

The No-Surrender of Intellectuals

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Vedanta Is Not About Gaining Knowledge

Fred: Hi, Sundari.

Sundari: I am not going to answer your very long email, Fred; there is no point. You may have read all the books and listened to many of the teachings, but you have not assimilated the meaning. We have all tried to help you and it's not working, even though you think your questions are highly intelligent.

What is it you want? Are you after *moksa* or a degree in Vedanta à la Fred? Do you think you are going to gain something if you can wrestle the teachings into your own intellectual understanding and quote your version verbatim? You have it all backwards.

If you are more interested in your interpretation of the teachings, which I think you are, Vedanta will not work to set you free of the ignorance of your true nature, because it will be "Fred" who thinks he is enlightened. It might work to make you feel superior, but what use is that, really? Do you want to be the clever guy or the Self, free of the clever guy?

We can only help people who trust the scripture more than their own intellect, and who understand the value of a proper teacher.

I will pass this on to my husband to see if he will take you on as a student.

Fred: I sincerely apologize if you feel I've taken advantage of your time. Stan spent an enormous amount of energy on my questions and although he never made me feel unwelcome, he ultimately came to the conclusion that I should speak to you instead. I assumed I should proceed with you in the same manner, which was perhaps a poor miscalculation.

Sundari: Thanks for the apology, but no need. We all gave generously of our time to you as we do to anyone who is a genuine inquirer. The problem is not that you took advantage of our time. The problem is you did not.

Fred: To answer your first question honestly, I suppose I want both *moksa* and "a degree in Vedanta," although I never thought about it in those terms. It's just that I'm more interested in the nature of reality than anything else. I'm interested in how to speak, write and think about seeking *moksa*. The real seeking of *moksa* is my main goal of course and I "think" I understand how to "pursue" it, which is why my questions for you are more related to the prior - how to speak, write and think about the seeking.

Sundari: If you understood what Self-inquiry is and were truly interested in the true nature of reality and *moksa* above all else, you would listen to what we say. But you interpret everything we say according to what you think you know. You have not surrendered to the teachings or to the teacher. Does it occur to you that if you get a reply from us that does not gel with your thinking it could be your understanding that is faulty, not the teachings?

Fred: I would imagine that you and James share this interest, otherwise what would inspire you to write books on the topic? Obviously, you both feel you have things to say that haven't been said before.

Sundari: We write and teach Vedanta, not only because it is the most satisfying thing we could be applying our minds to do, but because we are in service to the teachings as qualified Vedanta teachers. We are simply a mouthpiece, *Isvara's* minions. It is *Isvara* doing the teaching and responding to your very many emails. It is not Stan or Arlindo or Sundari.

Fred: I realize that I'm taking the role of challenging you and your ways of speaking, writing and thinking about seeking *moksa*, and again I sincerely apologize if that puts you in an uncomfortable position. However, I'm not being combative for egotistical reasons, I have nothing but love and respect for all of you. I genuinely want to understand the teachings and have the confidence to espouse them (not publicly) with real conviction, knowing deeply that they have merit.

Sundari: Don't flatter yourself, Fred, you do not challenge us, make us uncomfortable or even ask difficult questions. We have heard it all a thousand times a thousand before, in every possible permutation. You are not original and not as smart as you think you are. Ignorance is ignorance. Do you honestly think you could come up with something we have not heard before or could not answer?

The problem is you do not hear the answers we give, which are not our interpretation, but what the scripture says. You are invested in your intelligence so your comeback tends to be an argument. You think you know a lot more than you do. While it may be true that you are genuine in your desire for *moksa*, and I hope you are for your sake, I do not believe you really understand what it is or what it entails. I may be wrong, but it certainly seems to me that you are more invested in "getting it right" than anything else.

Fred: Perhaps you imagine that in my personal life I'm simply mulling over the teachings solely from an intellectual point of view, but this is not true. The reason I come across that way in my emails is because that is what I'm pursuing with you and the other teachers, an intellectual understanding. I know that in order to have real direct knowledge of the Self, we must "step beyond" the intellect. However, only I can take a stand as awareness, you can't do that for me. No question and answer exists to facilitate taking that stand, it is inexplicable, yet all we have are our words to communicate with so we try our best.

Sundari: I am glad to hear that, Fred, and I wish you well with it and I hope it's true.

However, there is a very big difference between taking a stand in awareness as awareness and taking a stand in awareness as an ego, which is what you are doing.

Fred: Therefore what you could do is help facilitate my intellectual understanding because you and James have been speaking, writing and thinking about how to teach others for a very long time. That doesn't mean you are willing to do that or want to do that, and if that is the case I can accept that without any hard feelings. No one has an obligation to do that for me, but that is what I'm asking for. If this is not available at ShiningWorld, no problem. I would certainly enjoy talking to James if he accepts me. However, I hope I'd be allowed to ask difficult questions. On the other hand, if James is not interested in my questions but feels he has a valuable one-way message for me, I'd welcome that wholeheartedly with open arms.

Again, I sincerely apologize for any loss of time and energy. I'm truly grateful for you, James and the entire ShiningWorld organization. If I don't hear back from you, I will trust that you don't want to hear from me again.

Sundari: Gratitude is always good and welcome, thank you. We are happy to help any genuine inquirer, but if they do not listen to us or have the requisite faith in the teachings or the teacher, we can't help them. I hope you understand what I have said in this reply to you, as I have nothing against you and wish you only the best. You sound like a great guy. If you are still comparing notes with other teachings and teachers and trying to fit Vedanta into your "intellectual" understanding, then Vedanta will not work for you. We have no interest in arguing, Fred, we have better things to do with our time.

As I said to you before, all teachings require an intellectual understanding. But the difference with Vedanta is that it is not a theory, an academic or philosophical thought system. You cannot "study" Vedanta, because it is who you are. There is no distance between the subject matter of Vedanta and you.

Vedanta requires a certain kind of intellect – one that is refined, purified and surrendered so that it is capable of assimilating the meaning of the teachings, which are extremely subtle and therefore very counter-intuitive. We have some inquirers who are in love with their ability to think and have a lot of ego around their own ideas and intelligence, so it is harder for them to put their thinking aside. These are the hardest people to teach.

Self-inquiry requires training the intellect to think differently and to want different things. While we need an intellect, it is not the intellect that removes ignorance. It is just an object known to you, the Self. You cannot "think your way to enlightenment," because it is the ego, the doer, doing the thinking. The ego must surrender to a qualified teacher and the teachings and trust Self-knowledge to scour the mind of ignorance.

Can you do that, Fred?

I have passed on your emails to James; you may hear from him. If you want to write to him, his email address is swartz.jb@gmail.com. If you do, don't waste his time or yours.

~ Love, Sundari

James: Dear Fred, both Stan and Sundari have shared their experience talking to you and both came to the same conclusion. I read most of the *satsangs* you had with them and offered ideas how to approach you. I think I identified your basic misunderstanding about Vedanta. Vedanta is not about gaining knowledge, although it does seem to be. We often formulate it that way because most people seeking freedom from a subjective sense of limitation are emotionally oriented and need to become intellectually oriented, i.e. to get their lives on a rational foundation.

But, as I just said, Vedanta is not about gaining knowledge. It is about removing ignorance. If you gain knowledge you are adding something to Fred, which is a big problem because Fred will then feel impowered to teach people who they are. But “teaching people who they are” is not teaching people who they are. Teaching people who they are is losing the belief that you are a person, which we call ignorance. Ignorance doesn’t mean the person you think you are is stupid. It means that you don’t realize there is only one Self and that it is not a doer, in this case a Fred-teacher or a Fred-seeker or whatever else Fred might imagine he is doing.

Do you know why nobody ever told you that you exist or that you are conscious? Because it is a self-evident fact. To say that you exist and that you are conscious implies that you are existence/consciousness because whatever existence and consciousness you enjoy is obviously borrowed from existence/consciousness. You didn’t create your existence or your consciousness. If you did, you can claim authorship. If not, not. So you are two-thirds “enlightened” already. The other third is that you are limitless. Obviously Fred is isn’t limitless, meaning free, because he has a lot of desire and he includes his body and mind when he says the word “I,” which always only refers to limitless existence/consciousness because there is only existence/consciousness, although it appears as if it is something else, sad to say.

So how does Vedanta solve this problem? It removes doubts. It doesn’t add knowledge. The knowledge neutralizes doubts as a base substance neutralizes an acid, leaving you as you are, free of ignorance and knowledge. And what is the basic ignorance? “I am Fred” and the subsequent misunderstanding “I want to be a teacher of Vedanta.” All proper teachers of Vedanta are not teachers of Vedanta. All proper teachers are the Self, existence/consciousness. So what is the teacher? The teacher is *Isvara*. The scriptures are the words of *Isvara* and the teachers of Vedanta offer their minds to *Isvara* and let *Isvara* use them as instruments to remove the ignorance of qualified individuals who approach them in the right spirit.

You met with resistance with Stan and Sundari because your attitude was incorrect, because your primary motivation was not freedom, but to teach Vedanta. If you want me to teach you, you need to know that when you become a disciple you lose control of your destiny, not to the teacher. We don’t tell people what to do. We explain what has to be done to take advantage of the great tradition of Vedanta and we expect you to follow the program, which is not laid out by us. It is laid out by *Isvara*, the author of the Vedanta teaching tradition. Our job is just to see to it that you stay on track. The whole teaching is a five-step process that you have to go through step by step.

You’re way ahead of yourself. You don’t even understand the basics, although you are a clever guy who thinks he knows a lot. We come across this problem quite a bit because Vedanta attracts intellectuals, who tend to be know-it-alls. I suspect that the reason you have been unable to properly use Stan’s and Sundari’s services is because you think you know best, having read a lot of your *satsangs*.

This purpose of this letter is to cut you down to size, Fred. If you want help, you need to listen to what I have to say and keep your questions on-topic. You can't argue. Every possible doubt has been laid to rest by Vedanta so all I have to do is identify it, see that you are paying attention and give you the knowledge. Your mind will be left clear. You won't have another bit of knowledge to add to Fred's vast storehouse so he can go out and impress others.

Eventually, you will be a simple, clear, happy conscious being free of the need to teach anybody anything, including yourself. If it doesn't work, I will recommend some practice that will qualify you and you will accept it because you will be clear that your only desire is freedom from Fred. You needn't feel bad that you wasted Stan's and Sundari's time. We are all timeless. We like challenges and we are not bothered by failure. For every clever know-it-all there are scores of simple, humble, smart people who understand how Vedanta works and who listen attentively and do the required work.

You haven't asked me to teach you, but you seem to have worked your way up to the Big Cheese. This is a pre-emptive strike in case you do. I don't expect you to reply. I recommend that you purchase the *Atma Bodh* book and video series from the shop and watch them. Then you can Skype me and we can speak face to face about teachings in the text that you don't understand. No "yes, but"s. We are only interested in ignorance.