but the body-mind is inert – it seems conscious because the light of awareness (you) shine on it. The body-mind is like the moon. It seems to shine because it “borrows” its light from the sun. So who is really experiencing? The body cannot experience you, because it is an object known to you; it is not conscious. The ego, or small “I” identified with the body-mind, is just a thought appearing in the mind, so how can a thought experience you? It is not conscious either. You know it, it does not know you. Anything you know cannot be you. Because of *maya*'s power to delude, the hypnosis of duality seduces the mind into thinking that there is something other than it – something “out there,” so believing itself to be incomplete, the mind chases objects and suffers.

Consciousness is the non-experiencing witness because it is non-dual, so it is only ever “experiencing” itself because there is only itself. Being a partless whole, to be an “experiencer” would mean that there would have to be something other than awareness for it to experience. But this is not possible, as there is only one awareness and we are all it. Contrary to what most people believe, you, either as the self under the spell of ignorance or the self-realised self, are only ever experiencing awareness, “enlightened” or not.

Michael: You say at first that anything known to me cannot be me, which would mean that this body and mind are not me, right?

Sundari: Yes, the body is you but you are not the body. In order to qualify for self-inquiry, we have to first negate all objects as not-self. However, the body-mind is reflected awareness; it is like your reflection in a mirror – it comes from you and reflects you, but it does not know you, because the reflection is not conscious. However, it does exist. The body-mind is made up of you, consciousness, arises in you and depends on you to exist – but you are prior to all objects and depend on nothing to exist. You are always free of all objects even though they arise from you.

Michael: But the body-mind does exist, so what is the relationship between me (consciousness) and the body-mind?

Sundari: To understand this teaching properly, we need to do an analysis of the

unexamined logic of our experience of reality by questioning what constitutes existence – what does it mean for an object to exist?

The self, eternal existence, is free of qualities and limiting factors. But it can only be known to the mind by analyzing the nature of the effect, the creation, which seems to limit consciousness, the self (but does not). When we eliminate the non-essential factors from the equation (like the pot from the clay or the ring from the gold or consciousness from the three states, waking dreaming and deep sleep) the essential factor remains and can be known as it is – the unlimited “IS-NESS,” or pure existence/consciousness, underpinning all objects.

Consciousness is existence and existence is consciousness. You exist and are conscious are two facts that are actually one because they are mutually dependent. They cannot be separated – and this is true of all objects which make up the creation, from the subtle body, or *jiva*, to the gross material objects, which are all made up of parts and appear as names and forms. But awareness is one partless whole, and has no name or form. The same existence brings all objects into experience, and it is a matter of experience (albeit unexamined by most) that Existence with a capital “E” is independent of objects, including our discrete experiences.

The nature of existence involves the consideration of several factors:

1. Existence has no divisions; it is not a part, product or property of an object.
2. Existence is not limited by boundaries of objects; it is positive, intangible, limitless and all pervasive, like space.
3. Existence remains when all existent objects disappear, just like the clay remains when the pot is broken, the gold when the ring is melted or consciousness whether the mind is awake, dreaming or sleeping.
4. Unless existence is associated with an object, it cannot be experienced (other than as your own self through the removal of ignorance by self-knowledge).
5. Existence alone is pure consciousness.

There is only one existence which pervades all objects and it is generic, not specific to any object. The object is appreciated by the senses, and the “is-ness” is appreciated by the intellect, often unconsciously because the is-ness of every object is consciousness. When you meet another person, you know they are conscious; you do not have to think about it. What you don’t know (unless you have self-knowledge) is that they are the same consciousness you are, appearing in a different form with a different name. This is true of all *jivas*, human and otherwise, as well as of inert objects, though not obvious in the latter.

I cannot exist unless I am conscious and I cannot separate my existence from consciousness. Therefore all objects are me but I am not the objects. *Moksa* is the ability to separate the object from the existence that supports it (and is not localized anywhere, because there is nowhere that it is not). I am formless, all-pervading existence/consciousness. I only become localized when I am associated or confused with the “physicality” of an object, like my body. Every wave is the ocean. This teaching reveals that the “is-ness” of everything is me, consciousness. The names and forms of all objects are supplied by *Isvara*. To experience non-separation from objects, from consciousness, or me, name and form must be separated from

existence. Although this is harder to see in inert objects, like a rock or a chair, if you don't understand that all objects are you, your relationship with objects (which is your life, after all) will be fraught with difficulty and suffering.

Michael: Next, you say that non-dual vision is knowing that whatever I see or experience is nothing other than me, the self, because there is nothing other than me.

Sundari: Correct. See above.

Michael: How can there be a distinction or discrimination between me and objects if there are no objects in the first place?

Sundari: By understanding the two orders of reality: the real, *satya* (consciousness – that which is always present and unchanging), and *mithya*, the apparently real, the *jiva*/world (that which is not always present and unchanging). These two orders of reality are not in contradiction or opposition to each other, because when looked at in the light of self-knowledge, they dissolve into each other. Or rather *mithya* dissolves into *satya*, not the other way around.

If you apply the logic of Vedanta and investigate the true nature of reality, you will see that awareness (the subject – you) is the only principle that is always present and never changes. Everything else, the *jiva* and all experience (objects), is that which is not always present and always changing – but, as stated above, it cannot not exist without awareness. Knowing the difference between the two orders of reality and never confusing them again is called *moksa*, freedom from limitation and suffering.

Many people ask: “If objects are not aware, how can they BE awareness?” *Maya* creates matter out of consciousness – subtle and gross bodies. The subtle body is born of *sattva* and is capable of reflecting the light of awareness – which illumines the gross objects through the senses. It is given the power to know and experience by awareness, so it seems sentient, but actually it is not.

The gross body is born of *tamas*, the five elements, the existence or substance “aspect” of consciousness (consciousness has no aspects, but we use the term here to explain a point). Gross objects have no ability to reflect the light of awareness, because *tamas* absorbs light, and so they do not reveal themselves as awareness. *Maya* makes awareness seem like it is both sentient, as in the subtle body, and inert, like the gross body. But it is neither. It is the knower of both. Consciousness only becomes conscious (as we define the term) when there is something for it to be conscious of – i.e. matter, or the creation – in other words, when *maya* appears.

To wrap up: although all objects are you – awareness – you are not the objects, because no object is aware. Awareness IS what it sees. Sees means “knows.” Awareness, the subject, is not an object, so it cannot be known by an object, because an object is not conscious. Think of the spider’s web: although it originates from the spider and is made up of the spider, it does not know the spider, because the web is not conscious.

Awareness is that which knows all objects; it is the “transparent,” or non-

experiencing, witness. Awareness does not need anything to know itself, because it is self-knowing; we say awareness is self-illuminating. It is always a witness. But awareness is a witness only with reference to whatever is seen. Remember that non-dual means just that: the self is a seer that never began or ceases and is the “all-seeing eye,” or “I,” that sees only itself because that is all there is to see, not that awareness is a seer in the way the *jiva* (person) understands seeing. The person (subtle body) is the lens through which awareness apparently looks at objects, but seeing as all objects are reflected awareness and thus have a dependent existence on awareness, there are no objects for awareness to see. Even the experience of awareness in a purified mind is an object known to awareness.

It would be more appropriate to say that the self, seeing only itself, is that which knows the seer with reference to the seen only when *maya* is operating. The self-aware self appears as a seer, but it never actually is a seer, unless seeing refers to its own self. From the perspective of duality or the person who is identified with being a person, i.e. when ignorance is operating, the *jiva* thinks that the seer is different from the seen. In other words, that the subject and object are different. They are not different, although they exist in different orders of reality: awareness, that which is real and reflected awareness, that which is apparently real.

Understanding *maya* is the key, and it is probably the most difficult concept to assimilate because it seems so contradictory. Many inquirers get stuck with this question, insisting there has to be a more satisfactory answer to the “why.” There isn’t one in the apparent reality. It is impossible to understand this, because the one asking the question is in *maya* – duality. Understanding only takes place when you can step out of *maya* when non-dual vision is firm and has removed the illusion of duality. Then there is no need for an answer to “why,” not that duality (ignorance) disappears when you know what it is; the mind is just not deluded by it anymore. Ignorance is only a problem when you take it to be real – i.e. to be knowledge. As I said in my last email to you, there are apparent contradictions in the teachings, which are not real contradictions and dissolve in the logic of the teachings. However, they are not easy to understand, which is why you need a teacher.

Maya is a power that exists in awareness or it could not be unlimited. *Maya* is also eternal because awareness is eternal, which is why *maya* is said to be beginningless – but NOT endless, because self-knowledge can remove it. Although its appearance gives rise to the apparent reality, *maya* is neither real nor unreal. *Maya* creates the categories of real and unreal. Without *maya* there is no creation, no *jiva* and no *Isvara* in the role of Creator. Personal or microcosmic ignorance (*avidya*) ends for the *jiva* when the self is realised to be its true nature, ending its cycle of incarnation and suffering; but macrocosmic *maya*, or macrocosmic ignorance, continues unchanged, although it is not always manifest, because the creation is not always manifest.

When ignorance, or *maya*, manifests, *Isvara* in its capacity as Creator appears, followed by the apparent creation (*Isvara srsti*), the world of sentient beings and insentient elements. *Isvara* creates, sustains and destroys the whole universe. The world we see with our senses and the senses with which we see it is all *Isvara*’s creation. The subjective reality of the *jiva* is its own creation, called *jiva srsti*, or *pratibasika*. When the mind of the *jiva* is controlled by *maya* and deluded into the belief that duality is real, it suffers.

Michael: Would it be true to say that a pen in a hand is really just me? When I know the contents of this pen to actually be me there still seems to be a name and a form.

Is this name and form me as well or should I negate it? It was my understanding that duality does not stop appearing once the self is known to be my nature. Is this discrimination?

Sundari: Yes, this is discriminating the objects that appear in you – awareness – from you. You are formless, nameless awareness, and the pen (name and form) is you, but you are not the pen. It is called the “location of objects” teaching, and it is one of the foundational teachings in Vedanta, taught in detail in James’ books. In brief: all objects dissolve into me, awareness, because they are only ever experienced in the mind – and nowhere else. Duality makes an object appear to be separate from and other than me, but nonetheless, every object is a thought appearing in the mind. You verify this by investigating any object. You see that every object is made out of thought and thought is made out of energy and energy is made out of awareness and is non-separate from you, awareness.

Reality is non-dual consciousness, you, and there are no differences in it. The differences we see belong to the *uphadis* (limiting adjuncts that make something look other than what it is) of different objects, not to consciousness. As stated above, it is a matter of experience that existence is independent of objects because there is only one existence, or consciousness, neither existence or consciousness is specific to the object.

You could ask: “How can every object be made out of thought?” The answer is in understanding the relationship between (1) pure awareness, (2) pure awareness in its role as Creator – *Isvara*, (3) the *jiva* and (4) *jagat*, the world. We always start from the fact that everything is awareness/consciousness. So everything associated with *Isvara* and *jiva* is consciousness. But *Isvara* does not see the creation the same way *jiva* sees it. As I said above, *Isvara* only ever sees creation as itself in the form of knowledge, either in form, as in gross material objects, or formless, as in subtle objects (thoughts/feelings). *Isvara* creates in such a way that to *jiva* under the spell of ignorance everything seems as if it is not me – meaning it seems “other than” me, consciousness, because I take myself to be a body-mind. Owing to the power of *maya* this knowledge (the programs that create gross and subtle matter that make individual living beings possible) evolves from the subtle (mind) to the gross (physical matter).

Under the spell of *maya*, when *jiva* (awareness ignorant of its nature as awareness/consciousness) identifies with the body, the material world seems to be solid and substantial, “out there,” standing alone. It is not “out there” and it does not stand alone – unless you assume that you are the body, then the objects are out there – for you.

When you analyze perception, i.e. experience, you see the truth of the statement that all material objects and the sensations invoked by them are in fact made up of thoughts, i.e. knowledge of the objects. You see a tree and you know a tree. You never jump out of your body and experience the tree. The tree appears in you. You never jump out of yourself, consciousness, and experience your body either. It appears as an object, like a tree, in you because it is in the same order of reality as the tree. It is gross matter, *mithya*. So what is the experience/knowledge actually made of? Does it float in from some outside source, some parallel universe, and present itself to you? It does not. It arises in you. It is created by *Isvara/maya* out of you, consciousness, yourself. We can leave the individual *jiva* out of it. There is just you, awareness, and the objects appearing in you.

You can also arrive at the same conclusion by an analysis of the objects themselves. It should be easy to see that thoughts are made of awareness. It is not so easy to see the physical objects are made of awareness, but if we investigate matter scientifically, it breaks down into particles and space and the knower of particles and space, i.e. you, awareness. Material science cannot make the obvious connection of matter and awareness, because it relies on perception and inference as a means of knowledge. It does not realise that perception is an object known to consciousness in the form of the scientist and that perception is consciousness. *Maya* makes it seem as if consciousness is an object, when it is actually the subject.

Maya also makes the individual *jiva* think that it is a unique entity, separate from all other entities and objects. But *jiva* is not what it seems either. *Jiva* is really awareness – appearing as matter. So the relationship between the three seemingly separate factors *jiva/jagat*, *Isvara/maya* (which creates the material world out of awareness) and pure consciousness – you – needs to be understood.

Think about it. If you look at the creation, where does it exist? Have you ever actually seen a creation? No. You have only experienced the objects that appear to you at any moment and these objects are not separate from the thoughts that make them up. Creation is only an idea, a thought. When that thought appears in you, the mind imagines the totality of objects by inference, but those objects are never directly experienced. All that is directly experienced is you, awareness, and objects. The only issue left to resolve is whether or not awareness/consciousness or matter is primary. Which came first? When we use the word “first” we mean: Which stands alone? Does matter exist prior to consciousness so that we can still have matter without consciousness? No. You cannot separate an object from the consciousness of the object. In other words, objects are not conscious. They do not know themselves or other objects. As I said above, *Isvara* associated with *maya* is conscious (although it is not a *jiva*, or person) and is not modified by ignorance/*maya* (the *gunas*). *Isvara* is conscious because with the appearance of *maya*, there is something for awareness to be to be conscious of, i.e. objects. Consciousness is “prior” to matter in the sense that matter depends on consciousness. Consciousness stands alone. It is the first “principle” out of which everything arises.

Finally, you cannot get something out of nothing. So if matter depends on consciousness, it has to come from consciousness. The effect (matter) is just an apparent transformation of the cause, awareness. It is not an actual transformation, because if it were, consciousness would have lost its limitless nature when it transformed into matter. It would have become limited, bound by time and space. That matter (subtle and gross objects) arise in you, awareness, which if you think about it is actually your (unexamined) experience.

The logical approach to non-duality as a means to explain the creation, while useful, breaks down (from the *jiva* perspective) when it comes to the analysis of the cause of the universe. Deductive reasoning will only get you so far because the only means of knowledge available for it are the senses (perception and inference), which without self-knowledge are *mithya* and are stuck in *mithya*. Non-duality, consciousness, is not an object of knowledge and cannot be known by the means at our disposal. It is far too subtle and can only be known through a valid means of knowledge for awareness, which is Vedanta, which is capable of removing the ignorance standing in the way of understanding.

The difficulty modern science has in understanding the origin of the universe is a

good example of this. It can reason up to the point where it understands that there must be a moment when the creation began – but it cannot tell us what happened at the point of creation or before it began. Quantum physics, the most advanced theory in physics to date, cannot go beyond the Big Bang. The reason for this is that non-duality – or a singularity, which is what science calls non-duality – is a state (it's not a state, but I use the term here advisedly) from which there is no information from which to reason. If it's non-dual there are no objects. Science will be stuck at this point until it understands what consciousness is – which it won't, unless self-knowledge removes ignorance for the scientist.

Michael: Can you go wrong with discrimination?

Sundari: No, if your discrimination is solidly based in self-knowledge, and yes, of course you can, if it is not. Discrimination can be used in the service of ignorance – which is hardwired and very tenacious. Assimilating self-knowledge is the subtlest and most difficult thing the mind will ever do – and it is never its own doing. Only self-knowledge removes ignorance with constant and dedicated self-inquiry into the true nature of reality with a valid means of knowledge. Once self-knowledge is hard and fast, discrimination never fails, because you always know the difference between what is real (you, *satya*) and the objects that appear in you, that which is apparently real (*mithya*).

The most important *prakriya*, or teaching, for *moksa* is *karma yoga*. See this teaching from James' book, attached.

Michael: The self can't be negated, so there can be no errors.

Sundari: Yes. Self-knowledge, unlike object knowledge, is always true because it is true to the self, meaning it cannot be dismissed or negated by any other knowledge. Self-knowledge is different from knowledge of objects, which is object-based, not subject-based. Knowledge of objects is not knowledge unless it is true to the object. If it is "my" knowledge, then it is my subjective interpretation of an object (*pratibasika*), which is not necessarily knowledge. Ignorance (or my point of view) causes me to see or experience objects in a certain way because of "my" conditioning. People believe that ignorance is knowledge because they believe that what they experience is knowledge. It may be knowledge, but it may not be.

For anything to qualify as true knowledge, it has to be true in three non-negotiable categories:

1. Exists in all periods of time – past, present and future.
2. Exists in all three states – waking, dreaming and deep sleep.
3. It cannot be negated and is not subject to verification.

Only consciousness qualifies in all three categories.

Michael: if I continue to discriminate the name and form and time and place of this pen from me, the self, will it just become less apparent. Or does the self actually

stop appearing as the many?

Sundari: No. Name, form, time and place do not become “less apparent” upon discrimination and investigation of the true nature of reality. They are known to be *mithya*, only apparently real – meaning not always present and always changing. The self “appearing as the many” (i.e. objects) still has an apparent existence when ignorance, or duality, is removed from the mind, and you know that the objects are not real. It is like the mirage still appears when you know it is a mirage, which is called “conditional superimposition.”

Michael: The name and form of this pen would be considered *mithya*, and the knower of this name and form would be me, consciousness (*satya*).

Sundari: Yes, the name and form are *mithya*, and the knower is *satya*. See above.

Michael: And again you say there is nothing other than me, the self. Is it the force of *maya* that apparently divides consciousness into two orders of reality, that which never changes and that which changes. Is this the dream within a dream?

Sundari: Nothing divides consciousness, because it is a partless, indivisible whole. *Maya* makes reality appear to be a divided – a duality, explained above. Duality is a superimposition onto non-duality. It is not real – a dream within a dream – as you say.

Michael: I also was curious whether the experiential bliss that you explained to me is the same as or related to the (*akandhakara*) thought of limitlessness. I read the *satsang* entitled *Why Seeing the Light of Awareness Makes the Jiva Happy* at NeverNotPresent.com.

In it, Ted says that a clear reflection is as good as the real thing, and above that some questioner says that he realized the inherent emptiness in objects, which was confirmed by Ted.

Sundari: The *akandhakara vritti* is not experiential; it is just the hard and fast knowledge “I am awareness.” However, the thought of limitlessness is as good as the real thing in that it boils down to knowledge, but if self-knowledge is not firm, the experience will end, and so will self-knowledge.

Michael: The reflection is an object as well, but still just as unreal as all other objects?

Sundari: Yes. Everything reflects light, but a mirror reflects light clearly, as it is. The clearer the mind (reflective surface), the more distinct are the objects in it. Even though all objects arise in awareness, it is not as easy to see some objects as awareness, because they are obscured by *tamas*. The point is, if the mirror (mind or reflective surface) is clear, the self as the object reflected in the mirror can be

precisely known as an object of knowledge/experience. In non-dual reality experience and knowledge are the same. There is no obscuration in a clear mirror. However, the reflection is still only a reflection of the self. It is not the self, and it is not conscious.

Michael: So to say it straight, do I, consciousness, just keep doing what I'm doing, as I am unconcerned and fill and pervade all and am full and complete, although I am not really doing anything.

Sundari: This question is a jumble. I have broken it down into the many questions you are asking:

Awareness is not a doer; it is actionless, unconcerned, whole and complete and pervades everything. Doing apparently happens through the action of the *gunas* – the three forces in creation: *rajas* (action, extroversion, projection), *tamas* (dullness, obscuration, denial/depression) and *sattva* (clarity, peace, intelligence). The doer does actions and always will because it lives in the apparent reality where action cannot be avoided. When it is under the spell of ignorance, the *jiva* thinks it is the doer and suffers. When self-knowledge has removed ignorance from the mind, it knows it is not the doer – *Isvara*, or the *gunas*, brings about all doing – meaning, all change and action. So the *jiva* responds appropriately to what *Isvara* presents to it, following *dharma*, discriminating between the real and the apparent at all times, with the *karma yoga* attitude. Even though the *jiva* makes actions to achieve certain results, it knows the results are not up to it but up to the field of existence – *Isvara*. So it takes all results as *prasad*. Please make sure you understand the teaching on *karma yoga* – or self-inquiry will NOT work for you.

Michael: And this body-mind experiencing entity (*jiva*) has naturally come to find Vedanta from a desire to remove its ignorance of itself, which takes place in the intellect, or *maya*?

Sundari: The experiencing entity appearing as the self under the (apparent) spell of ignorance, *jiva*, wants to experience itself as whole and complete. It is built into the *jiva* program; suffering is not natural to humans, because our true nature is consciousness, love, happiness – *satya*. All minds seek an end to suffering because they know without knowing why or how they know that there is another way to live for the *jiva* – i.e. without suffering. This is why teachers and teachings abound (such as Deeksha, as you mentioned in your last email) that promise experiential enlightenment or “transformation” through whatever means. Unfortunately, most of these teachings are mired in duality, and the ideas are all enlightenment myths. Basically, they all boil down to (1) someone grander than you can “give” it to you, (2) you can do something to obtain it, (3) there is something wrong with you the way you are and (4) when you achieve it, the *jiva*, or person, is magically transformed. All nonsense, all based in duality.

The subtle body, or *jiva*, comes to Vedanta when the mind is prepared (sufficiently purified and qualified) to hear it, and not before. It is grace, and grace is earned through good *karma*, granted by *Isvara* ONLY.

Michael: What is the nature of the ignorance that obscures the self (consciousness), which is me? Is there no obscuration? Is this the magic trick of *maya* that arises due to my limitlessness?

Sundari: I have answered this above. Ignorance is the belief in duality, and it does not obscure the self – although it seems to because of the power of *maya* to delude. Nothing has the power to obscure the self, because the self is always aware of the (apparent) obscuration, even when the mind is clouded by ignorance. When *maya* is operating, there is an apparent obscuration, but the knower always knows.

Before you write to me again, I want you to tell me something about yourself and your *sadhana*. You are doing well and seem to have a quick grasp of the teachings, but you seem to be in a big hurry. I have had to work hard to clean up your writing and clarify your questions. Slow down, take it easy. You say you have been “studying” Vedanta for a year, but you do not say where, with whom or what you mean by “studying.” Studying Vedanta is not the same as doing self-inquiry under the tutelage of a qualified teacher, for reasons I explained in my last email. We have requirements for people who write to us, which is to read either one of James’ books, *How to Attain Enlightenment* or *The Essence of Enlightenment*, if you have not done so yet. I recommend the latter book, as there is a corresponding 12-part teaching course at our website with all relevant questions and answers with each chapter. There is a progression to the teachings which must be followed or self-knowledge will not obtain; or if it does, it will not be firm. Corroborate reading the *e-satsang* section and by listening to as many videos of James teaching as possible. It is also not the correct protocol to bombard us with questions before you have assimilated the methodology of the teaching. We will be jumping around, and it will not be good for your *sadhana*. We have a backload of people we are teaching, so in fairness to us – and for your own sake – you need to “do the work” slowly and carefully.

If you get stuck, you are welcome to write.

~ Love, Sundari