

# ***Jivanmukta* Is the Self**

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2019-09-26

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/3949>

**Karen:** *Pranams*, Sundari.

Thank you for your response. I have read and mulled over your words, but I still have a few more questions.

*Moksa* might not mean that the *jiva* disappears; however, if one apprehends the *jiva* as the illusion it is, then for all practical purposes, wouldn't one lose all interest in it? Why would the unreal be of any interest to anyone, other than maybe as a source of amusement?

**Sundari:** It is entertainment for the most part. We say that when the doer has been negated the *jiva* program (its conditioning, or small-self persona) has been rendered non-binding, so it is "as good as" non-existent. Therefore it no longer bothers you. You are neither interested in nor disinterested in it, but you love it unconditionally nonetheless. It is a source of amusement a lot of the time or not. Even though as the Self you are *trigunaatita*, beyond the *gunas*, they must still be managed to maintain peace of mind for the *jiva*, as it is a changing, entity living in a constantly changing environment. *Prarabdha karma* will still play out. It's not that easy to ignore *rajas* and *tamas* when the body is in pain, for instance, especially if it is chronic. *Moksa* does not confer immunity for the *jiva* from the ups and downs of life, but it takes away the sting because it knows it cannot lose anything. So, when the *jiva* program appears, which it does all the time, you dismiss it as not-you, not-real.

The last stage of Self-inquiry, *nididhyasana*, or Self-actualization, is negating the last vestiges of the mental-emotional programming of the *jiva*, and that can take a long time. While none of it is real, there is no way to be free of the *jiva* unless all the deep-seated *pratibandikas* and *samskaras* are understood and negated in light of Self-knowledge. It's all very well to say just ignore the *jiva*, but if this stage is not complete, you are not free of the it and *moksa* cannot obtain.

There is a tendency in the spiritual world for inquirers to jump too quickly into claiming they are Self-actualized, when they are far from it. We know many inquirers who tried to ignore their *jiva* stuff, claiming they are the Self, so why bother with it? Well, that's true for the Self and fine if you are happy to live with a mind that is not purified of its program. But how free is that?

**Karen:** How can that which is limited (i.e. the *jiva*) live free of limitation? How can the *jiva* ever be free? I was under the impression that the whole point of *moksa* was to recognize one's true nature as awareness (which is free of limitation) and live as awareness while leaving the *jiva* alone to be what it will be, since it is governed by *Isvara* and not by me.

**Sundari:** *Moksa* is not freeing the ego, it is negating the doer/ego in light of the knowledge. But the *jiva* is accepted the way it is because it "belongs" to *Isvara*, and you did not make it the way it is. As stated before, *moksa* is freedom from AND for

the *jiva*, so that it lives its life free of limitation, free of suffering, knowing it is really the Self, with a mind that is peaceful, perfectly satisfied, instead of constantly seeking or running away from objects. As the Self you are and always have been free.

You are right, the *jiva* enlightened or not is always limited, as it lives in *mithya* and is subject to *Isvara* and the natural laws that run the Field. But when its conditioning is no longer binding (i.e. the mind is no longer conditioned by the *gunas*) and the doer negated, you are free of it and thus free of existential worry and stress. When Self-knowledge is firm, the *jiva* has a completely different orientation in the world because it knows it is no longer in the world. The world is “in” you, including the *jiva*. You see everything as the Self, as non-separate from you, so you have no problem with any part of *mithya*.

In fact, when Self-actualization has taken place, there is no *satya* and *mithya* for you anymore. They are just concepts/principles used to teach you that you are the Self and can be discarded. *Mithya* “becomes” *satya* because it was *satya* all along. You see everything as just IS-NESS, a direct experience of existence as your identity, the Self - including the small-self *jiva*.

Maybe you are confusing the mind/ego, or small-self persona, with the eternal *Jiva*. Though there is only one principle as the substratum of everything, *Maya* manifests two “types” of *jiva*: the “small-self” finite *jiva*, the one who believes it is a doer and is identified with its story, run by its conditioning, under the spell of ignorance. It is just an idea, the “I” wrongly identified with the subtle body, the Self apparently under the spell of ignorance. This one is negated by Self-knowledge, though obviously, the body-mind don’t disappear, hence my statements above. And then there is the eternal *Jiva*, *Jivatman*.

Both the eternal *Jiva* and *Isvara* are pure awareness; they are *adjata*, unborn. They are principles in awareness, like *Maya*, and so beyond, or out of, time - *anadhi*, beginningless, and therefore endless. They are either unmanifest or manifest when *Maya* appears. The small-self *jiva* (personality), while also the Self, is “in time” and ends with the death of the body, though the *vasanas*/subtle body are eternal because the causal body is eternal.

The subtle body of that particular *vasana* bundle is subsumed into the causal body at the death of the gross body and will reincarnate at the appropriate time to work out its *karma*. But as there is only one causal body, there really is only one subtle body, the one eternal *Jiva*. *Maya*, being such an amazing, intelligent, deluding power, makes it seem like there are multiple objects/gross bodies. But there is also actually only one gross body too. Everything reduces to the Self; there is no other option. All is dependent on awareness, but awareness depends on nothing.

**Karen:** I understand that Self-realization is the only the beginning and that we must get out lives to conform to the truth. I’m not trying to deny *mithya*, I was simply asking why one need take any interest in that which is unreal.

**Sundari:** You don’t, but why wouldn’t you when you see it all as the Self? This world is beautiful when you know who you are. When you do know, you live life as a constant devotional prayer of gratitude to *Isvara*, your Self. The whole point of Self-inquiry is to restore the *jiva* to its natural state of permanent happiness, free of

anxiety, to give it a fabulous life without suffering. It is one thing to know who you are, but you are not really free until you experience yourself as bliss all the time. Knowledge is never enough. It needs bliss, the Self loving itself.

**Karen:** The *jiva* is, like you said, that which is not always present and that which is always changing. Is not *moksa* akin to realizing that the snake in the rope (i.e. the *jiva*) is a projection and therefore not real, and that once ignorance is removed what remains, the rope (i.e. the Self) is what is real? Is not the *jiva* as good as non-existent because it is unreal?

**Sundari:** Yes, see above. *Viparaya*, is the reversal of apprehension that *Maya* imposes on the mind, which results in the erroneous cognition of reality as a duality – the snake taken to be the rope. *Adhyaropa*, superimposition, is caused by *viparaya*. In both cases, duality (the snake) is there, ignorance is there, for a *samsari*, or seeker. But for a *jnani* (Self-realized person, a non-seeker), *viparyaya* is gone and so is unconditioned superimposition. Conditioned superimposition still functions, but the *jnani* never takes it to be real, so is never deluded by it. And it is not bothered by it.

**Karen:** My understanding of the application of Self-knowledge in daily life suggests that I should continuously affirm my identity as awareness in the face of whatever fear/desire that arises in the mind. Does not this process necessarily involve a refusal to entertain or give attention to thoughts, feelings and emotions (i.e. the *jiva*)?

**Sundari:** Yes, it is about negating the “small-self” *jiva* conditioned by the *gunas*, hypnotized by duality. As stated above, when you are free of that *jiva*, which is no more than a thought, you are *Jivanmukta*, *Jivatman*, the Self. You are not the Self AND the *jiva*; the *jiva* IS the Self. You live free as the Self and there is no longer any *karma* for you. You accept the apparent person as they are, an apparition, never confusing yourself with it again, and the apparent person lives happily “in the world” until the body dies. You, the unborn Self, are there to observe its apparent death as you were there to witness to its apparent birth.

**Karen:** Also, why do you say primary identity? Doesn't that imply a secondary identity with the *jiva*, in which case Self-knowledge would not be complete?

**Sundari:** All words have implied meanings, there is no avoiding that. Even “Self” implies not-Self. We need words to teach but all words are *mithya*, the finger pointing at the moon. We say that your primary identity is the Self when *moksa* has taken place because the *jiva* identity, while known to be unreal, continues “after *moksa*.” You are free when you are more attached to the Self than to the body-mind. The purpose of the *anadhi*, the beginningless, teaching is to reveal that though *Maya* is beginningless ignorance, *avidya* (personal ignorance) is not. *Maya*, macrocosmic ignorance, continues with *moksa*, but *avidya*, personal ignorance, ends, which is why we say that ignorance is beginningless but not endless.

When you are free, duality does not disappear when you know what it is; it's only a

problem when you think it is real. You can appreciate duality for what it is and the temporary enjoyment it offers without getting broken when you don't get what you want or "lose" something you have. You hold onto nothing because you are everything.

You are no longer afraid of anything. Death becomes meaningless. Life is understood to be meaningful only because of YOU, nothing else. Nothing gives you anything or has the power to take anything away. As I said above, while Self-actualization does not mean the *jiva* does not have to face the vicissitudes of life, it takes away their sting because you know it is a dream world and everything you are really attached to you is you, which cannot be lost.

We emphasize this fact because there is the erroneous belief in the spiritual world that when you are "enlightened" you "transcend" the *jiva* and assume some special status or state. While Self-knowledge destroys the notion that *mithya* is real, you cannot ignore it or superimpose *satya* onto it. Many believe they will be different as the *jiva*, better. You may be, but you may not be. *Moksa* is not about perfecting the *jiva*. What changes is how and why you contact objects. *Moksa* is ordinary, which is why it is very difficult to tell if someone is free just by looking at them. A free person is free to behave as they wish, embracing everything about the apparent person, even acting as though they are a person. In fact it is important to do so at times to not disturb other minds or cause unnecessary confusion for those around you who are still caught up in *Maya*. If you need to draw attention to yourself, you are not free.

Enlightened people differ because of the nature of their *karma*. There are no rules regarding their behaviour, though they always follow *dharma* because they are *dharma*. Discrimination, not behaviour, is the mark of a free person.

**Karen:** I see that non-duality implies no separation between consciousness and its contents (the *jiva*). However, isn't the point of discrimination to see that while the *jiva* is me, that I as awareness am no-thing and therefore, free?

**Sundari:** Yes, it is. See above. Consciousness has no "contents." If it did, it would not be non-dual; it is a partless whole. Consciousness is not a "no-thing" either, though it is formless. No-thing is an object known to it, the fullness of everything, the knowledge that gives rise to all apparent "things" or forms. Space is a good analogy for consciousness because it is all-pervasive, like consciousness, but space is also an object known to it. There are only two orders of reality, and the second "dissolves" into the first. There is you, the Self/consciousness/existence/*satya*; and there are the objects, *mithya*, that apparently appear in you when *Maya* appears. The objects are a mirage, not real, and *moksa* is the ability to discriminate between the two orders 100% of the time, until even the discrimination falls away because there is only you. No need to discriminate anymore, because you have permanent, unshakeable, non-dual vision.

Until then, keep applying the teachings to your life, especially taking a stand in awareness as awareness, applying the opposite thought, *karma yoga* and *triguna vibhava yoga*. You ask good questions, keep up the good work.

~ Om, Sundari