

Satya-Mithya Confusion

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Steve: Dear Sundari, thank you so very much for the readings that you sent me. They helped tremendously!

Sundari: You are welcome, Steve.

Steve: I have this burning desire to understand the Vedanta teachings (as well as Hindu/Sanatana philosophy). I wish that I could go to an *ashram* and spend three or four years there... but it is not feasible for me (I am a divorced, 55-year-old man with four children and financial difficulties). Fortunately, *Isvara* led me here to you and your staff. I am eternally grateful.

I have been tirelessly studying the teachings and working to remove ignorance. However, I am a little confused about a couple of things, and I would be extremely grateful if any in your group could possibly spare some time to help me with a couple of questions. I have searched your *satsangs* to see if I could find the answer before bothering any of you, but I cannot seem to find the answers.

Sundari: Thanks, Steve. You made us laugh! We don't have "staff." We are it and can barely keep up. James does not reply much to emails anymore, as he is busy writing the *guna* book, and I just never have time to get to my book, as there are just too many people who want answers to their questions. We can only do so much.

Two things: the Sanatana Dharma, or the Eternal Way, has two sections, the "Karma Kanda" section of the *Vedas*, which is all action- and lifestyle-based (and not required for *moksa*), and then there are the *Vedas*, with Vedanta being the very last part of the *Vedas* – the end, or last part, which is knowledge-based, the knowledge that ends the quest for knowledge – and definitely not a philosophy. Assuming qualifications, that is all you need to assimilate. While it may help to escape into an *ashram* to study Vedanta, it is in normal everyday life that self-knowledge counts. *Ashram* life will not protect you from your ignorance, nor will studying all the *Vedas*. As I explained last time, Vedanta cannot be studied, because the subject matter is you. We cannot escape our *karma* and there is no need to, because *moksa* does not require any particular setting, just a purified mind, a *dharmic* lifestyle, the right qualifications and, most importantly, total dedication to self-inquiry.

Secondly, you cannot work to remove ignorance. There is no doing that can be done by the ego that will remove ignorance. The ego cannot free the ego. Freedom is negating the doer/ego. Only self-knowledge ITSELF is capable of removing ignorance. The *dharma* of an inquirer, assuming the presence of the requisite qualifications, is to make self-inquiry its primary focus and submit the mind with great dedication to the scriptures, surrendering to *Isvara* and trusting *Isvara* to do the rest, no other way. Surrender to *Isvara* is the best kind of self-inquiry and takes care of your life.

Steve: Here are my questions:

1. I was reading this *satsang*: <<http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/283>> and within it James makes the statement that “feeling one with the universe” is a non-permanent experience, which brought about this question:

Presently, as I (ordinary awareness) perceive apparent objects in *jagat*, would it not be correct to have the understanding that these apparent objects are self, since self is non-dual? Or is this the same as “feeling one with the universe,” making this an experiential understanding? If I know that I am *Brahman*, wouldn't I also know that the universe IS me? I do not want to become “enlightenment sick,” or confuse *satya* with *mithya*.

Sundari: Yes, we first negate the objects as not-self, and the next step is understanding that everything is self but self is not the objects. All objects dissolve into me, they depend on me but I depend on nothing to exist. I am existence. What James meant by his statement that the “feeling of oneness with the universe” is transient is that all feelings are transient, always changing. Only self-knowledge is permanent.

Steve: 2. Also, in another *satsang*, entitled *Vedanta, India and the West*, James mentions that he chants and performs *puja* to Krishna every day. I have some questions regarding this...

Is there any way for me to chant (beneficially) without knowing the Sanskrit? Are there any chants that I should learn (including the Sanskrit) that would be preferable?

Sundari: Yes, any chant will do, and no, they do not have to be in Sanskrit. The self understands all words and all languages. It is the feeling and understanding of devotion to the self that counts. Krishna says: “In whatever way you worship me, I will come to you and make your faith strong.”

Steve: Is this a *puja* offered to Krishna as the *avatar* by the *jiva* (*bhakti yoga*)?

Sundari: That depends on who you think you are. For us, we know we are the self, and our worship is only ever as the self to the self.

Steve: And if so, what is the reasoning behind the focused devotion to the *avatar*? Is it simply a matter of personal choice or spiritual background, with the knowledge that all devotion is to the self? Why is Krishna the object of devotion? Why not *puja* to *Isvara*? Or maybe there is an understanding of Krishna that I am not aware of (I am a neophyte after all)?

Can I offer worship (or *puja*) to Brahma/Vishnu/Shiva? Being pure consciousness, is this devotion even necessary? I somehow think it is. I know that ultimately “I” am eternal awareness (*Brahman*)... but it seems proper, from the *jiva*'s perspective, to offer worship to *Isvara* (out of a sense of gratitude). But isn't any devotion ultimately to the self?

Sundari: The only “*avatar*” is the self. Krishna is just one of the many names or symbols that point to the self; it means “that which is always good and always auspicious.” But any symbol will do because they all point to the self. Pick one you like and most symbolizes the self, for you. Please read attached email on *Who or What Is God?* (I am sure I sent it to you last time), as it explains the kinds of *bhakti* and why they are important, AND read James’ book *The Yoga of Love*.

Steve: 3. Per the teachings, I have been practicing *karma yoga*. What is *upasana yoga*? I could not find any references.

Sundari: It is meditation. Read the *satsang* on devotion, read *The Yoga of Love*.

Steve: My understanding is such:

The self/awareness (*jivatman/Brahman*) has no attributes (is empty).

Sundari: The self is not “empty.” Emptiness is a concept known to the self. There is no such thing as emptiness, as everything is the self and the self is the fullness that knows the apparent emptiness.

Steve: Because awareness is unlimited, it has the inherent ability to create (*shakti/maya*). *Shakti* manifests as *Isvara* (Brahma/Vishnu/Shiva), wielding its attributes, *maya* and the *gunas* (it is, apparently, no longer empty), and *Isvara* (the causal body) is apparently existing.

Sundari: Essentially correct. The attributes of *maya* are the three *gunas*. The self was and is never empty. Without attributes does not mean empty. Read the above.

Steve: The self (*jivatman/awareness*) is reflected off the causal body, and the subtle body manifests in, apparently, many forms, just as the moon apparently appears multiple times when reflected in many pools of water.

Awareness, deluded by *maya*, identifies with the subtle body, manifesting the *jiva*.

Sundari: Awareness is apparently deluded by *maya*. It never actually is deluded, because *maya* is an object known to awareness. But yes, because of the deluding power of *maya*, awareness appearing as the subtle body identifies with objects and then thinks that awareness is something other than it, so chases objects to complete it.

Steve: The *jiva* is apparently born (gross body), apparently dies (gross body) and transmigrates (subtle body) in the apparent creation (*jagat*). The only permanent reality is awareness. If I need to be corrected anywhere in this logic, someone PLEASE set me straight. :-)

Sundari: All that dies is the impermanent ego-personality and the gross body. The subtle body, being the vehicle for the *vasanas*, and therefor eternal with reference to the *jiva* (but not with reference to awareness), continues. It is called “the traveller.”

Steve: I have read that *purusha* and *prakriti* are the two different aspects of the manifest *Brahman* (*Isvara*)... and that they are both eternal, indestructible realities.

Are they speaking from a Dvaita Vedanta perspective?

And I have also read that *purusha* is indestructible, yet *prakriti* is withdrawn at the time of dissolution of creation.

Would this be considered dualism? Or is it possible for *Brahman* to have a permanent existence as *purusha*? Or does this effectively introduce dualism as well, and therefor negate Advaita?

Sundari: I am not sure why you got so mixed up here. We went through all these terms in my last email. Nothing in *mithya* is permanent – and so it would depend who you think *Brahman* is. If you are saying it is awareness, of course it is permanent. Awareness is existence itself, and nothing negates it. If you think *Brahman* refers to awareness as *Isvara* the Creator and the world, then it has a relatively impermanent existence as the Creator. *Purusha* is another word for the self, so it is non-dual, ever-present, unchanging, unmodified, indestructible and non-negatable.

Prakriti is matter in seed form; it has three qualities (the three *gunas*), which seem to conceal the self (but do not, nothing does). *Maya* creates *prakriti* – it is the subtle cause of matter and energy. *Prakriti* is like a mirror, capable of reflecting awareness. It borrows awareness and is an object known to awareness. So like all objects, *prakriti* is destructible and impermanent with reference to awareness, but not with reference to the individual (non-eternal) *jiva*.

PLEASE READ *INQUIRY INTO EXISTENCE* by James. All your questions are answered there as well as in thousands of *satsangs* on the website and in James’ teaching videos.

Steve: Does Advaita understand *Isvara* to be both *purusha* and *prakriti*?

Sundari: You should be able to answer this one, Steve. If this is a non-dual reality, there is only awareness, so creation arises from awareness and dissolves back into it. *Prakriti* is an object known to awareness (*purusha/satya*), which arises when *maya* manifests, it is not eternal (meaning it is *mithya*), other than as a principle in awareness, as is *maya*, *Isvara*, *maya* and the eternal *Jiva* (not the individual *jiva*).

Steve: Is there any formal Vedantic logical process used to validate this position?

We are taught that *Isvara* is not a permanent reality???

Again, is there any formal Vedantic logical process used to validate our position?

Could you elaborate on this for me?

Sundari: I gave you all this logic in my last reply to you. Please read it again, I have attached it here. I cannot repeat the whole teaching to you again. Repeat: please read *Inquiry into Existence*. It will really help you with this inquiry.

Steve: I apologize for so many questions.

I pray that my understanding is unfolding correctly, and I hope that I am not sounding too confused with the words that I am choosing. Thank you all for your valuable contributions of knowledge and time to this world. I am very grateful that *Isvara* has brought me the teachings through you. When I have the money, I do plan to purchase your video courses, as I am sure this will help deepen my understanding. May you and your husband continue in eternal peace.

Sundari: Thank you, Steve, you are welcome, and may *Isvara* bless you with fully assimilated self-knowledge. Your understanding is good, but you are a bit confused and you have work to do on assimilating the teaching on *Isvara/jiva*, which is very subtle and the most difficult part of Vedantic scripture, the means of knowledge. You are doing fine, keep at it. Please follow my instructions with regards to the reading material I recommend.

~ Love, Sundari