

No Pressure to Change the Doer

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Douglas: Hello, Sundari. I assume you and James made it to the States safely. I also apologize for the delay in responding; I like to digest these words over a handful of days to see if there are any questions that arise afterwards. Your words have shone truth on my fallacy in thinking, and for that I am grateful. The doer is very tricky, and yet after inquiring into the nature of the self, the pressure to change the doer lessens each and every day. *Maya* makes the self appear as the doer playing a role in life. I see now that only knowledge – not action – could have brought me to this truth. Life seems so much easier than it ever has, and it's not because my workload or family duties have lessened; to the contrary, I am busier than ever, having to listen to lectures on my lunch break or very late at night after my son and wife have gone to sleep.

Your and James' words have really brought together years of inquiry into a cohesive and, as odd as it sounds, real way. Thank you.

Sundari: Hello, Douglas. Good to hear from you again, and yes, thanks, we have arrived in Princeton and are settling into our normal routine, here in the States. I am glad that our last exchange helped. *Maya* remains even "after" self-realisation, even though your personal ignorance (*avidya*) has been removed. It continues to condition the individual, the *jiva*; it is its nature to do so. But the *jiva's* creation (*jiva sristi*) – its projections born of *rajas* brought about by self-ignorance (*tamas*) – no longer obtain, or are known to be real, once self-knowledge takes place.

If they do continue, they are known to be projections. When you see water in the desert you do not try to drink it, because you know it is a mirage. Similarly, you will not invest your projections on objects with meaning and chase the objects when the individual's creation has been negated by knowledge that it is non-separate from the total (*Isvara*).

The first half of self-inquiry involves negating all objects, the second half involves realising that all the objects are you – but you are not them. And it is all good, normal, with no fanfare. You get to enjoy everything without a story. But the doing continues. It is fine to be a doer as long as the doer is engaged in self-inquiry guided by scripture. It is good that you realise the importance of not trying to change the doer. If you work on understanding those aspects of the doer's thinking that produce conflict, trying to square the doer's actions with its nature and the nature of the *dharma* field, life will flow nicely. Trying to change the doer is a violation of one of the cardinal rules of self-inquiry: following *svadharma*, your self-nature. You should not assume that there is anything wrong with the doer. It should be observed and seen for what it is. Then if anything needs to be different, the changes will take place as a result of the knowledge, not as a result of the doer's own efforts.

Douglas: Your telling me to practice *karma yoga* for *moksa* highlighted insecurities in my mind. I thought – and partly still believe – that enlightenment was only for certain people, not for people that live in the middle of Nebraska with no Vedantins around.

Sundari: Yes, indeed this seems to be a big stumbling block for seekers who are close to being finders. It is an ego position because the ego sees no gain in surrendering to the knowledge. It wants to make a big deal of enlightenment so that it can keep on seeking – and keep up the erroneous illusion that it will disappear once self-realisation takes place.

Douglas: Yet your words give me confidence that I am about to crack the code to it all, that I am not far from returning to my natural state.

Sundari: You cannot return to your “natural state.” Firstly, the self is not a state – all states exist in it. It is the knower of any state. And secondly, how can you return to where you have always been? The journey metaphor is very unhelpful because it obscures the fact that the seeker is the sought.

Douglas: Sometimes I even fantasize that the switch will come immediately after accepting that I am worthy of the teaching – daring to own it, as you put it. I know I am not the body-mind-sense complex. Countless experiences and the *sruti* have revealed this. But I don’t know I am the self. I ask myself why I don’t dare own that this is me.

Sundari: Who is saying, “I don’t know I am the self”? Who is asking why you don’t know this? Knowing you are the self means that you are whole and complete. Look to see if anything is missing. If it isn’t, accept the fact that you are what you are seeking and “become” a finder, i.e. awareness.

Douglas: The thought that consumes me most these days is that all the practices I have done before seem frivolous. I have little desire to work for *moksa*, yet I want the final identification. I have been meditating for at least an hour a day for seven years, but now see no point in going inward for a finite experience of the reflection of myself. I want the real deal.

Sundari: You are the real deal. Meditation to gain an experience of the self is superfluous when you know you are the self. There is nowhere to go with this, it is now here.

Douglas: I want to know and live inquiry.

Sundari: I don’t know many who are living and doing inquiry with the dedication you bring to it and who have the good fortune to realise that inquiry needs to be guided by scripture and a teacher.

Douglas: I consciously practice *karma yoga* at times, and at other times it naturally happens. Life is hectic, but I know that’s from the *jiva’s* point of view. As “I,” I know I am the changeless in the changing. Even trying to purify the mind and perfectly gain every qualification and value seems moot because that is only for the *jiva*, not the

self, me, though I don't fully know that.

Even when frustration arises or hatred, it just falls back into awareness, again, me, though I don't fully own it. In short, I see more so than ever that I can't do anything for *moksa*.

Sundari: All that is required is that you say "me" when you say "it all just falls back into awareness." Why is this so hard?

Douglas: Rereading my response, I think I'm in the firefly stage, as Ram puts it, though I don't like to think of this in terms of stages anymore. I don't own it, but I know, if that makes sense.

Sundari: It does not make sense. I think you are right that it is a worthiness issue. Perhaps you have been seduced by the language of hyperbole that surrounds *moksa*. *Moksa* is just you. It is very simple, ordinary.

Douglas: As *Bhagavan* sees fit. If you see anything wrong with my line of thinking, please correct it. Thank you, and thank you for these talks. I am attending the weekend retreat in Golden, Colorado, from June 23 to 25. I look forward greatly to seeing you both there.

Sundari: It is a pleasure conversing with you, and I am looking forward to meeting you!

~ *Om* and *prem*, Sundari