

# Vedanta and Reincarnation

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**Manolo:** So long as the mind is identified with the forms in this projection there will be reincarnation, corresponding to prior mental habits.

**Sundari:** Correct; as long as there are binding *vasanas* and the *jiva* is still identified with being a person ignorance prevails and there will be reincarnation into ignorance with each thought. But what is reincarnation and who or what is it that reincarnates?

**Manolo:** But the enlightened person is reincarnated too? Because although he is identified with the self, he still perceives through a body, still in the illusion.

**Sundari:** The enlightened person knows that they are not the person; they are awareness. Awareness is not perceived through a body because the body is an object known to it. The body is in awareness, not the other way around. Although the body appears conscious because the light of awareness is shining on it, it is not conscious. The subtle body belongs to the order of reality called the apparently real – meaning that which is always changing and not always present. Awareness is the knowing principle, what is called real, because it is always present, never changes and cannot be negated. Awareness is the knower of the person, Manolo.

Awareness does not need a subtle body to perceive itself because it is self-knowing. When you are standing in front of the mirror looking at your reflection in the mirror, do you need a mirror to know that you exist? No, you do not. Does the image in the mirror know you? No, it does not. And if you were the only person on the planet and had never known a mirror, you would still know that you exist even though you would not understand the nature of your existence. Awareness would still be there to witness the presence of ignorance and the absence of self-knowledge. Existence or awareness is a fact known to you; you can never say you do not exist because you would have to be there as awareness to say that you do not exist. Vedanta is a means of knowledge to remove ignorance so that the true nature of your existence can be revealed to you.

When *maya* is operating, awareness apparently appears as a *jiva* (subtle body or person) and because it is under the spell of ignorance, the *jiva* identifies with the subtle body, believing that awareness is something to gain. The *jiva* is conditioned by the *gunas*, or *Isvara*. The *gunas* are the three forces in creation, called *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*, or the “ropes”; they are called this because they bind you to objects. The *gunas* are what govern the creation of the *vasanas*, which are given to the *jiva* by *Isvara*. *Isvara* is the macrocosmic mind, or awareness plus *maya*. Your conditioning is called *avidya*, which is Manolo’s personal ignorance.

**Manolo:** If it does not reincarnate, what happens? It creates another universe or something like that? Remember that there is not free will to do something like that.

**Sundari:** Awareness is actionless and does not create, therefore it does not reincarnate either. The creation of the universe comes about when *maya* is operating. The whole idea of reincarnation and of free will depends on who you think you are. If you are identified with being the person called Manolo, then the ego will be attached to the idea of reincarnation. The person called Manolo is just a name for the self under the spell of ignorance. When ignorance of his true nature is fully removed, he knows that Manolo only has an apparent existence and he will no longer be attached to him. The tenacious belief in the reincarnation of the person is just the ego trying to hold onto the illusion of continuity. It cannot be done. Manolo will never reincarnate because he is not real. Even if he does reincarnate, Manolo will not be Manolo anymore and will have no memory of ever having been Manolo. So what difference does it make? Whether reincarnation happens or not has no bearing on Manolo's present life. The belief is nothing more than a false sense of security for the ego.

The subtle body is called "the traveller." It is the subtle body, or the binding *vasanas*, that may or may not reincarnate (find another vehicle in which to express themselves) through another body. The next person or subtle body will be a completely different person with a different set of life conditions or *karma*. The spiritual arena has built up a very elaborate fantasy around the belief in reincarnation because the ego is afraid of death. As your true nature is awareness, you never die because you were never born. The body-mind-ego will die.

Each apparent incarnation is just a playing out of the *gunas* which creates a story with a name and an address. It is not real, no more than a movie playing out on the movie screen is real. Awareness is the screen, not the movie. Although the personal story of Manolo will never be repeated, as there is really only one self or awareness, there is really only one mind or subtle body seemingly appearing as the many. If you understand what non-duality and duality is, you will not be concerned with reincarnation.

Free will depends on who you think you are as well. Manolo, the person has relative free will. This means that you can choose to do this instead of that: eat an apple instead of a pear, stay home or go out, etc. As the *dharma* field is a lawful universe which runs on certain principles that apply to everyone; if you take appropriate action you will have a good chance of achieving a certain result. The results of action depend on the nature of the field, meaning the *gunas*, or *Isvara*, and on the nature of the action taken. The results of action do not necessarily depend on the state of mind of the doer because one can achieve a negative result with positive actions or vice versa. If a certain amount of free will was not possible, success for the person would not be possible; even though all actions taken by the doer, or person, are limited and cannot achieve a limitless result because the person is limited. Only self-inquiry, which is also an action, produces a limitless result because the result of self-inquiry is self-knowledge, which is limitless. Ignorance can be removed by self-knowledge because ignorance is not real; if it was real, there would be no way to remove it.

Once ignorance has been removed and the knowledge that your true identity as awareness is firm, then you understand that the person is no more than a conglomeration of tendencies – likes and dislikes, or *vasanas* – that create a certain personality and a life story. But both *Isvara* and the *jiva*, or apparent person, are objects known to you, awareness. Your conditioning belongs to *Isvara* therefore as awareness you do not claim it. Nor do you set out to perfect the apparent person. What for if the person is not real? All you need to be free is to understand Manolo's conditioning in the light of self-knowledge (NOT in the light of what he believes to be

true about his apparent identity) so that you can free of him. Liberation is freedom *from* the apparent person, not *for* them. This is because the apparent person will always be limited as they will never leave the apparent reality, meaning that the *jiva* is always subject to *Isvara* even though as awareness they are free of *Isvara* and the *jiva*. The apparent person, or *jiva*, seems to have a beginning and an end. But you are not the apparent person. You are whole and complete, non-dual, actionless, ever-present, unchanging, unlimited awareness.

The most important teaching for the seeker of liberation is *karma yoga*; this is the only way to negate the notion of doership. *Karma yoga* is an attitude one takes towards action, which states that although you have a right to act, you do not have control over the results. The right attitude to action is gratitude: consecrating every thought, word and action on a moment-to-moment basis to *Isvara*, knowing that the results are not up to you and taking the results that do come as *prasad*, a gift.

The *dharma* field is like a computer game: although you can take action to win the game, all the actions that are possible to take are already programmed into the game. Freedom is the knowledge that the game and the player of the game are both objects known to you, so you no longer mind what the results are. This means your binding *vasanas* have been rendered non-binding and the notion of doership has been negated. You will then respond appropriately to every situation without thinking about it, so free will is of no real concern to you because you will automatically do what brings peace of mind. This is what surrendering to *Isvara* means: you trust that as *Isvara* has total knowledge of what is best for the whole and as the *jiva* (enlightened or not) you do not; whatever comes your way is for the best and you are thankful for it.

**Manolo:** And therefore should continue this process, the evolution, to its end, the end of the universe, the end of the projection.

**Sundari:** The self does not evolve because it is whole and complete and it does not have a beginning or an end. The Total Mind, or *Isvara*, does not evolve either because it is not affected by *maya*, or ignorance, the *gunas*. In other words, awareness becomes the apparent reality without ever changing its original identity. *Isvara* is really pure awareness plus *maya*. *Isvara* is not the name for a form, it is the name for all forms because *Isvara* is not a person. *Isvara* is the impersonal Total Mind and is known only by inference, which is a valid means of knowledge. *Maya* is a power that exists in awareness or it could not be unlimited, therefore *maya* is beginningless but it is not endless for the *jiva* because it can be permanently removed by self-knowledge. *Maya* is what makes the unchanging appear to be changing therefore it appears as if things in the apparent reality evolve. This is why the *jiva* seems to evolve because it exists in the apparent reality, which is always changing. The theory of evolution according to science does not contradict Vedanta as from the standpoint of the apparent person everything does seem to be changing. From the standpoint of awareness, nothing ever changes because nothing ever happened.

When ignorance is removed it does not mean that the person has been perfected or has evolved. The *jiva* cannot become more conscious; Manolo, or the mind, can only become less ignorant by the removal of ignorance through self-knowledge. Self-knowledge means that the person's personal projection or creation (meaning the world it has previously interpreted through its *vasanas*) comes to an end because it

has negated the doer, meaning duality. This does not mean that duality disappears or that the *jiva* and its world cease to exist. It just means that duality is known for what it is: a superimposition onto non-duality.

You would not try to drink the water in a mirage when you know it is a mirage, although you can still see the mirage. Duality or ignorance only causes suffering when you do not know what it is and therefore identify with it, taking ignorance to be knowledge.

Ask yourself at all times: from which perspective am I looking at this – from the *jiva* identified with Manolo (ego) or from the perspective of awareness?

The *dharma* field, *Isvara*, or the creation, continues as before enlightenment, meaning before your personal ignorance is removed. *Moksa* means the discrimination between the real and the apparently real, it does not mean that the laws that govern the apparent reality change or that the *jiva* necessarily changes. *Moksa* means you know that you are whole and complete and that the joy is not in the object but in you so you do not chase objects to complete you. You may have to make some lifestyle changes but you would only do so because you follow *dharma* and value peace of mind, not because you find fault with the apparent person. You would know that as your true nature is awareness the *jiva* is not a problem for you because you are not identified with him or her. You therefore know that as an object is anything other than you, awareness, the idea of reincarnation is an object known to you.

**Manolo:** So yes, there is a will to follow and this is necessary to avoid relapse, to perceive suffering in the next perception through another body.

**Sundari:** As stated above, when you know that your true nature is awareness, you automatically do the right thing because you want to maintain *sattva*, peace of mind. This is called *dharma*, appropriate response. If the individual responds properly to what *Isvara* wants, it will be in harmony with *Isvara*, the creation, meaning its environment. But if the *jiva* is living in its own world and gets a request from *Isvara* but responds according to its fears and desires, likes and dislikes (*vasanas* or conditioning), it is quite possible that it will run afoul of *Isvara*, meaning its circumstances, and therefore suffer.

If you mean by “the next perception” that reincarnation is identification with the next thought that appears in the mind, then you are correct. In order to avoid reincarnating into ignorance (re-identifying with the person) one has to keep the mind focused on the self and follow *dharma*, enlightened or not.

You are incorrect if by “the next perception” you mean that the person reincarnates.

**Manolo:** There is a right way, there is order. When one does something wrong, he is condemning himself. There is order and justice. I like that.

**Sundari:** There is no wrong or right way, really. Everything the person does is governed by the *gunas*; no one is doing anything. If you are identified with the person then everything you do is determined by your likes and dislikes. As already stated, in order to be free of the person, you need a full understanding of their

conditioning in the light of self-knowledge. This means you need to know what you value, which is what creates your likes and dislikes. If you do not follow *dharma* you will suffer. If you do not know what duality is, you will suffer. The result of actions taken on a moment-to-moment basis (*agami karma*) is either *papa* (bad) or *punya* (good). *Karma* collected over many incarnations of the *vasanas* is called *sancita karma*. *Prarabdha karma* is *sancita karma* that is fructifying in your life right now and it covers everything – the kind of body you have, state of health or illness, the kind of parents you are born to, your likes and dislikes, etc. *Prarabdha karma* is always playing out as long as the body lives. When it ends, the body dies. If *moksa* has been achieved, your particular *vasana* load will not reincarnate. You are free of the wheel of *karma*. But the whole point of *moksa* is to be free of *karma* while the *jiva* is alive. There is no *karma* for the *jivanmukta*, the self no longer under the spell of ignorance. This is because the doer has been negated and the binding *vasanas* rendered non-binding.

*Moksa* will not take place without a comprehensive understanding of what the *jiva*, or the person, is and what controls them as well as who or what *Isvara* is. You need to understand what makes *Isvara* and *jiva* different and what makes them the same, which is their common identity as awareness. I have attached a teaching for you to read on this topic. It is the most important teaching in Vedanta and where most people get stuck in their self-inquiry.

**Manolo:** But many Advaita teachers say there is no reincarnation because there is not something individual to reincarnate, but you also do not believe that there is something individual to reincarnate; me too, it's always the self, BUT you say it is the limited perception of the self which re-experiences through another body. Is that correct?

**Sundari:** It is not the limited perception of the self which reincarnates. It is the *vasanas* or the self under the spell of ignorance that apparently incarnates when *maya* is operating. I have covered this in my explanations above.

**Manolo:** They also say there is no good or evil but then, yes, there is because nobody will want to do evil if in the next life so as not to receive even more suffering.

**Sundari:** There is no real good and evil per se, there is only knowledge or ignorance. If you know that your true nature is awareness and this is a non-dual reality, then you will treat every aspect of it with love and respect because it is all you and you will value non-injury above all because you want to experience peace of mind. If you do not know that your true nature is awareness, then you will be under the whip of the *gunas*, or ignorance: *rajas* and *tamas*. You will be totally identified with all your thoughts and feelings, your body, mind and ego, taking them to be real. *Rajas* is the projecting energy, the energy of desire and of doership. *Tamas* is the concealing energy, the energy of denial, dullness and depression. *Sattva* is the true nature of the mind: love, clarity, peace; it is the energy of revelation. All so-called good and evil is caused but an excess of *rajas* and *tamas* and a lack of *sattva*. Evil is simply the non-apprehension of your true nature as awareness.

**Manolo:** If there is no such process as reincarnation, life would be meaningless. But

it's good to know that others think that does really happen.

**Sundari:** This is true for the ego who is identified with the body-mind and who fears death because it thinks that life ends with the death of the body-mind. This statement of yours is total duality. Vedanta does not believe in anything. It is the science of consciousness, based on pure logic and has no beliefs. Beliefs can be contradicted or changed. Vedanta or self-knowledge is that which cannot be negated, unlike any other knowledge. It never changes because it is not based on anyone's opinions or beliefs. Vedanta is an independent means of knowledge for awareness.

The only true meaning of life is to discover your true nature as awareness, which means you are free of the body and mind (Manolo) because they are objects known to you. When you are free you know that you can never die because you are that which gives rise to the apparent reality (the body-mind and the world, or life) although you as awareness are always free of the apparent reality. Like the gold is free of the ring, the clay is free of the pot, the water is free of the ocean and the wave. Nothing exists without you, so how can there be any meaning to anything without you? Your discrimination needs some work.

If you have not read *How to Attain Enlightenment* by James, I strongly advise you do so. If you cannot translate my writing, I am happy to help you. If you have difficulty with this reply of mine, send it to Eleonara and ask her to translate it for you. I am not so sure that that Google Translate will do a good job of translating Vedanta as the words we use are very specific and precise.

**Manolo:** As data, I mention to you that I have read other books on Advaita, I know the basics, I'm not a novice searcher. I just do not understand why the silence on the subject of reincarnation.

**Sundari:** In order to achieve *moksa* (liberation from bondage to objects) you need to be very dedicated and committed to self-inquiry as your spiritual practice. Read the *e-satsangs* at ShiningWorld website and watch as many of the videos of James teaching as possible. We also recommend Swami Dayananda's book *The Value of Values*.

The subject of reincarnation is not such a big topic in Vedanta because self-inquiry is about negating the notion that you are the body-mind, or the doer. Once you understand that you are not and why, it is not terribly important to know whether the person reincarnates or not because you know that you, awareness, are eternal. The person is just an idea that appears in you, awareness. This does not mean that the person called Manolo does not exist, it just means that he is not real, meaning not always present and always changing. Why bother with who he will be in the so called next life when you are that which knows Manolo – the eternal, unchanged and unchanging consciousness out of which everything arises and has its being? For awareness there is no such thing as the next life. Awareness has no past and no future; time is just a construct, it is not real. Time is created by your fears and desires, and if you think you are bound by time you do not know who you are. You are looking at the changeless through a changing instrument, Manolo. This is ignorance.

**Manolo:** Thanks!!!!

**Sundari:** You are welcome; please feel free to write any time.