

# Nothing Changes but the Status of the World

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2017-01-11

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3125>

**Robert:** Hi, Sundari. I came across James' teaching randomly after almost 15 years since I started coming across non-duality teachers, and I always read them (Ramana, Nisargadatta, etc.) but could never figure out what they were talking about. It just didn't make sense to me. But I became curious about it once again after some coincidences. (My wife, who is not interested in spiritual things, randomly bought a book on the *Upanishads*, and I thought I should figure out what this is about and came across James' teachings about three months ago.) As I went through his video series, something clicked in me and it just felt like pieces of all the religious puzzles fitted together into a teaching that I felt was very confident in.

Anyway, to make a long story short, I bought his book and am planning on buying the offline videos, but had a question on the *jiva*, below. I would appreciate if you could help with my understanding. I hope James does a retreat sometime in California, as I would love to meet you guys!

**Sundari:** I'm glad you wrote, Robert. We all come to Vedanta when we are ready to hear it, and if we are not ready we will not understand it. The mind must have developed the qualifications for self-inquiry – the main qualifications being enough discrimination to have realised that the joy is not in objects, dispassion about indulging its likes and dislikes, among many others, faith in the scripture being a big one. Also, if we read the scriptures without having them unfolded by a qualified teacher, we will most likely not gain the full import, because the mind will interpret the teachings according to its conditioning. We are happy to assist you with your self-inquiry but you need to do some work on your own, Robert, too. There is a very strict methodology and progression to the teachings for good reason. **Vedanta is a valid means of knowledge to remove ignorance, and it works, if it is correctly followed by you and unfolded for you by a qualified teacher.**

Please make sure you read all the instructions we give on our home page to inquirers who write in, and follow them carefully. If you are serious about freedom from limitation and you would like our help, you need to have a burning desire for *moksa* and do the work. A middling or piddling desire will not bear much fruit.

Vedanta is a radical teaching and it will strip the ego of its attachment to its identity, meaning, its identification with the body-mind. The ego is a fear-thought born of ignorance of your true nature. The whole point of self-inquiry is not to destroy the ego, but to deconstruct it in the light of self-knowledge so that Robert can live free of the ego as the self – and not as Robert and the self. Robert remains but he is known, understood and loved as is, but you no longer identify with him as your primary identity. But if it is the ego trying to enlighten the ego, there is no solution, because the ego will still be conditioned by its *vasanas* and will not let go of its idea of doership. It will hang on tenaciously because it believes that letting go will mean it ceases to exist.

As I said above, the main qualification for self-inquiry is that the mind has come to the firm realisation that there is no solution in the world of objects, that they are empty of any real or lasting meaning, and there must be something else that gives life meaning. The ego, or "I" sense (identification with the body-mind), is the biggest

hurdle to see as an object known to you. The ego will most definitely kick against this, as it refuses to believe it is not real and that the joy is not in objects. It cannot see that the joy of objects comes only from awareness.

**Robert:** Question: in ignorance, we mention that there is a sense of incompleteness and the person in ignorance does things that might be *adharmic* to (incorrectly) try and fulfill a sense of incompleteness. I assume that this leads to it taking actions that are driven by these needs. Assuming the person reaches a point where through self-inquiry can see that he doesn't need to feel incomplete, then is it fair to assume that the *jiva* will lose the need to seek comfort in those things that supposedly make it complete?

**Sundari:** Yes, correct. The whole point of *moksa* is freedom from dependence on objects for my happiness, fulfillment, sense of self – or anything else. The belief that we need objects to complete us or make us happy is the source of all suffering and limitation. *Moksa* is the ability to discriminate you (awareness, that which is real, meaning always present and unchanging, or *satya*) from the objects (that which is only apparently real, meaning not always present and always changing, or *mithya*) that arise in you 24/7, never to confuse the two again. This is freedom, the essence of Vedanta. The world will not magically change, you will not “transcend” it, Robert will remain Robert with his particular personality and *karma* stream, but you will no longer be bothered by the world or by Robert, because both are objects known to you.

**Robert:** So does that mean that it will stop being motivated to act out of fears?

**Sundari:** That is the ultimate aim of self-inquiry, yes. But it is not quite that simple to get to that point. A mind that has been conditioned by ignorance and has chased objects for completion for as long as time exists does not easily surrender. Although you may intellectually understand the process of self-realisation, for self-knowledge to remove ignorance permanently, all binding *vasanas* must be rendered non-binding and the sense of doership negated. I have attached a *satsang* on the nine steps to self-inquiry for you to read. Make sure you understand and follow each step carefully and slowly by reading (and re-reading) James' books and signing on to the logic. Do not skip and do not be in a hurry. A very good *sadhana* would be to sign on to the 12-month teaching course we have available for free on the website, based on James' book *The Essence of Enlightenment*, with relevant questions and answers. And make use of the e-*satsang* section on our website, which has a search function. There are literally thousands of pages of high-level Vedanta, all questions you could think of have already been answered there in great detail by all ShiningWorld writers, including this one.

**Robert:** My concern is that a lot of things, like working at a job, are done out of a fear of upsetting a client or a boss, and with self-knowledge, would the *jiva* not want to do these things and instead take a more chilled-out approach to life or lose motivation to work hard?

**Sundari:** For the *jiva* to have peace of mind, it needs to follow *dharma* – and *dharma* is a complex topic. Universal *dharma*, or the laws that run the field of existence, are

the same for everyone, such as non-injury and the laws of physics. We transgress those at our peril. But everyone is different, so how we relate to universal *dharma* will be slightly different for everyone. And our personal *dharma*, or *svadharma*, which is the nature, personality and *karma* we were born with, is also different for everyone. To be happy and achieve peace of mind, our lives must conform to both universal and personal *dharma*. You need to work that out for yourself.

A prevalent myth in the spiritual world is that the *jiva* will somehow change or become redundant through *moksa*. Thanks to all the rubbish that is “out there” in the spiritual arena on enlightenment, many inquirers erroneously believe that somehow the person needs to be changed, perfected. Or when enlightened, will assume mythic powers, become transcendental, soaring above life and all that is mundane. Well, it is just not like that. This is because the *jiva* never leaves the apparent reality, thus **the *jiva* is and always will be limited**, even though the essence of the *jiva* is awareness, which is unlimited (meaning not conditioned by anything). Awareness is and always has been limitless. All that changes for the *jiva* when self-knowledge has obtained is the **why and how** it contacts objects. It no longer does anything seeking happiness; it does everything happily, always with the *karma yoga* spirit, knowing that it is only *Isvara* who is in charge of the results of all actions and takes care of the field. The *jivanmukta*, or free *jiva*, sees all life as the self, itself, but discriminates itself from the objects that appear in it automatically, at all times.

Self-knowledge gives the mind the ever-present confidence of the self, no matter what is or is not happening in the life of the *jiva*. Life goes on as “before” enlightenment; it does not change the *jiva's karma* stream, except indirectly, over time, because it takes a while for all the effects of ignorance to dissolve and fall away, like the blades of the fan take a while to stop turning when the fan is switched off.

**Robert:** I have a bit of trouble trying to wonder about whether I should worry about how self-knowledge will affect my life or maybe I shouldn't be worrying if I think that it will be for the best. I would love to hear your thoughts.

**Sundari:** Who is asking the question here, Robert? This is the ego talking about its fear of the loss of identity, its fear of non-existence – and its fear of having to give up its likes and dislikes.

You also seem to think that enlightenment will confer a special experience or status. It does not. We experience awareness every minute of every day because there is only awareness, and without it we would not exist. So we do not become more aware or change when ignorance of our true nature is removed by self-knowledge. Although ***moksa* is freedom from and for the *jiva*** (the doer, or ego), it is not about improving or changing the *jiva*, although usually it does improve because enlightenment means we have dissolved the doer and rendered binding *vasanas* non-binding.

**The function of objects does not change with enlightenment. All that changes are the status of the world and of the *jiva*. Both are no longer seen as real, because you know yourself to be that which is real, from which all objects arise and on which on all objects depend for their existence – and you know you are the non-experiencing entity that knows**

**the experiencing entity (*jiva*/ego) and all objects.**

~ Love, Sundari