

No Parts to Awareness

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

2018-09-17

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3701>

Dan: Hi, Sundari

My first message to you was mainly intended to sort out how people are separate from each other and also from *Isvara*. As you say, I'm a bit hazy on the relations between people and *Isvara*, but after reading your email and reading some other *satsangs*, I think I may have a clearer idea of the relations. I'm wondering if an understanding of *Isvara* can be mapped on to the ocean-wave metaphor. Something like, water is the Self/awareness, the ocean is *Isvara*, and every wave is a *jiva*? So the *jivas* are really just *Isvara* by another name, but only divided by name and form, not in reality, and every differently named entity is actually awareness anyway, so it's only name and form that make it seem like anything other than awareness knowing itself is happening?

Sundari: Yes, very good.

Dan: What I was asking regarding the metaphor in which awareness is compared to physical space and each person is compared to a pot with a portion of empty space within it, is the "part" of awareness in the pot what illumines that *jiva's* experiences or are those experiences somehow known by the whole all at once? If the latter, how do you account for the apparent distinction between Dan's thoughts and Sundari's thoughts? Basically, I was trying to ask the perennial question "if there are no divisions, why are my thoughts and your thoughts not known together?"

Sundari: There are no parts to awareness, as there are no parts to space. There is no difference between the space inside or outside of the pot, because space pervades everything, as does the awareness. It is the container for all objects. Although there is only one eternal *jiva*, *Maya* makes it look like there are many individual *jivas* by giving sentient beings an *uphadi*, their *vasana* load, subtle body/five sheaths, or personal ignorance (*avidya*). An *uphadi* is a limiting adjunct – that which makes something appear to be something other than it is. For instance, if I have a red rose behind a clear crystal, the clear crystal will appear to be red even though it is clear. Put it this way: the *uphadi* for the Self/awareness is the individual under the spell of ignorance – and it makes the Self look like it is a *jiva*. However, what belongs to the person does not belong to the Self, because the person and awareness do not exist in the same order of reality.

The Self, the subject – *satya*, is what is real, and the object, the person, is what is apparently real, is *mithya*. The definition of real is "that which is always present and never changes," which only applies to the Self. The perceiver only looks different in accordance with the *uphadi* in association with it; the difference belongs to the *uphadi* and not to the subject (the Self). It is just an appearance in awareness causing a sense of difference where there is no difference. *Maya* is a very clever trickster – ignorance is very intelligent. *Maya* is *Isvara's* (apparent) *uphadi*.

The confusion is in what belongs to the person and what belongs to the Self: you

think that what applies to the person also applies to the Self. As stated above, the person and the Self are not the same, because of the different *uphadis*. What belongs to the person cannot belong to the Self, because the Self is a partless whole. So the Self cannot be a *jiva*, but the *jiva* is the Self. Understand? Like the wave is the ocean but the ocean is not the wave, though their essence is water, the pot is clay but the clay is not the pot, the ring is gold but gold is not a ring. These are only apparent contradictions which resolve when the logic of Vedanta is applied to them.

Remember that the Self is not an experiencing entity. It is the witness (*sakshi*) of the experiencing entity. The experience of the “experiencing you” is limited by the *upadhi* through which you experience, i.e. Dan. Therefore you only know the objects you have contact with. You cannot know what another mind is thinking or feeling, except by inference. As long as you are identified with Dan, you are limited and bound by “his” ignorance. You are the only one with a Dan-*upadhi*. I have a “Sundari”-*upadhi*, so I can’t know what you are experiencing, but because Self-knowledge has removed my personal ignorance, I do know we are non-different because we are both the Self, which is all there is.

You are imposing *satya* on *mithya*, which can never work. The two orders of reality, the real and the apparently real, duality and non-duality, are not in opposition to each other but nor do they ever meet; they do not contradict each other, even though duality is not real and is superimposed on non-duality. As long as the so-called individual mind is under the spell of ignorance, it thinks it is separate and has to chase objects to complete itself. When ignorance is removed, although you are still limited by your *uphadi* and cannot know anyone else’s thoughts, because *moksa* does not confer omniscience (which only belongs to *Isvara*), you no longer see others as separate from you, because you know that the essence of all life is the Self, you. The wave dissolves into the ocean, the pot into the clay, the ring into the gold, and you no longer chase objects to complete you.

Dan: That aside, I feel pretty clear on the identity of my Self with awareness, as this is the aspect of the teachings I’ve focused on the most. I feel presumptuous laying claim to the knowledge that “I am awareness” but I understand it on an intellectual level, I would say, and will try to demonstrate my (level of) understanding of it below.

Sundari: It is clear you have indirect knowledge of the Self, that is, you know what it is and by logical deduction it must be you. But you do not know what it means to be the Self, which is why you hesitate to claim what is obviously true. To do this, you need permanent, direct knowledge, which is *moksa*. Until then, put Self-inquiry into practice by taking a stand in awareness as awareness and think the opposite thought whenever a thought to the contrary appears in the mind. Fake it till you make it because whether you believe it or not, you can trust the scripture when it says your true is the non-dual, eternal Self and not the limited *jiva*.

Dan: So: everything that seems to happen, happens automatically. “I” am just actionless awareness by which all the apparent happenings are known. *Isvara* and *jiva* are just names for different automatic apparent happenings within the field of awareness that I am, like dust motes in a beam of sunlight. All the apparent happenings are just pixels on the screen of awareness, which is me, so they’re just qualia in me that do not change me, like the objects in a dream.

Sundari: Yes, good. Qualia are an attempt by schools of philosophy and some models of psychology to explain individual subjective and conscious experiences. Unfortunately, they will never be able to do so, because they are ignorant of *Isvara*, what the *gunas* are or how they govern the creation of everything in the apparent reality. These schools attempt to explain what can never be fully understood without Self-knowledge.

Dan: Though thoughts like “I would like to meditate now” may appear to me, followed by the body sitting down, it’s just colloquial to say, “I wanted to meditate.” In reality, each thought and each action are just choicelessly appearing in me. It’s as if a computer game were generating all the inner dialogue and “outer” actions of a fictional character while I, awareness, just watch. The process whereby awareness becomes identified with the person is just a more complicated version of the “rubber hand illusion” by which a fake hand placed in front of and visible to someone and stroked in time with their real (hidden) hand makes them think it’s part of themselves (except there is no hidden hand/ego in this case). After seeing through the illusion’s apparent reality, it remains perceptible as an illusion, like the blue of a mirage in the desert, only it’s known to be unreal.

Sundari: Very well put, Dan, I like your style of writing and thinking.

Dan: I think I “get” all that at some level and I’m certain it delivers results in meditation to say such things to myself, but is it just an intellectual/superficial understanding so far, would you say? Something I’ve noticed in myself is that I have always thought I “get it,” ever since I first read about enlightenment as a teenager. I know ShiningWorld says that everyone already is it, is already experiencing the Self, so how much of a barrier should I be putting up between my semi-self-assessment as “getting it,” given that the above paragraphs seem pretty accurate to me and yield good results when focused on in meditation? I don’t want to prematurely claim I’m done, but I also don’t want to cling to *samsara*.

Sundari: You do have a clear understanding and you are able to communicate it very well. The problem is that Self-realization is experiential and for it to translate to Self-actualization there must be not even a nanosecond of hesitation in discriminating between the Self and how you relate to life, 24/7. Simply put, you are the knowledge and live it, all the time. This is a process, and highly intelligent people sometimes take longer to get there because they have more trouble letting go of the way they think. While you may well “get” intellectually that you are the non-dual Self, this remains indirect knowledge until you know and live what it means to BE the Self.

It becomes tricky when the doer gets involved “trying hard” to understand, because the ego cannot “get” Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge obtains when the intellect is refined enough by exposure to the scriptures, by *Isvara*, not before. It does not matter how clever you are, in fact that can often be an obstacle if you are invested in your cleverness.

No matter how accomplished you are in the world or how many degrees behind your name, this means very little when you come to Vedanta. It is a great leveller

because the mind must be trained to think completely differently. We are all beginners when we come to Vedanta, full of ideas and beliefs that are mostly ignorance, mixed in with some knowledge. We need to be “debriefed” by *Isvara* so that the mind can assimilate the teachings of Vedanta, which are the often reverse of everything we thought we knew.

Dan: I realize that meditation is just a side project to inquiry, I mentioned it only as something else to say about me, not to imply that I think it’s on the same level as the year I’ve spent reading Vedanta.

Sundari: Good. What is essential in the second stage of Self-inquiry, *manana*, besides contemplating the scriptures and meditating on them, is stilling the mind through meditation or silence, as you experience. Any technique that works for you is good. Understanding every detail of the doctrine is not necessary for *moksa*. If you can always discriminate *satya* from *mithya*, and that translates into your life, that is *moksa*. If it is purely intellectual knowledge and does not translate into your life, Self-actualization has not taken place. That is why the last stage of inquiry, *nididhyasana*, is the longest for most inquirers. I have attached a *satsang* by James on *nididhyasana* which recently went into our latest newsletter.

Dan: You say that Self-inquiry is definitely NOT about acquiring more concepts but divesting yourself of ALL concepts. This confuses me. I thought this was a description of some types of meditation, and Vedanta was about assimilating the knowledge from the scriptures?

How do you reconcile “divesting yourself of all concepts” with “acquiring/assimilating Self-knowledge from the teachings”? Isn’t “I am awareness” a concept we’re supposed to dwell on? Ram here seems to say he meditated with effort on the *akandakara vritti* in the same way I’ve been trying to meditate on my collection of Vedantic sayings:

Ram: “After a year-and-a-half of continuous meditation in which I clung to that thought with great tenacity – affirming it in every situation – it destroyed the notion that I was limited.”

Sundari: Yes, but Vedanta is not conceptual knowledge, it is the truth about you. Self-knowledge dissolves the power behind the conceptual definition of yourself, the objective knowledge about yourself, and sets you free. The freedom Vedanta talks about is the freedom from the prison walls of attachment to the notions of yourself as the limited ego-entity. The walls of the prison are made of nothing more substantial than limited concepts – thoughts – of who you are. If Self-knowledge remains a concept for you, assimilation has not taken place. Probably what stands in the way are your own concepts about truth. Ram’s notion of limitation was destroyed only because all concepts fell away and he realized who he was, and that realization was not experiential, it was pure unobstructed Self-knowledge. At that point, he no longer needed the scripture. He was the scripture.

While some concepts of who you are as a *jiva* may continue “after” *moksa*, none of them are binding. They are like a non-binding contract that exists only for

momentary convenience and ease of living in the world but does not limit or even define your action in thought, word or deed, because you know the world is not real.

Sundari: Self-inquiry is the application of Self-knowledge. Keeping this knowledge in mind and continually contemplating on it is Self-inquiry, which is why Self-inquiry is different from meditation. The knowledge is maintained by an act of will, whereas in meditation the knowledge appears during a particular experience, which ends... Self-inquiry is superior to meditation because the doer does not need to maintain a particular state and wait for the knowledge. He or she has the knowledge already and applies it continually. Meditators do not know the value of knowledge, whereas inquirers do."

Dan: This actually sounds like what I do when I do what I had been calling "meditation." I don't just sit there focusing on the breath or something, I run various Vedantic sayings through my mind.

I looked up the *akandakara vritti* you mentioned and found this *satsang* about it by Ram: "Whenever you forgo the incorrect idea of yourself in favor of the truth about yourself, great waves of joy and peace follow. In other words, you cultivate an 'I am the Self' *vasana* so that the knowledge becomes unbroken and works on its own whenever it is called for."

Ram: "I am whole and complete, limitless awareness, I am everything that is, there is nothing other than me, I am fullness itself, I am the cause of the whole universe, nothing can be added to me or subtracted from me, etc.

"The Vedanta texts are full of formulations of this thought. It is a statement of the nature of reality and one's true identity. It may not even form up in words. It may just appear as a sense of complete release coupled with an unshakable conviction that 'I am fine, I have always been fine and I will always be fine.'"

Sundari: Correct, see above.

Dan: This is the sort of thing I run through my mind while meditating, a bit like a *mantra* but being aware of the meaning. I start with "I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the person, the person appears in me, the world appears in me, the world is made of me (consciousness), the world is imaginary and only I am real." Then I say, "I am not awake" (I used to say, "not the waker/dreamer/sleeper," but this seems to produce a clearer effect). At this point I may just "listen to the silence," as Ram said to in the Tiru lectures, or contemplate something like "nothing ever happened" (manifestation as dream that doesn't touch me, consciousness). I also find "I am pure awareness" can bring me to the highest state in just a second, outside of meditation, if I'm *sattvic* enough.

Sundari: Excellent. Keep it up, and when the knowledge sticks and never leaves you, you don't need to be concerned about meditating or using affirmations, because you know you are the knowledge, you are meditation. It does not matter one bit then if you meditate or not, though you may still do so purely for your own enjoyment. *Moksa*, freedom from limitation, is not dependent on any particular state

of mind. Because the *gunas* are always changing, the mind is constantly in a state of flux, and that is fine with you if you know who you are because as the Self you do not modify to the mind, i.e. the *gunas*. You are blissful even if the mind is not because the bliss you have is just knowledge, not a transitory feeling or state of mind.

Sundari: “Self-inquiry is superior to meditation because the doer does not need to maintain a particular state and wait for the knowledge. He or she has the knowledge already and applies it continually. Meditators do not know the value of knowledge, whereas inquirers do.”

Dan: I feel like what I had been calling “meditation” may be more like “contemplating Vedantic truths and gauging whether or not you’re doing a good job by watching for experiential effects” then.

Sundari: This is part of the *manana* phase of Self-inquiry, as explained above.

Dan: My psychiatrist said I was “somewhere in the schizophrenia family,” but like I said, I have no delusions or irrationality, etc. while on the meds (except for the hard-to-describe impression, every few months, that small visual details are important, which I know intellectually is nonsense, and which passes within 10 to 15 minutes of lying quietly with my eyes shut). I would say the only bad effect from my illness (or maybe the meds – my last psychiatrist said it was from the illness) is a lack of ability to do mental work, like concentration for long each day, but during the time I do concentrate, I feel like I’m 90 percent-ish as good as I ever was.

Sundari: You certainly sound very lucid and *sattvic* to me.

Dan: You asked: “Are you asking as the *jiva* identified as a person or as consciousness?” Clearly, it’s the former.

This brings up another subject I’m not clear on – can consciousness “ask” or “do” anything in any way, ever? In this sentence, you seem to imply it can, but elsewhere in your email, you seem to me to say it can’t – “because as awareness you are actionless.” Also, Ram often describes awareness as “ordinary, non-dual, ACTIONLESS, unconcerned,” etc. And in the *satsang Actionless awareness*, Ram seems to clearly say awareness cannot act ever, at all, “even if it wants to” (which seems to imply it could “want,” or am I reading too much into that?):

Ram: “It [awareness] cannot act if it wants to, because there is nothing other than it to cause it to act or to act upon it. When you think you are doing something, you are not actually doing anything... awareness is like a witness. It is the part of you that just looks on and makes what is happening within you and without you known. It does not comment on what is going on. It just shines and in its light things are known.”

Dan: However, during the Tiru *Panchadas*i video lectures, Ram said if it could not “do” things sometimes, awareness would not be limitless. First of all, am I

misremembering or did Ram not say that the meaning of “limitless” was “does not modify to experience,” not “can do anything”? Second, if consciousness never changes, how can it change from not doing (before the action) to doing, then back to not doing? And what would impel it to make one choice over another, since it has no attributes? And what would it act with, since it has no mind or body?

Sundari: Nothing happens without consciousness, but it is neither a thinker nor a doer. How could it be? But thinking and doing can only take place in the presence of consciousness. Thinking and doing are all thanks to *Isvara*, the *gunas* – *Maya* – nobody is doing or thinking anything. The point is, who are you identified with? If you know you are the Self, your thinking is spontaneously in line with Self-knowledge, there is no need for the scripture anymore. If you are still identified with the *jiva*, ignorance/duality is still modifying your thinking. To understand *Isvara* you must understand the *gunas* because they determine everything in *mithya*. Freedom from bondage to object identification requires mind, or *guna*, management.

Dan: My understanding regarding *karma yoga* is that it involves doing what is *dharmic*, with an attitude of consecrating it to the Self/consciousness, and not being attached to results. I would say I do this (inasmuch as I feel like I’m doing anything), I’m mostly calm and *sattvic*, not drawn to worldly things except as mild amusements, not magical things that will “fix me,” and don’t get particularly upset when something goes wrong. If I do feel a strong emotion it seems like an object known to me rather than something that I am.

Sundari: Good. Apart from what you understand it to be, the main function of *karma yoga* is to destroy the notion that you are the doer. *Isvara*/the *gunas* are the only doer because nothing is really going on here. The Self is actionless. For you, the *jiva*, who is really the Self, if you see action in inaction and actionless in action, you are free of the *jiva*/doer.

~ Much love, Sundari