

Who Is the I?

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Claude: First and foremost, thank you for taking me under your wing, so to speak. “That is what you have found” (a teacher) regularly comes to mind as a joy and an encouragement to this “*jiva*”! 😊

Meanwhile, I have a question about “awakening” so that this can be put to rest. I do not want to “push” my thoughts, I just want to understand.

During the day:

To me, to be “awake” or “asleep” is the difference between the time in which I am only unconscious of my environment (asleep) and the time in which I am awake, the moment I am aware of “myself in my environment.”

Sundari: As I said previously, there is no “awakening” for the Self, because it never slept. Therefore ask yourself: Who does the “I” refer to? When the *jiva* is awake, it is conscious of its environment, and when asleep it is not. The subtle body is withdrawn into the causal body. But as the Self/consciousness never sleeps or wakes up, sleep and awake (like any experience) is an object known to it. Consciousness is the substrate, it is never not present, how could it be otherwise? If consciousness went to sleep, there would be no *jiva* and no world for it to inhabit, because Claude would never wake up. When you (Claude) wake up from deep sleep, you are conscious of the fact that you slept, not so? How would you know this if you were not able to infer that consciousness must have been present while you (the *jiva*, or Claude) were sleeping? The question to ask then is: Who is the *jiva*?

Claude: I suppose “asleep” is the time “I” (consciousness) identify with the “*jiva*,” a kind of “unconsciousness,” so to speak, a time of “sleepiness.” And “awake” is the time I know myself to be the “self.”

Sundari: No. The Self, consciousness, never identifies with the *jiva*, because it sees the *jiva* as the Self. How can consciousness ever be unconscious? It is impossible. Awake, dreaming and asleep are three states available to the *jiva*, but the Self is never in any state. It is the knower of all states. You are asking this question from the point of view of the *jiva* identified with the *jiva* (body-mind), not as the Self.

Claude: For example, suppose I am at the cinema watching a movie. If I am asleep during this time, the “*jiva*” is concentrated on the movie and is not aware of itself. If I am “awake,” I realize I am sitting in a chair in the cinema watching a movie.

Sundari: Once again, Claude, who does the “I” refer to? Consciousness does not sleep, wake or dream. It is the knower of the *jiva* awake, sleeping or dreaming and watching a movie.

Claude: The question(s):

What does this “experience” amount to in terms of Vedanta?

Do I get this moment of awareness correctly? Is my understanding correct about this?

Sundari: All experience is just an object appearing in you, consciousness. Consciousness plus a thought is experience. Consciousness without thoughts is pure consciousness, you, the knower of all experience. *Moksa*, freedom from identification with the ego-self, requires that you are able to discriminate consciousness, you, FROM the objects (experience) that appear in you at ALL times. An object is anything other than you. If you know something, it cannot be you.

You need to do self-inquiry into who the “I” refers to. When you find yourself using the word, press “pause” and ask yourself three questions: (1) Does the I refer to the *jiva* identified with the body-mind?; (2) Does it refer to the *jiva* that knows about the Self but does not know what it means to BE the Self?; or (3) does it refer to the Self that knows itself as the Self only?

Claude: I understood from your email about “experience” not being real, and that experience is not and cannot amount to “self-actualization.” But I need here to differentiate what is actually happening with these two different experiences of life. I want to put this to rest with truth.

Sundari: Self-actualization is not an experience, it is the hard and fast, PERMANENT knowledge that you are the Self. It means Self-knowledge has removed all ignorance (duality) from the mind and non-dual vision is spontaneous and instant, i.e. you see only the Self as the Self. As stated above, all experience is an object known to you, consciousness. Consciousness is the ever-present knower of the experiencing entity, Claude, who is an object known to it; this is the essence of self-inquiry.

Please follow the 12-month course carefully and slowly. Once the mind has been trained to think differently, i.e. once it stops interpreting the teachings from the ego’s (*jiva*’s) point of view, the right questions will appear in the mind. The teaching provides the answers, but only if you get stuck you are welcome to write to us.

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari