

# You Are the Only Gold Star

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**Anna:** What a year, dear Sundari, what a year. I'm okay. I am still married. There is no chicken without an egg without a chicken without an egg.

2017 has been as a sort of "reset button" for Anna's life: it forced me to inspect thoughts, emotions, lifestyle, notions of what I can put up with and what I can do without. I took Christian's course and established a daily mindset practice, which is very useful. I am watching James' video on the *gunas* again after I read his book. What about the book you are writing on the *gunas*? When will it be out?

Until recently, I found myself in the middle of a huge battle with thoughts and emotions that went against my highest values: for Truth, for the means to know (Vedanta), for the instruments to know (body and mind) and for the field in which to actualize it (family and life). Peace seems to be on its way now.

I seem to have just identified the *pratibandika* that has kept covering the knowledge in my day-to-day experience, the mother of poor self-esteem and its reflections: control, unwillingness to accommodate, anger, fear. I'd like to run this by you, see what you think. None of it is new, but it's become crystal-clear in how it fits together, in how it flows throughout "the story of Anna." It's been a major eye-opening. This is not about blame and it's not a pity party either; it helps me to write it for you. And I will be very grateful for any comments you might have.

The way I was raised was all about not wanting anything. As a child, I was not allowed to want/desire/request anything (not even a birthday party). The adults always knew and always knew better, and it was their job to provide what the kid needed (and deserved). And it was the kid's job to be grateful and to be sensible enough to accept the adults' limitations (what the adults could afford in terms of money, time and effort). In this context, children's wishes were deemed ungrateful and were seen as a sign of selfishness, i.e. not honouring the sacrifices the adults were making for the child.

This led to beliefs like wanting is wrong, "I'm underserving." From very early on, I was motivated by what I didn't want (to happen), never knowing what I really wanted (much less how to achieve it). I became a good student, for college was the only ticket out, not because I wanted to study (I didn't even know what I wanted to study), but because I didn't want to stay with my family. So I excelled at what could take me as far away as possible, and off I went. My parents are proud because I succeeded: I speak five languages, am the first in my family to have gone to university, worked and lived in many countries, I married well, have a very successful husband, two gorgeous kids who are trilingual, well-mannered and well-travelled. It looks pretty.

Other important beliefs were that "adults must sacrifice," "adults provide and always know better," "children don't want," "wanting = not loving back/not honoring." At the same time, there was always an underlying sense of guilt and a lot of fear. I started to feel unhappy in my marriage when I became dependent on my husband, when I became a mother and gave up my career to raise my daughter. That was 13 years ago, and I see now that in the beginning my daughter was the main recipient

of my sorrow and my anger. She had demands, she wanted. And I felt used and underserving. I felt guilty, frustrated and fearful. Nothing I did was good enough. My husband, the other adult, was never there; he was totally oblivious and uninvolved, plus he had demands himself. I was not a good adult for my child, and I became a sort of a child to my husband (in my head), plus he wasn't a "capable adult" either; he neither helped me nor was there for my daughter. He only used me for what he wanted, not caring what I needed (which I didn't know myself, because, hell, "you can't want, adults always know better"). Over the years, my husband and I distanced each other, and after my son was born five years ago, back to square one, running on sacrifice; and my husband, who is mainly motivated by "fun and achievement," did what he had to do.

It is amazing how clearly I can see all this. These beliefs are threads and form a web on which the story of Anna stands. I see the threads in the thoughts, in the emotions, in the interactions with my parents, with my teachers, with my childhood friends, with my husband, with my children, in something as banal as "Mummy, play UNO cards with me." I see the actions, the interactions, the reactions; it's all one, spread and spreading apparently in time, in space, among characters.

What is also clear is that this has nothing to do with me. This is all going on in me, of me, for me. *Isvara* is doing all this, though I can't even call it *Isvara*, because it just is what is being here and being done, what is happening, what is moving. And I am just seeing it, witnessing it, and it is all me and for me. And for the first time, there is love in what I see. Previously, Anna (or any of the other characters for that matter) wasn't good enough, she had to become better, do better, look better, speak better, be nicer, be more patient. Now she's - I don't know what she is, but she's okay. I am okay. This love, this okayness, this calmness: there is compassion and even beauty to it, and it is very new and I'm not sure what to make of it.

I guess I keep up my practice, I enquire and I just stand in this knowing. I have these determinations for the mindset practice re Anna; I guess I need to tweak them. It seems funny to have determinations for Anna - though I get it: she's me, she's for me, so let's see if we can figure out what she wants - though, quite frankly, I don't think she wants anything else.

Thank you so much. Please let me know about your book! Love (lots of it) to you and James.

**Sundari:** Hello, Anna, good to hear your update, thank you for sharing it with me.

You have come a long way, well done for sticking to your *sadhana*, cleaning up your *karma* and facing the *jiva*. You are right that all *mithya* comes down to nothing when you see it for what it is. We say it's all a play of the *gunas*, or *Isvara's lila*, but then the *gunas* and *Isvara* in the role of Creator are *mithya* too. The *Mandukya Upanishad* explains this beautifully. It is an advanced text for advanced inquirers, not what we call "baby Vedantins."