

Who Is the Seer?

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Eric: Dear Sundari, thank you for your answer. I need time to think things through.

So, on your *sadhana* question.

I read James' book, carefully. I watched all of the videos on YouTube, multiple times. I found comments on Vedanta from ancient and more recent *yogis*.

If I could, I would sit and study for a year or two just to absorb all of the scripture. I can't, so bit by bit I go.

Sundari: Thank you for providing the background. What other *yogis* are you listening to? There are many bogus Vedanta teachers out there, one must always use discrimination.

Eric: Almost every hour of the day, I watch what goes on. The idea of the witness was nothing new; the word is often used in Neo talk as if it is some special thing; it is a tool to me. It is from where action takes its cue when I make things – or when I hear birds sing, it receives. Maybe I am wrong. But it has a place as it is a function: to see. I always see, and seeing is something other than only visual. The witness has no time or space exactly; it sees these things.

I “see” thought passing by; pragmatic thought, fantasy, creative, etc. Feeling, things, all of it. I see before I think, I see before I feel, etc. This has always been consciously so. I retreat in it half the time; often people think I am a dreamer; but I just watch.

Sundari: Yes, this is everyone's unexamined experience. The point is, who is the witness, and what is it witnessing? Who does the “I” refer to in your statement above? The non-experiencing witness is the non-dual Self, but it functions in two ways, as the opaque witness, or *jiva* (*saguna brahman* – with qualities), and the transparent witness (without qualities – *nirguna brahman*). The opaque witness is the mind/ego watching itself, and the transparent witness is the Self, pure awareness. The Self is a seer that never began or ceases and is the all-seeing eye, or “I,” that sees only itself because there are no objects for it to see. It is self-effulgent, as there is nothing but itself. Eventually, we must drop all these terms, even *nirguna brahman*, because that implies *saguna*. It would be more appropriate to say that the Self, seeing only itself, is that which knows the seer with reference to the seen, only when *Maya* is operating. The Self-aware Self appears as a seer; but it never actually is a seer, unless seeing refers to its own Self.

Whereas, when ignorance is operating, the *jiva* thinks that the seer is different from the seen, the subject and object are different. *Isvara* is also known as *saguna brahman* because it operates *Maya* (the *gunas*), but unlike the *jiva*, it is never deluded by them. When *tamas* and *rajas* arise in *saguna brahman*, then awareness apparently becomes a *jiva* and is deluded by *Maya*.

Eric: I cannot make the difference between self-indulgence and a healthy self-interest for this *jiva* that I am more or less. I've seen too much – I do not need lessons of compassion or how egocentric I am – I wish I was in fact; I hardly ever demanded, wanted or insisted upon anything in particular but space to be.

Sundari: Self-indulgence is an entitled, egoic self-interest, a narcissism that cares only about its own desires being met – a mind under the whip of *rajas* and *tamas* (desire and fear). Genuine self-interest is born of self-respect and a healthy self-esteem, and it always sets healthy boundaries; it is the opposite of self-indulgence and it never abuses nor takes abuse from anyone.

Eric: I stood my ground a long time; amidst events I really could write a book about – but many can write books about deep, “real” fucking pain.

Sundari: Yes, totally true. This world is a “vale of tears” for those stuck in duality. The only way out of it is through Self-knowledge.

Eric: Either I regain energy and indeed some *sattvic* mind-life or not.

Sundari: You can do a lot to maximize peace of mind (*sattva*) by living according to your *svadharma*, cleaning up unhealthy lifestyle and mental/emotional habits. But ultimately, the only way to permanent peace of mind is through Self-inquiry and the application of Self-knowledge to your life – through *karma yoga* and mind management (*guna yoga*). A devotional practice helps a great deal too because it helps to neutralize the childish ego that feels hard done by or that things “should” be different. I notice some anger coming through in your comments. Anger is usually the result of frustrated desires, the belief that we have been wronged. Maybe you have, but how you relate to it is what matters. A devotional practice coupled with *karma yoga* engenders an attitude of gratitude.

Self-inquiry is about growing up, giving up blame and shame by facing up to our conditioning – realizing where it comes from and how to manage it. There is no one to blame for anything, because nobody is doing anything; everyone is driven by their *guna*-generated *vasanas* given to them by *Isvara*, who is the facilitator of our *karma*. You can choose to be a victim of it or choose the only other sane path – Self-inquiry. This life is a great gift, if we have the correct understanding, and it can be a curse if we do not.

Eric: I understand what you say about identifying with being an artist. But not many know what “artist” is. But a *jiva*-artist is technically open, creative and fluid in mind; that is not a thing you can learn really; it is a psychological trait. Dogs bark, artist make. Not being able to do so is the pain in question; it is a pressure I do not ask for.

It isn't a choice between “Shall I do this or that?” It is not even a question. I see, form and make. To not do this goes against my nature.

Now, if that doesn't matter in relation to Self-knowledge, I get that. But how does my action; that has to happen as long as I live, not relate to Self-knowledge? Many can

work in construction, not many can make a sculpture; that is not special, as in “ego-look-at-me-being-special,” That is a type, like nerds get numbers and dancers dance.

For all I care I humbly get by; but then really – art has to go out of my mind – if not, conflict exists.

Sundari: Non-identification with your nature, or *svadharma*, is not about denying it. It is about living it fully – WITH the realization that the art or whatever comes from *Isvara*, not you as the *jiva*. You are merely the conduit for the form to appear here. There is absolutely nothing in our lives that comes from us. Everything comes from *Isvara*. That is the essence of *karma yoga* – negating the identification with the doer, not doing itself. If sculpting is your nature, it is pointless trying to do anything else, because that would not work for you and it would be a contravention of *dharma*.

~ *Om shanti*, Sundari