

The Thinker Thinks She Has Got It

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Sundari: Hello, Lisa. Thank you for you for the lovely message, good to hear from you again. If you received the last newsletter you will know that Ramji and I endorsed a number of new teachers at ShiningWorld. Ramji has such a busy teaching schedule and is writing several books, so together with these new teachers I am now answering the e-satsangs for him. I have answered your email below and I have sent it off to Paul Hardman and Isaiah Sanders, who will also reply to you. This will give you a broader perspective and you can choose whom you would like to stay in touch with.

I have replied in point form below.

Lisa: *Namaskar*, Ramji. How are you and Sundariji? I am loving reading of your travels and your socks! I have been working on making the knowledge firm per our last conversation, which is almost a year ago now. I can't believe time has gone by so quickly.

I would be so grateful for some further advice, Ramji. You can see our last communication below. Since then I feel I have dropped off the wagon somewhat. Although the knowledge that I am experienceless actionless awareness is understood, something feels misaligned, maybe because I am not aware of experiencelessness, only experience, or should I say Lisa is not aware of experiencelessness.

Sundari: If you think of the term "experiencelessness," what is the obvious meaning? It means literally that: no experience. Awareness, the experienceless experiencer, does not feel like anything. This is a tough one to get for people who have been seeking an experience of the self for all their spiritual lives. This *vasana* is one of the toughest to render non-binding. There is no magic way to put this, it is just what the statement purports to say. Remember what Ramji told you: the desire for *moksa* is an experience; *moksa* itself is not an experience. The last object to give up before *moksa* is the desire for the experience of *moksa*. So how are you going to "experience" experiencelessness? It's not possible. Awareness, the self, you, is not an experiencer, it is that by whose presence all experience is possible but itself is always free of experience. It is not an object of experience, being the subject, or the cause; it is beyond perception and inference and therefore subtler than the effect. The effect can never understand the cause.

Hence consciousness evolved Vedanta. When the mind is exposed to Vedanta through self-inquiry, it is possible to experience the self in a pure mind; this is called the *akandakara vritti*. But the *vritti* disappears and what is left is just knowledge. When self-knowledge removes the ignorance of your true nature, both knowledge and ignorance disappear as well. Only the self remains and is known as your true nature. This is why many people go through a period of emptiness, even depression, at this stage. This is because the ego "sees" that there is nothing "out there," the apparent reality really is empty and nothing has any intrinsic meaning. This passes when the knowledge becomes firm and you know that you are the fullness that

knows the emptiness. Your statements above are the classic statements made by the ego trying to experience the self instead of the other way around. You have an intellectual understanding of the self that has not yet become firm. Self-knowledge is there, but it is like a photograph that has not yet been developed; the filter, Lisa's conditioning, is still in the way.

Lisa: I cannot put my finger on what is missing. It is as if all the puzzle pieces are there and in the correct positions but they have yet to join and merge. Whilst I understand that Lisa will always remain Lisa and that the self is the ever present witness, i.e. enlightenment is freedom from Lisa and not for Lisa, I do not know what to do with myself.

Sundari: You say here that you understand that Lisa will always be Lisa, the ever present witness and that *moksa* is freedom from her, not for her, then in the same sentence you say, "I don't know what to do with myself." Who is "myself," and who is really speaking here? Is it the *jiva* who knows the self or the *jiva* that knows it IS the self speaking here? It is pretty clear that this is the *jiva* who knows the self talking here, the reflected self who still thinks "she" has to "do" something "with myself." This is the doer. It is indirect knowledge that has not become direct. What is missing here is you, awareness, the one who knows that nothing is missing and it is not Lisa, the doer.

Lisa: No desire to work, I would love to learn Vedanta perfectly as you know it, and that is about my only want and even that is such a soft, gentle request that I do not feel motivated to do anything except dip into your book and read your site every so often. I guess I expected that once I knew the self that life would be smooth sailing and I would just be led to undertake actions per *Isvara's* desire, but "Lisa" is no more enlightened than a banana! So I can't tell if my journey is complete or if I have more to "do," although there is nothing more to do... Jeepers, I think I have lost the plot.

Sundari: You are right, Lisa is and always will be "no more enlightened than a banana." This is because Lisa is only apparently real, she is an object known to you, awareness, an object like any other and as such inert. She is value-neutral. Lisa has "lost the plot" and the plot is continued self-inquiry. You cannot "learn" Vedanta. It is not separate from you, Vedanta IS you. Vedanta is the pathless path that has been "beneath" Lisa's feet the whole time; it is what stands under Lisa, the substrate of everything. Self-inquiry is taking the journey that is not a journey to find what you already have: you, awareness.

The dullness, lack of motivation and lack of impetus to "do" anything is just *tamas*, and it has made the mind cloudy and dull. Negating the doer is not about renouncing action. It is about renouncing the results of your actions. It is *jnana karma sannyas*, renouncing the doer through knowledge, not the action. As a *jiva* you never stop being a doer/experiencer; self-knowledge simply reveals who the real doer is. (Hint: it is not Lisa and it is not awareness. So who is the doer?)

It is obvious that you were expecting enlightenment to deliver some magic experience and that "life would be just smooth sailing." Well, here is your problem. *Isvara* does not care if you are enlightened or not; the *dharma* field just keeps

churning out those *gunas*; *Isvara srsti*, or *maya*, continues as always, conditioning the subtle body. Ignorance is alive and well and very, very intelligent. The belief you express here, the unfulfilled expectation that things would be different “once I (who is speaking here?) knew the self” – see the language? It is typical of the experience-based spiritual paths. (The one who knows the self is the reflected self, or apparent being.)

All these so-called spiritual paths promise “transformation,” that enlightenment is some kind of special, rarefied experience or state which will make all your problems disappear because you will simply “transcend it all.” Well, this is just not the way it is. There is no “after” enlightenment, really, anyway; either you know that you are enlightenment, meaning you are the light, you are *moksa*, or there is no enlightenment, meaning no freedom from the *jiva*. When self-knowledge has removed *avidya* (personal ignorance) *maya* still remains and *Isvara* is not going to come and sort out all your problems for you, because you are the problem.

You know you are the self, this is clear. The problem is that the knowledge is indirect knowledge, so self-realisation has not taken hold. You are still vacillating between direct and indirect knowledge. And self-realisation is the easy part, self-actualisation is the tough part. Self-actualisation is the understanding of what it means to be self-realised in the apparent reality.

When self-actualisation takes place, Lisa will be truly free of Lisa, although Lisa remains Lisa, as you say, but nothing will be missing. And nothing changes either, nor will Lisa want things to be any way other than the way they are. The only thing that changes “after” enlightenment is the way Lisa has contact with objects. Instead of going for objects to make her happy, she will be happy and experience objects happily if they are there and just as happily if they are or not.

The message that comes through this email (no offence intended) is the whine of the ego that wishes things were better or different. This is a sure sign that there is still a way to go for *moksa* to take place.

Considerable “work” is still involved in making the knowledge firm. It does not work to impose *satya* on *mithya*, the apparent on the real. Just knowing you are the self will not make much difference to the suffering. To the self it matters not at all if the *jiva* is free or not, because the self is always free. At the same time, when *maya* operates the *dharma* field, the self apparently under the spell of ignorance (the *jiva*) seeks to be free of the *jiva*. *Maya* makes the impossible appear possible. And in the *dharma* field the *gunas* that are underpinning “Lisa’s” *vasanas* and create the conditioning that has been running her are still there.

So freedom means doing what it takes to manage the *gunas* (*triguna vibhava yoga*) and render the binding *vasanas* non-binding. This requires understanding what the *gunas* are; make sure you have a good understanding of this topic. One cannot understand *Isvara* if you don’t understand the *gunas*. There is so much that is written on this topic in many of the e-satsangs at the ShiningWorld website, James’ book *How to Attain Enlightenment* and numerous other sources.

Then make the appropriate choices in the light of self-knowledge to manage the *gunas*, i.e. follow *dharma*. This could require lifestyle changes: diet, exercise, work, home environment, relationships of all kinds, money, sex, recreation, etc., etc. Ramji has already explained all this to you. All these issues influence Lisa’s state of mind, and if *moksa* is her goal *sattva* is what you are aiming for. Start a devotional practice

of some kind if you don't have one, even if it is just lighting a candle every day and seeing the light as you. Give thanks, consecrate your every thought word and action to *Bhagavan*, knowing that the results are not up to Lisa and taking whatever results that do come as *prasad* (*karma yoga*).

This is *bhakti*, because if you are tired of being Lisa and understand that her true nature is *parama prema svarupa*, pure unconditional love, then you want Lisa to stop suffering, because you love her. When this knowledge is firm, what Lisa does or does not do is not that important, other than that she will follow *dharma*, which means she will do whatever it takes to achieve peace of mind. Study the *guna* teaching, track which *guna* is operating and see the very predictable thoughts, feelings and actions that are the result of each one.

To refresh: *rajas* is the mode of action, passion, desire, agitation, pain, projection. *Tamas* is denial, dullness, sloth, depression, apathy, complaining, dissatisfaction. *Sattva* is clarity, intelligence, peace, etc. These *gunas* are what make up the *dharma* field, or *Isvara*, they are what form Lisa's conditioning, her *svadharma*, and they are running the show. This is the "work"!

You need to keep up the inquiry, Lisa; that desire for *moksa* needs to be burning to go the distance or you will keep slipping back into duality, *samsara*, and suffering is inevitable.

Lisa: If I read what I have written, it seems that Lisa is still in charge, looking for experiencelessness now, but I no longer feel like a seeker. I think I am seeing both Lisa and the self as objects. So how do I move on from this stupidity? Please just zap me. I'm ready and waiting...

Sundari: Yes, Lisa is still in charge here. You may no longer be a seeker but you are not a finder yet either. You say you (who?) "think you are seeing both Lisa and the self as objects." Can you see that if you were speaking as awareness and knew it, you would not be using those words? Get back to self-inquiry and do the work, Lisa. Ramji has already said everything you need to hear in the previous exchanges with you. Maybe Lisa sat back and took it easy a little too quickly, probably because she is laid-back, pretty *sattvic*, and tends to be lazy - *tamas*. It's not the kiss of death, as our dear Ramji would say, just a wake-up call. 😊

Lisa: In untold appreciation and gratitude, words cannot express how lucky I am to have found you and Sundariji to guide me.

Much, much love and thanks, I hope you are enjoying Europe after India. Any chance of you visiting London?

~ Lisa

Sundari: Thank you, Lisa, lovely words and appreciation is much appreciated. Much love to you too. 😊

~ *Namaste*, Sundari

What Are the Facts?

Lisa: *Namaskar*, dear Sundariji and Ramji. Thank you so much for your response. Before I got your reply something shifted almost like last time. I realised that I was getting stuck in thinking, expecting that thinking having stopped would be the change that made the difference. This is nonsense, thinking continues per conditionings; what a relief this is in itself.

Sundari: Yes, indeed it is. ☺ Nonetheless, the quality of Lisa's thinking determines the quality of her experience in the apparent reality. Remember *moksa* is for the *jiva*, not the self, and it is freedom from the *jiva*. Freedom requires discriminating the self from the not-self on a 24/7 basis. Which requires watching that mind and what arises in it; the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

Lisa: Whilst I am not really suffering, some old "have-to-be-employed" *vasanas* are playing out. I know I am the self but, as you rightly say (as if it would be anything but rightly said ☺), self-actualisation is missing. Fullness, completeness, is what I am most of the time, emptiness just does not reflect my understanding to date. I loved the part about the *jiva* speaking knowing the self, or awareness, speaking as the *jiva*; this has resonated deeply and cleared up some more confusion. Funny how the same thing can be said thousands of times but everything occurring in perfection is only understood at the right time. Since I wrote, *sattva* seems to be more predominate, almost without any effort. I will continue *rajas*- and *tamas*-watching – the little blighters...

Sundari: Yes, self-actualisation, as I pointed out in our previous exchange, requires training the mind to think differently. It is like an errant child, and its conditioning (ignorance) is hardwired. Even science knows this with the studies done on the neurotransmitters and how the synapses in the brain form neural networks. This is again where understanding the nature of the *gunas* is vital, seeing how they arise in the mind, what predictable thoughts arise with them, what situations trigger the thoughts, how this conditions the subtle body.

Look at your statement "Fullness, completeness, is what I am most of the time..." Who is speaking here? The self/awareness IS fullness and completeness ALL of the time. Lisa is talking here again. I know you probably mean that Lisa knows she is awareness most of the time, but your language is sloppy and it is reflected in the way you write as well. Your writing skips punctuation and capital letters.* It shows a very *rajasic* mind that is in a hurry and could not be bothered with the details, *tamas*. *Rajas* and *tamas* always work together. We call them "the terrible twins."

(*Editor's note: After *e-satsangs* are posted, seekers' and teachers' writings are edited for clarity because language shapes the mind, and thinking determines the quality of experience, just as Sundari points out above. Lisa's punctuation and formatting have been corrected.)

When speaking as the self Lisa will see everything from the perspective of awareness, starting with the language she is using. Every time you find yourself saying "I," hit the "pause" button immediately and ask yourself who is speaking

here. It's a great *prakriya*.

Doing what it takes to be free of the *jiva* is working in the trenches, it requires dedication and repetition and it is less than fabulous but, oh, so worth it. I have attached something for you to read that I culled from one of Ramji's emails and edited. Read this often; it will be very helpful to objectify the *vasana* that is playing out for you at the moment. Most *vasanas* are linked to *samskaras*.

A *samskara* is a conglomeration of *vasanas* that all have their origin in (or are all connected to) a deeply ingrained pattern. The *vasanas* are like a bunch of electrical wires that link up to a main switch, which is the control centre, or *samskara*, and are sparked off when this centre is triggered. If you deconstruct the *vasana* you will find that there is never just one *vasana* at play, they are all linked to *samskaras*. So when a *vasana* or *samskara* is identified, stop everything and ask Lisa: "Okay, what are is going on here, what are the facts?" The *vasana* or *samskara* will always dissolve because they are never based on facts, just an interpretation of events. Then you have a choice of how to deal with whatever the situation is in the light of the knowledge. It is all about understanding and thus following *dharma*, which will be taking the action that produces peace of mind.

I am also going to forward you a brilliant email from a friend of ours, Bede Draper, who is a *jnani*. It is called *Subjectivity/Objectivity*.

Lisa: As always, even if infrequently, much, much love and gratitude to you both.

Sundari: Always a pleasure.