

Integrating the Knowledge

This elegant, eloquent document, contributed by a member of the ShiningWorld community, is a fine testament to the power of Vedanta to completely transform lives...Ramji

Dear Ramji and Sundari,

Several months ago, in the middle of a dream, your face appeared, with a gold border around it (which I'd expect no less from the great Ramji!), and along with it came the message that I had to write a small book about Vedanta. I get inspiration for projects all the time, but rarely in such a direct way. I've been working on some projects for a generalised audience, *antahkarana shuddhi* type stuff, meditation, understanding the functioning of mind, etc, but I definitely feel at some point I am going to find a way to share Vedanta in my own words and writings.

I found some old journals when I was clearing out stuff the other day. They date back 10-15 years. It was astonishing to me how much has changed inwardly. I was suffering so much back then. Really lost, and in search of the truth - which I kind of always inherently knew -- but my

mind was just totally eaten up by *samsara*. It was never desires and craving that really cut me up, but a monstrous assortment of self limiting beliefs, fears and at times crippling anxiety and depression. I'd had it from quite an early age, too.

But it's gone now. It's amazing. The most amazing thing ever...!

I'm so SO grateful and bewildered. And so unspeakably glad that I found you and Vedanta.

Growing up I was exposed to some new age teachings which helped give a little spiritual nourishment I was seeking, but at the same time the dualism kind of fucked up my mind even more. It was all a journey though, through some dark, swampy, stinky places, into the open spaces where the sun is always (and has always been) shining.

I've realised that I can never be complacent though. As Swamiji said, vigilance is the price of freedom. Ignorance is, to misquote Joseph Campbell, the villain with a thousand faces. 😊.

I find these days I'm just keeping my head down, living simply, writing all day, enjoying nature (my *bhakti*) and carefully curating what my mind is exposed to in terms of media, enrichments--and other people! The more I'm content with myself the more other people seem to want a piece of me, but I need to watch where my energy is going, and saying no to *Isvara* is getting easier. I think I had fallen to the trap of 'everything is *Isvara*, so it's all good'. On a relative level, however, that is an unwise presumption. I tend to love everyone I meet, which is a good thing, but I need to keep discriminating. The emails you sent earlier in the year were a big help in making me understand it's OK to prioritise *sattva*. I don't think I'm resisting my experience now, but I am curating it.

Nididhyasana is a fascinating journey....

It turns out the Self Knowledge bit is fairly simple. Integrating it is the tricky part. I've learned that I can't afford to 'coast' - the process of integration requires commitment, discipline and being 'switched on'.

In some ways I've found that Vedanta is a bit like uninstalling the mind's old operating system (OS)

and reinstalling a new one. Although there's nothing to 'add' to oneself in any way, on the level of the mind, there's a significant amount of rewiring to be done. Once the major overhaul is done, and the mind is oriented towards seeing oneself as awareness and not a *jiva*, there's still a lot of refining and work goes on. The new OS may not immediately be stable. There are bugs and glitches and perhaps bleed-through from the old system to be overcome.

I've often heard you refer to *maya* as beautiful intelligent ignorance. I totally get that now. I can see the beauty, the ignorance - and also the intelligence. I've always felt like there's an in-built trigger whereby the Self WANTS to wake up within the dream and realise its own nature. That's why Vedanta is here! But there also seems to be a counterforce, a part of the psyche that doesn't entirely want to pierce the veil of ignorance. Ignorance is not only hardwired-- it almost seems to have anti-bodies.

From my limited understanding of physics, physicists say that the universe (*mithya*) is driven by chaos and entropy. Systems naturally disintegrate and collapse after a time. Yet life itself (*satya*) is an ordered 'system', of balance

and wholeness. I can see this entropy in the *jiva* in both a microcosmic and macrocosmic level. But there's a hidden beauty in the breakdown, because it creates the space for new life, new creativity, new knowledge. Maybe this entropic breakdown is necessary for the realisation and actualisation of the Self. Part of the design...?

These dual forces seem so evident. There seems to be the desire for freedom and also the almost intelligently obstructive forces that conspire to keep the *jiva* program in place. I totally understand why the Bhagavad Gita is set in the middle of a battle. Ignorance really doesn't want to die. It can be like a mythical creature, where you chop its head off and it grows another. Maybe it's just because the mind is naturally quite lazy and always tends to revert back to the old default.

That said, I've found the process of inquiry becomes easier to the extent it's almost automatic. Self knowledge seems to dissolve vast chunks of the iceberg of ignorance, but there are other bits that require a sturdy chisel and some manual chipping away.

I think I've learned to just enjoy the whole process. Any little pockets of ignorance or attachment that arise are actually a blessing. They are opportunities to solidify self knowledge in the mind. I had this belief that the *jiva* should somehow be perfected, but nothing in *mithya* will ever be perfect. To think otherwise creates a subtle tension and resistance. *Mithya* will never be perfect. It simply can't be. The perfection is seeing its perfect imperfection.

I've found that by managing the mind, watching the *gunas* and reducing *pratibhasika* to *vyavaharika*, life becomes so simple and beautiful. I live in a constant state of wonder. I'm usually happy for no particular reason. The dance of creation is just the most incredible thing-- Isvara in ecstatic motion. The 'ordinariness' of the sacred is just the funniest thing.

The show goes on and on - the *jiva* program keeps ticking away with all its little quirks, and the world keeps turning. Through all the perceived beauty and ugliness and strangeness (Donald Trump as president - couldn't make that up!), *Isvara* just keeps dreaming new stuff. It's a beautiful show - bizarre and wondrous.

Anyway, I just felt inspired to share especially after reading those old journals and realising what a stark contrast there was in my experience of life.

I feel I owe so much of it to your teaching -- and all the gifts you and Sundari are sharing with this world. I'm pretty sure I'd never have sussed this out without your remarkable ability to teach this knowledge. Thank you so much for all that you've done and continue to do!!

Love you both so much :)

Roryji !!! I loved your letter. I'm a bit slow replying because of my workload and because I've been reading some Swami P transcripts...Upanishad stuff...looking for one for you to work on. In any case it seems you really have it sussed; welcome to the jnani's club . This letter itself is your certificate. You have fulfilled all the requirements, to wit: (1) to handle *rajas/tamas* say 'no' to Isvara, (2) to eliminate the crippling fear of self-limiting beliefs stick to self inquiry, (3) Never think you're done. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, or as my mother used to say frequently, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop, (4) see ignorance as an

opportunity (definitely) and (5) know where the knowledge came from.

Finally, be sure to pat yourself on the back for sticking it out to its glorious end! One's spiritual life really only begins with self knowledge. It's such an important moment, most people get distracted, ring the bell to call the faithful to church and proclaim the great accomplishment, not realizing that enlightenment is just a baby step. *Nididyasana* doesn't appeal. About twenty years ago I met a guy, in a cafe in Tiru, a ex-Rajneesh Neo guy, who claimed he was 'cooked.'

He was a useless goodlooking fellow with a bit of money in his pocket and a bit of small self swagger. He was trying to enlighten me. I listened to him for a while just to make him happy and once he grew tired of his monologue I said, "That's all very wonderful, but I'm the fire that cooked you." He didn't know what I meant but he realized it was faint praise and got up and left. He never spoke to me again even though our paths crossed regularly. I haven't seen him for at least ten years and yesterday there he was, definitely the worse for wear, overcooked by the unremitting fire of samsara, the meat falling off the bones, a sad lonely scruffy old man shuffling along the street in front of

Ramanashram, the light gone from his eyes, the spring having since deserted his step and his pocket book obviously threadbare. But obviously, since he was in Tiru and not sitting on skid row somewhere, some faint memory of what he wanted still troubled him. As you know, you need a teaching, a teacher and the discrimination to know the difference between satya and mithya. I tip my hat to you.

Finally, yes, the 'entropic breakdown' keeps one seeking. The self is always present and a few rays of its glory manage to sneak into the mind every day and keep one seeking because we know we're dying as we live. Science thinks it's all downhill since the big bang and they're right on the material level as far as they know, but what they don't know is that *Isvara* is recreating every dying thing as we speak and that we live on eternally to tell the tale of our apparent involvement in this beautiful intelligent ignorant duality.

Much love,

Ramji