

The Price Tag on *Mithya*

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Richard: In answer to your final question, one of my Buddhist teachers said 20 years ago, “Everything has a price tag; the price tag on enlightenment reads ‘Everything.’”

Sundari: So true, but what is “everything”? If it means all identification with the *jiva*, then yes, there is no fine print, it must all go. But when you know you are the fullness of the Self, you have nothing to lose and nothing to gain, because you are everything.

Richard: I have read your email several times and thank you for your frank reply, I appreciate it. It helped me to let go a lot right away. It is strange how we (at least I) practise *karma yoga* selectively. I never gave up my relationship before!

Sundari: Remind yourself that you are not giving up on love or on relationship per se – just the illusion that you need either to be happy. You don’t and chasing or hanging onto objects is a guarantee that you won’t be, even if the desired object does not leave you. This is not a white-knuckled renunciation, you are not denying anything. You are looking at need square in the face and seeing how futile it is. And it gives you the space to pry off every greedy needy little tentacle from the psyche. It feels like hard work at first, but if you practise *karma yoga* every moment of every day, with every thought word and deed before you act on them, it gradually becomes second nature.

Richard: This morning I gave this up to *Isvara* and kept on handing it back throughout the day. I also sat quiet in the morning and discriminated back to the Self as I often do but today it had a very clear quality.

Sundari: Good for you, Richard, place the *jiva* and all its smallness on the altar of *karma yoga*, where it belongs. It takes courage, even though attachment causes us so much grief. Ignorance is indeed tenacious and hardwired. There is never any good reason to hang onto anything. Love is free, it is not about attachment unless you are attached to the Self in the “other.” If you are, you will know that there is no need to hang onto what you already have.

Richard: I looked for the joy – it is there. There were a few psychic assaults through the day, but I said a sharp SHUT UP! There were attempts at self-pity, resentment, self-denigration and self-righteousness, all knocked back.

Sundari: The joy is always there, even if the *jiva* does not feel joyful. It cannot not be, because it is you. Ramji, in his inimitable way, says practise the “fuck your feelings *yoga*!” While we honour our feeling nature as a *jiva*, as long as feelings are

running the intellect, you are in trouble. Ignorance never gives up without a fight, it is the only thing that never dies a natural death, as does everything else in *mithya*. Only Self-knowledge kills ignorance. If all the roots are not pulled out, it will sprout again, you can count on it.

Richard: I am very calm this evening. It is also interesting what you say at the end. My problem with Buddhism was that I got to the point of seeing that the *jiva* wasn't permanent or reliable, but the alternative was emptiness.

Sundari: Many inquirers have this problem – the ego is afraid to let go because it believes it would rather hang onto objects, as unreliable as they are, and which clearly cause suffering, than to be stuck with nothing. Buddhism says that all is emptiness, *shunya*. What does it mean by this? It is true that all objects are empty, but what is their essence? Emptiness is not a problem when you understand that duality is not real, it is just a superimposition on non-duality, which is the true nature of reality. Vedanta asks the obvious question: Who know emptiness? The fullness of the Self, you, that which validates and gives meaning to everything, even emptiness.

Richard: The non-dual experience which made me understand the Self was an extraordinary relief, and also beginning to get that the *jiva* stuff existed and did not have to be destroyed made sense. Recently since listening to James in Reigate the point about superimposition began to sink in, and then there were more flashes of the unreality of the *jiva*.

Sundari: Indeed. The only way you get to enjoy the *jiva* or any object is when you are free of dependence on it. The *jiva* is loved wholeheartedly the way it is, but you are not free of it until all its programs no longer cause agitation or denial, i.e. do not modify to the *gunas*.

Richard: I am amazed actually that a year of studying Vedanta and practising *karma yoga* have produced a much more stable mind, which seems to be able to cope with considerable pain and remain reasonably objective.

This practice will require a lot of patient insistence, but freedom is the only worthwhile goal – already I seem to be accepting the possible end of this relationship. It is okay. It is not up to me.

I am looking forward to reading your book.

~ Enormous thanks for your great advice, feeling blessed

Sundari: You are most welcome, Richard, always glad to help. Our reward is knowing this infallible knowledge works, has always worked and always will. While everything is up to *Isvara*, understanding the game means you know how to play it well and not get burned any more.

~ Much love, Sundari