

# Vedanta Is the Spear That Never Misses the Mark

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**Mathew:** Sundari, thank you for your detailed and helpful response. I have been digesting it over the last couple of days, letting it sink in. This reminds me of the classic Chinese martial arts movie scene where the old master throws a strike with his palm and the opponent takes a few steps and then falls. Your strike has penetrated. 😊

**Sundari:** Yes, indeed Vedanta is the spear that cannot miss the mark; when the mind is ready for it, it will penetrate. Ignorance is obsessively persistent but it is no match for self-knowledge. It just crumbles in the light of who you are.

**Mathew:** I had to pull out some of your comments and sort through and understand better the depth of what you said. I tried to respond to the parts separately but sometimes my response is to more than one part of your letter.

**Sundari** (from previous email): “What is ‘happening’ for Mathew is the shakiness he experiences, though measured by the duration and intensity of reaction to certain types of situations that recur in his life, etc....” This is how this sentence would read if you were talking as the self. Mathew would be objectified and your secondary identity. This is the doer talking, vacillating between direct and indirect knowledge. As the knowledge firms up, all that one can “do” is to take a stand in awareness, as awareness.

**Mathew:** I still have trouble responding to this. Your comment about “Mathew” being objectified and my secondary identity. Yes. I see now. Perfect. Thank you.

**Sundari:** Good. Mathew is an object known to you, awareness, and is just a name that refers to the self under the spell of ignorance.

**Sundari** (from previous email): Vedanta has at least 12 *prakriyas*, or teachings, that are designed to negate the ego and help in making the knowledge firm. Any of them are good and all of them work; applying the opposite thought (*pratipaksha bhavana*) is a very good one and works very well in taking a stand in awareness. Just declare yourself to be awareness and press “pause” every time the opposite thought comes up. Another one that really helps is to hit the “pause” button every time you hear Mathew say “I” and ask: “Who is speaking here? Is it the *jiva* identified with the *jiva*, the *jiva* who knows the self or the *jiva* that knows it IS the self?” I find this one particularly powerful.

**Mathew:** “...press ‘pause’...” – It’s like “I” (my mind) can say to itself, “What just happened here?” Not to analyze it, just to flash a strobe to stop the motion and see who is claiming to be the enjoyer/sufferer. “Who is speaking here?” – very, very

helpful to hear this, Sundari.

**Sundari:** Yes, the mind is inert, it shines only because the light of awareness, you, shine on it. It is not capable of self-inquiry or of thinking. The self under the spell of ignorance, seeking freedom from the idea that it is bound to the objects, shines the light of self-knowledge on the mind and “sees” itself.

**Sundari** (from previous email): If you (who?) can name the feeling, then you can identify the *guna* that gave rise to it. As you probably know, all thoughts and feelings belong to the *gunas*, and it is very helpful to identify the *guna* operating and then disidentify with it as awareness. When you understand the *gunas* and how they function, you go straight for the *guna*. The *gunas* are always operating for the *jiva* (except in deep sleep and *nirvikalpa samadhi*) and give rise to everything in the *dharma* field.

**Mathew:** The *gunas* are more subtle than the photo of the emotion or the emotion itself. Yes, I would like to understand the *Isvara-jiva-jagat aikyam* better. I will get the 2013 *Panchadasa*, as you suggest. That won't be able to happen immediately though; any additional discussion with you on that would be very much appreciated.

**Sundari:** Indeed the *guna* teaching, although it is so practical from the perspective of the *jiva* in that it very powerfully and simply describes the forces that shape “Mathew's” environment and “Mathew's” conditioning, it is also the most subtle knowledge when looked at from the perspective of awareness. This is why it is so easy to get stuck here. Although discrimination requires the negation of all objects, one cannot deny the apparent existence of the *dharma* field. To be self-actualised as well as self-realised means that all the effects of ignorance have to be removed. You (the self no longer under the spell of ignorance) need to understand what it means to be self-realised in the apparent reality. I have said this in a previous email and it cannot be overstated. This is why it is imperative to be sure that you understand the *Isvara-jiva-jagat aikyam*. Once you have exposed the mind to *Panchadasa*, let's see what questions come up. In the meantime, I have attached a brief overview that I wrote for another inquirer for you to read. It still needs to be fleshed out as there are many more subtle points to it. We are planning a whole book on the topic. I have also attached a brilliant article on *vasanas* and *samskaras* written by Ramji.

**Sundari** (from previous email): Who is the I that is talking here? – the one who is looking at the “overall sense of me” – what is the “overall sense of me” and who is the me? The self does not feel like anything, it is the non-experiencing witness and is self-knowing. This sounds very much like the doer, using “effort” to achieve a desired result.

**Mathew:** The “overall sense of me” is my informal way of saying the subtle body, the embodied witness. This is more subtle than the gross emotion example of the Polaroid photo. It, the “sense of me,” becomes visible or separate and I can then see it as distinct and separate and “over there.” I am not trying to “experience the self” in this way; in fact it is just the opposite, I am sort of “stopping” and my dance partner/push-hands partner is continuing on and becoming separate and visible,

except there isn't really motion or stopping, it's more like the fog lifts or my eyes focus and I just see. I am "practicing" this more, so there is an element of doing to it. The practice is to notice the sense of me and then notice where I am when I see that "me" over there. My language is definitely imperfect here. In my letter, the separation or distinction between thoughts about objects and the "I-thought" came from my understanding of Ramana's *Upadesa Saram*, verses 17 and 18. I understand the "I-thought" in his context to be the subtle body, or the *ahamkara* specifically.

**Sundari:** This paragraph was quite difficult to decipher but I understand what you are saying now. You, as awareness, are objectifying Mathew, your "push-hand partner," as you refer to him. This is the process of discrimination but your language is complicated. That is why Vedanta (and specifically the tradition James represents) is so insistent on the correct terminology. Yes, Ramana was referring to the apparent being, the reflected self. The problem with Ramana is well-explained by James: he was not a teacher and did not have a teaching. He made great statements which have been misrepresented and misunderstood as a result of this.

**Mathew:** Along the same lines, Ram's "deconstruction" of Nisargadatta's use of the word "consciousness" is helpful. A Nisargadatta image I like is his description of "I am" as a telescope, an instrument. That is a clear metaphor for (or even definition of) *antakarana*.

**Sundari:** Yes, that is a helpful metaphor, but only in the sense that the self "sees" through it.

**Mathew:** I like what you said, Sundari, that "the self does not feel like anything." The I who sees the "sense of me" here also doesn't feel like anything. I am getting more and more familiar with noticing from that place of absolute, spacious, immobile silence. Those words are more ponderous than what I mean to convey. Ram's phrase "ordinary, unconcerned awareness" matches it better. Also, it's not a "noticing" as verb or action, it's just seeing; there is not a "doing" or anything even close to effort. It's more like "revealing happens" or better, I finally see what's in front of me.

**Sundari:** Beautifully put! You, awareness, are actionless; there is no volition involved in awareness's awareness! That is why Krishna says to Arjuna that he who "sees action in actionlessness and actionlessness in action" is a wise man.

**Sundari** (from previous email): *Moksa* is nothing other than the discrimination between the self and the not-self, knowledge and experience, *satya* and *mithya*, or the real and the apparent, which are different ways of saying the same thing.

**Mathew:** This was very helpful too. I thought I had a clear grasp of the difference between knowledge and experience, at least when it comes to people trying to practice *chakra/kundalini/whatever yoga* and getting some kind of enlightenment mind-blowing experience. But now I see that I was confusing or not distinguishing

between my own experience (the experiencing witness) and knowledge, the witness that is not affected by what is seen. Everything I experience is known, and is known by "me," who is not changed by the experience. If I feel I am changed or affected by or enjoying or rejecting the experience, then whoever is experiencing is not really "me." Again, thank you for that.

**Sundari:** Wonderful. This is the real meaning of unlimited: it simply means that as the self you do not modify to anything and are not modified by anything. As you say, the non-experiencing witness is free of everything; once self-knowledge has removed the ignorance of your true nature there is just you, the self. The word "awareness" implies to "be aware" but this is not correct in referring to the self. As I said in my previous paragraph, there is no action involved; awareness is *akarta*, it sees or witnesses without effort.

**Mathew:** I look forward to hearing from Isaiah and Paul; I am extremely grateful for what you and Ram and everybody are doing. As an aside, some Web search or another led me to a Taoist discussion forum in which a person there was praising Ram very highly. I almost joined in just to add my two cents but there was no need. I actually got out of there soon after because there was no point in poking around further. But my point is that "dearest Ramji" has fans everywhere.

**Sundari:** We are here to serve your desire for self-knowledge to the best of our ability. I shared your news about the Taoist group with Ramji, and with a big smile he said to say thank you for passing it on. 😊 He sends his very best to you and is so happy to hear about your progress.

~ *Namaste*, Sundari