

# Flying Free: I Am a Falcon

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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**Carson:** Dear Jim and Sundari, I am like a falcon kiting the winds of *maya*. I just watch. Everything keeps falling away... falling, falling and falling. Complete, utter and total surrender... I am neither here nor there... everything has become a beautiful, magical paradox. I am love and I see love everywhere and in everything... I am just riding it ever deeper, ever clearer. Skype with you would be good but at the same time it doesn't matter... it does and it doesn't... paradoxes everywhere. ☺ I feel like I need to sit at the feet of someone who can teach me, so I can keep falling and also teach, and free all of my brothers and sisters... I can't use language anymore as it's totally and utterly inadequate. I have tears and laughter filled with love all the time for everything and everyone... and while I am all of it, I am also none of it. It's pure joy and pure not-joy all in one... everything just IS.

Thank you for changing my life. Here is my story.

My name is Carson Owings. I was born in New York City in 1978. Today I live in India with my wife and daughter. I only heard about Jim or the Vedanta teachings for the first time yesterday. Jim's story was interesting to me because my life has followed a path similar to his. I have always been confident with little to no fear of anything. In my 20s I was all about money, sex, drugs... and okay, rock 'n roll too. I was/am a very extreme personality type and have always been very independent, strong-willed and confident. During my 20s I thought life was all about who can make the most money, have sex with the most (and most beautiful) women, etc., etc. And I was winning the game by those standards. I work in the financial industry, and my world of money, sex and drugs came to an abrupt end with the global financial crash of 2008. Suddenly I found myself bankrupt, and seeing as though my identity was entrenched with all of the material items I had accumulated... and then abruptly lost... I became a rather depressed alcoholic/cocaine addict with very little hope of anything left. It is still beyond me how my wife of nine years today stuck by me through all of this. Losing everything that was so dear to me at the time (all the money and toys) first sent me to drugs and alcohol and then finally to search for more meaning in life. Surely my story is not unique.

I can remember the day I first set foot on the path to some kind of higher truth or deeper meaning in life. It was December 1, 2010. I took that entire month off from work and read just about every kind of spiritual book I could get my hands on. I read everything from Blavatsky to Krishnamurti back over to Rudolf Steiner, traditional Buddhism, esoteric Christianity, Aleister Crowley... and the list goes on and on. I must have read a few hundred books that month. I read and assimilate information at a good pace. That first month of burying myself in these books forever changed my life. I didn't yet know what it all meant but I knew I was on the right track. By early January 2011 I can remember my very first moment of "awakening." I was looking in the mirror and it just clicked that I was not the person in the mirror but some awareness behind the person looking out through the person. This was a sudden and dramatic shift in perception. I didn't know what that shift in perception meant until yesterday when I first stumbled upon your work. But I will come back to that in a second. At that time, however, that shift in perception meant to me that I knew I was more than this Carson character. I still had no idea how much "more" or

what that even meant but whatever it was I knew it beyond any doubt.

From that moment in January 2011 up to yesterday, basically the last two years and four months, I had been on what I would characterize as one hell of a wild ride. I started meditating, exploring my mind (astral travel, etc.), achieving momentary states of bliss and momentary states of insanity and everything else in between. It had been a very challenging period, to say the least. The last several months specifically are what I would characterize as some kind of a dark night for my soul. I had been traveling heavily down the Buddhist path at this point... still with no teacher, mind you, because I have never had a teacher... but through a lot of self-inquiry, meditation, etc. and all the Buddhist literature you can find on the internet... an endless amount of literature. I ended up sort of following some kind of combination of Tibetan Buddhism and Japanese Zen Buddhism, and I think, mainly because these related to my extreme personality. But the last several months had been extremely difficult being filled with mostly very high levels of depression (I had never been depressed or anything like this before... stable personality, good, stable family/upbringing, etc., etc.)... but what happened is that I knew enlightenment was the name of the game for me. But, like almost all Buddhists, I thought enlightenment was "out there" or some kind of a state separate from my natural state that I needed to achieve. I started to get very depressed because I loved my wife and my soon-to-be daughter at that point but I also felt that I needed to leave everything behind, including them, and move into a hut in solitude and sit in meditation until I achieved this enlightenment thing. I was really fucked up, to say the least. And I was really fucked up, to a very high degree, as little as 48 hours ago. But like I said, I came across your teachings of Vedanta 24 hours ago.

How I missed Vedanta on my so far 28-month journey I will never know. I read everything, and I mean everything, on the planet... but for some reason always stayed away from the Hindu stuff. I don't know why because I covered everything else... even Islam, Sufism, Gnosticism, etc., etc. But of course I know there is meaning behind it all. And the meaning here is that very clearly I was not supposed to uncover Vedanta until I was ripe... and now I can see that the last several months of going through mental hell and deep depression was just the ripening I needed to receive Vedanta like a nuclear bomb on my psyche. I don't know how else to put it. I did a search on *YouTube* last night for Shinzen Young... one of the Buddhist teachers I was informally following on *YouTube*... he and B. Alan Wallace were sort of my "go-to" Buddhist guys on *YouTube*... I had read all their books, listened to all their *dharma* podcasts, etc., etc. Anyway, I was searching for Shinzen Young and the keyword "enlightenment"... and sure enough, this guy James Swartz popped up with something like "how to attain enlightenment"... and I immediately laughed and thought who the hell is this yahoo telling me how to attain enlightenment? I was convinced this Jim guy was a crackpot. But I said what the fuck and clicked on the video... after a few minutes when Jim dropped the Vedanta bomb on my psyche suddenly the joke was on me. He said a lot of things, all of which resonated with me immediately... but the one primary thing was what he said about enlightenment. He said it wasn't "out there" or to be "achieved" but that it was a subtle shift in perception... it was my natural, fundamental state... instead of Carson experiencing consciousness or any state of *samadhi*, enlightenment or any other exalted state of consciousness... he said the subtle shift in perception was awareness/self experiencing Carson... and that we are all at the core this field of awareness, if you will, in which the perceived experiencer is allegedly participating in this perceived reality... I couldn't fucking believe it... why couldn't the Buddhists put it this simply? And who the fuck was this Jim guy? I immediately ordered your book *How to Attain Enlightenment* and then I jumped into my sensory-deprivation tank/floating tank

that I use for self-inquiry (great environment, by the way... more people should have these in their homes)... I pondered this view of enlightenment for 90 minutes and came out of the tank laughing my ass off at 3:00 am... I woke up this morning still laughing my ass off... in fact it's now 24 hours later and I can't stop laughing. What a cosmic joke this all is... and I mean that in only the best way. It is all so simple, so ironic... we are all searching and searching and searching... and for what? But I guess all that searching eventually gets you to this state where you are laughing... it's all part of the journey, of course. So today I went around the whole day viewing things as the silent watcher, the awareness watching awareness... just watching Carson to see what he did, how he reacted to things, etc., etc. I was completely and utterly unattached... I dropped the caring about material things, etc., etc. a while ago... but the attachment to enlightenment, individuality, personal feelings, etc. were all still there 48 hours ago... but today... just gone. Now, I wouldn't say that I have permanently made the switch to always viewing things 100% as the awareness, self, behind the smaller awareness, the Carson character... but then again, it's only been 24 hours, so what the fuck do I know? And for the record, I don't usually swear this much but forgive me, this is all just so funny.

So your book is on the way and will be here soon. I guess I will read it, because why not?... but I get it. I am the awareness behind the awareness. It's so fucking clear and so ironically simple... insane, actually. So I am just going to ponder this, or inquire into this, in the sensory deprivation tank for several hours every day... because I think it's fun... and of course I will just continue to go through each day, every second of every day, as the awareness behind the awareness... it took no effort today and I don't imagine it will take any effort tomorrow. This is so funny. But like I said... I first "awakened" in early January 2011 and have had several "awakening epiphanies," or whatever you want to call them, between then and now... and even with what happened these past 24 hours I wouldn't say the switch to the enlightenment perception of reality is permanent yet... but then again, how would I know?... I guess I know because I still have to apply a little effort... ever so slight effort... to be the awareness watching awareness... and when the switch happens and is permanent and non-reversible I guess that means I won't have to make any effort, it will just be... is that how it is? Any comments, suggestions you have? I wrote to you, Jim, primarily to thank you from the bottom of my heart and also to share my story... and yeah, if you have any comments about this. And also, I have never wanted a spiritual teacher... don't know why, just never have... but I guess we all need friends/teachers, those who are a bit ahead up on the path, to help guide us along at times. Are you my *guru* now, Jim? Although I'm completely unattached to whatever you say regarding being my *guru* or not, I think it would be fun if you were my *guru*... although I don't have a clue what that means.

With love and forever grateful for helping me make that ever-so-subtle shift in perception. It was right there all along... hidden in plain sight.

~ Yours truly, awareness currently experiencing this Carson character

**Sundari:** Hello, Carson, great email and good to meet you! We very much enjoyed reading it and James would like to reply to it as well, so I have forwarded it to him.

As you so rightly point out, Vedanta only comes to you when you are ready for it and not before. What is important at this stage is to continue to practise self-inquiry and to begin a proper spiritual practice (*sadhana*). Although self-realisation is the first and very important stage it is an experience and like all experiences, it ends. If the

knowledge is not firm it can be lost as the effects of ignorance, along with *prarabdha karma*, take as long as they take to be removed. This is usually where the “work” begins. We call this self-actualisation, which is understanding what it means to be self-realised as a “person” (*jiva*) living in the apparent reality. Unless the knowledge translates into how the *jiva* lives, freedom is not that free. The self has always been free but even though freedom means that you have discriminated awareness from the objects appearing in it (meaning Carson and every other object, subtle or gross) which translates into freedom from Carson and not for him, Carson does not disappear. The “enlightened” *jiva* remains in the apparent reality, fully aware at all times who he really is and what is real.

Stay in touch and let us know how you are doing. 😊

~ *Namaste*, Sundari