

Enlightenment Is Not a Thought or a Feeling

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2012-12-14

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/334>

Sundari: Hello, Sundaresh, I am replying on behalf of James Swartz. He has read it and given it Vedanta Clearance.

Sundaresh: *Namaste*, Sri Ramji. I heard one teacher (Swami Paramarthananda of Chennai) say this: "Realization = enlightenment = knowledge."

Sundari: This is correct, but it is more accurate to say, "Without self-knowledge, there will be no realisation that enlightenment (awareness/*brahman*) is your true nature." Enlightenment is not something to be gained, it can only be revealed by the removal of ignorance. How can you gain what you already have? Your true nature is whole and complete, non-dual, actionless, unchanging, ordinary awareness and is always present.

It is the only thing that never changes, therefore it is the only thing that is real. Knowledge is an object and the self, or awareness, is free of all objects. All objects have a dependent reality on awareness, but awareness depends on nothing to exist, like the wave in the ocean. The wave cannot exist without the ocean, but the ocean exists without the wave. Self-knowledge (Vedanta) is a means to an end. When self-knowledge has removed the ignorance of your true nature, you no longer need the knowledge; it is a throwaway.

Sundaresh: Knowledge means I am *brahman*, the famous saying, "*Tat Tvam Asi*," etc.

Sundari: Self-knowledge removes ignorance, and in so doing reveals that your true nature as awareness, or *brahman*. Hence the saying, *Tat Tvam Asi*. Self-knowledge has to come first in order to have the realisation that you are *brahman*. You can say the words until you are blue in the face, but you need self-knowledge to make them stick. Reality is non-dual, and all objects arise from awareness; knowledge, being an object, arises from awareness, which makes awareness the knower of the knowledge. An object is defined as anything that is known to you, awareness. However, without self-knowledge (Vedanta), ignorance of your true nature cannot be revealed to the *jiva* (Sundaresh), which is the self under the spell of ignorance. This is because as a subtle body, or *jiva*, the organs of perception and inference are not subtle enough to gain knowledge of the self. It is the light of the self, awareness, shining on them that enables them to do so. This is why awareness "gave" us Vedanta. It is the self revealing itself to itself. It seems to be a contradiction and impossible, but it is only apparently so because when *maya* is operating anything is possible. This is why in Vedanta we say it is only self-knowledge that is capable of removing ignorance, nothing else can do it, because there is no "doer" involved.

Sundaresh: After reading a lot, I know this by now. However, I do not feel or think I am fully enlightened yet.

Sundari: Enlightenment is not a thought or a feeling; these are both objects known to you, awareness. Awareness is free of all objects. It is one thing knowing intellectually the meaning of these words, it is another matter knowing what being “fully enlightened” means to Sundaresh, the subtle body, and how this translates in the apparent reality or “the world.” First of all, who is speaking here, which I is asking this question? There are not really two “I”s, there is only one, as reality is non-dual and there is only awareness. Nonetheless, Sundaresh, or the subtle body/individual *jiva*, is the self under the spell of ignorance, the reflected self, sometimes referred to as the “small” I. This is the one asking this question. It is this reflected I that needs to have the ignorance of its true nature removed by self-knowledge. There is no other way to do this than with self-inquiry, using a teaching that provides a valid means of knowledge and applies irrefutable logic, Vedanta being such a means.

Self-inquiry means beginning the work of discriminating between what is the self and what is not-self (*satya* and *mithya*) and negating the one who thinks it is a doer, i.e. Sundaresh. This requires that you expose your mind to Vedanta, diligently commit to your *sadhana* and allow self-knowledge to purify the mind.

Sundaresh: What is missing or what should I do so that I feel I am enlightened? Do I have to do anything in particular or does it take place on its own slowly, slowly ?

Sundari: What is missing is the knowledge that you, awareness, are the one who is the knower of Sundaresh asking this question. Again, the doer, ego, or *jiva* (Sundaresh), is asking this question. The doer wants enlightenment to be a feel-good experience. This is one of the great impediments to realisation, as no experience will ever free you. It is not capable of doing that, because experience is an object in awareness and therefore limited. All experiences change and end, and are therefore not real. Vedanta defines what is real as “that which does not change.” What you need to gain is self-knowledge. In order for Sundaresh to free himself, he needs to undertake self-inquiry, which requires the practice of all the *yogas*: *jnana yoga*, *karma yoga* and *triguna vibhava yoga*. Make sure what your motivations are; you need to be very clear about this. Start with a fearless moral inventory, determine what is most important to you. Then check on the qualifications for *moksa*, track yourself very carefully with them. Freeing Sundaresh from ignorance takes determination and dedication and a burning desire for liberation. Without this, you will not get very far. Sundaresh cannot make it happen. *Moksa* (liberation) is freedom FROM the doer (Sundaresh), not FOR the doer. This does not mean that Sundaresh does not do something, in fact he cannot not do. It means that Sundaresh knows it is not him doing the doing, but *Isvara* (also called the total, or macrocosmic mind, or the *gunas*) that is governing everything.

I recommend that you read James’ book *How to Attain Enlightenment* from the beginning and do not skip, make sure that you understand each chapter before going further. You can also go to the ShiningWorld website and read the e-satsangs posted there. There are over 2,000 covering every topic that you could think of.

Sundaresh: I do see some things – fewer desires, less anger, etc. but do not know if that is enough.

Sundari: This is good, it means that you have some knowledge and it is working. You have to keep at it though, ignorance of your true nature is not going to magically disappear, it is hardwired into the *jiva* and is very resistant to being removed. Very few people have the experience that Ramana had; most of us have to apply ourselves to self-inquiry for as long as it takes. If this is more important to you than anything else is, you will get there. Don't give up and keep at it, do the work!

Sundaresh: Thanks !!!

Sundari: You are welcome.