

Nothing to Gain, Nothing to Lose

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Mirian: I think of Vedanta as a mirror. If it's an object that reflects the self, then it is a valuable object. Sometimes you might have to remove dust from the mirror or polish it, but it always reveals the self. So even though it is an object, it is the most precious object that there is in this life (both for self-knowledge and later for assimilation).

Arlindo: Hi, Mirian, it is a good analogy to picture Vedanta as a mirror composed of logical concepts based on *jiva's* practical non-examined experience. Such as a mirror, which reveals reflected light and the objects in it, Vedanta, will reveal the nature of the *jiva* as the pure "light" of awareness, with or without objects in it.

I am mentioning this because Vedanta is pure knowledge, the clear apprehension of the nature of reality (*satya* and *mithya*), and hence needs no further polishing or purification. What needs constant polishing and purification is the subtle body of the *jiva* in pursuit of self-knowledge.

Vedanta is pure and clear knowledge, but it will reveal the self (as one's own self) only to the qualified *jiva* with purity of mind and heart. Vedanta does not need polishing – the "polishing" analogy refers to the mind, which is, by the way, a "must." Vedanta works by neutralizing *jiva's* wrong notions of self and the nature of reality.

Vedanta is pure knowledge and as such it is just an object of experience among an infinity of other objects. And you are right to say that it is the "most precious object" because it has the potential to collapse the apparent phenomenon "subject-object" by revealing the non-dual nature of reality as pure non-dual awareness. It is an object that initially proves itself to be just "more of *mithya*" but in the process it reveals the nature of the *jiva* as pure *satya*, which is not an object of experience.

I am still jetlagged – got to Italy two days ago, and am already flying to Tiruvannamalai this coming Monday. Looking forward to see India after 20+ years away. I followed some of the above conversations and would like to add some comments; life in *mithya* is a "zero-sum game." It means to say that we cannot win here, but the good news is that we cannot lose either. This is the nature of this apparent order of reality composed of the suborders, *Maya-Isvara-jiva-jagatha*, of the same one non-dual reality we call awareness (among many other names given to the formless "It").

In this apparent zero-sum "play" or "platform" where no human *jivas* ever win or lose, every gain comes with a price tag attached to it, and every loss comes with reward. We call this dualistic field of experience *mithya*; it "does" exist but it is "not real"! It is apparently real – a superimposition or projection which produces the causal, subtle and gross manifest fields of experience.

For experience to exist we need this apparent dualistic platform in which the primordial duality "subject-object" arises. Within this apparent reality we find an infinity of objects and physical laws intelligently designed to govern and operate the

entire cosmos. Among the objects in creation, some become sentient beings and develop the ability to subconsciously respond to stimuli from their environment.

Among those sentient beings, some develop the self-awareness: I know, I “consciously” respond and I know that I do so. Of course I am referring to the “objects” called human *jivas*, and the complexity of psychological, ethic and moral laws governing their experience.

Only with reference to human *jivas karma* is relevant. But is *karma* real at all? Not really – but it is felt and experienced by all *jivas* before and after self-knowledge is hard and fast to produce *moksa*. What is then the difference between the liberated *jnani* and the *jiva*? If *jivas* and *jivamuktas* are both subject to the laws governing this apparent reality, what is to be gained by self-knowledge and *moksa*?

The sense of freedom and limitlessness derived by the hard and fast self-knowledge belongs to “another” order of reality we refer to as *satya*, pure consciousness or awareness. Awareness is ever infinitely and limitlessly free. Within its infinite and limitless freedom, universes appear and disappear, but no universe ever touches awareness, because they are not real. How then does the *jivamukta* (which is not real) benefit from self-knowledge?

The benefit comes from the fact that *jivas* and *jivamuktas* are “in reality” not the experiencing entities (either operated by knowledge or ignorance) they seem to be, but the ever-free awareness. *Jivas* or *jivamuktas* will never win or lose in *mithya*. But when self-knowledge is firm and solid, the *jivamukta* will apparently live in this world but with a sense of freedom because he or she knows that there is nothing to win or lose here. He or she knows their essential nature to be fullness, limitlessness and completion.

The *jivamukta* knows their true and independent nature to “belong” to *satya*, the non-dual reality existing beyond the pair of opposites. They will exhaust their time in this “world” but from the stand point of self-knowledge, or awareness. Nothing will touch or attach to the liberated *jnani*. Identification with apparent *karma* comes to an end.

Mirian: Hi, Arlindo.

Good to have you in our forum! Thanks for your posts. That is quite a round-the-world journey you are on! I’d love to hear of your impressions of India after 20+ years. I expect it has changed dramatically! I hope you have a wonderful time in Tiruvannamalai. Will you be giving some *satsangs* there?

Arlindo: Hi, Mirian, and thank you for your appreciation. This is my first trip to Southern India. Here India seems to be poorer and dirtier than Bombay, Goa, Poona, Delhi, Rishikesh, Lucknow and other northern parts of India. Today was the Deepam festival where thousands of people from all over India and abroad came to have their four-hour walk around the mountain Arunachala – they believe the mountain to be the embodiment of Shiva. Fire was lit at the top of the mountain to remain on for the next 11 days.

Everyone seems to have a strong devotional relationship with Shiva or *Isvara* – the creator, maintainer and destroyer of the universe. It is interesting to notice that they mostly do what they do as a means to please God in the hopes for the achievement

of their desires as well the avoidance of their fears. The love, appreciation and respect for *Isvara* is felt everywhere. We do not see it in the Western Christian societies. In the West, the *jivas* work hard for their desires and fears, but they do not seem to bring *Isvara* into the equation. Here, they work much less and they leave most of it to the will of *Isvara*.

Talking of *Isvara's* will – as far as giving some *satsang* talks, it is all up to the Lord. I love sharing my understanding of Vedanta but I do not look or work for it. If it happens I just respond and thank *Isvara* for the opportunity. There is nothing in a program. Ramji has arrived a couple of days ago, but I haven't met him yet. Much love from Tiruvannamalai to you and all.

~ Arlindo

Rob: Hi, Arlindo, thank you for your contribution to the conversation around the “life in *mithya* is a zero-sum game.” The comments were helpful in clarifying what is precisely meant.

What I also took away on reflection is that one must go beyond *mithya* to escape a no-win situation. But to say the good news is that one cannot lose either seems to take away that helpfulness.

I guess what I am saying is that Life (with a capital L?) is not a zero-sum game, when there is a recognition of one's true nature. I guess that formulation is not objectionable, or is it? Thanks again.

~ Rob

Arlindo: Hi, Rob, the super good news is that even after one's self-knowledge is hard and fast to “become” actualized, still the *jivamukta* (*jiva* with self-knowledge) cannot beat the system; you cannot win – you cannot lose – a zero-sum game.

The only difference is that after the recognition of one's true nature and the proper assimilation of *satya* and *mithya*, and the functionality of *mithya* with its physical, moral and psychological laws, the *jiva* does not expect to win anything in here any longer. 😊

He knows that for every gain there is a loss – for every up there is a down. So he relaxes and enjoys this apparent reality from the standpoint of self-knowledge + *Isvara*-knowledge: nothing to gain, because I am already full and satisfied. Nothing to lose, because nothing can affect my true essential nature.