

Vasanas after Enlightenment?

Hi James,

It's been a little time since I wrote... On the one hand, you seemed quite busy (I didn't want to impose) and on the other, I have been having to deal with some issues.

James: It's easing off. I am pretty well caught up and on top of things now. I saw you were on line the other day and tried to chat with you but it did not work. I was wondering what was going on.

Jimmy: Like this will be news to you... old traces that just won't leave me alone. (Old vasanas keep popping their heads up even if there is no real desire for them. Something like a gnarling dog that has no bite to his bark). Whether I want to diddle around the matter or not, the fact remains that there is a certain amount of integration that is happening. So, since this is one of the rare topics we didn't discuss (though you did allude to a period of integration in your own case when you left Chinmaya) I was wondering how much importance to give the matter and how to you view the question.

James: Self realization has an effect on the body mind to be sure. It brings about gradual changes.

Jimmy: As it happens, I've just read a newly included text on shiningworld.com (author unmentioned... who is it anyhow if he is known and it isn't too private ?)

James: He is a private person who does not want his name known.

Jimmy: ...concerning the person who saw his ego trying to co-opt authorship on the writing of a book on enlightenment. In some regards it reminded me of myself when you suggested I write a text on sham gurus. I noticed I would be just puffing up my own torso by showing off my long gathered "knowledge" on how fake and/or ineffective most so-called spiritual paths are...and because of this obvious ego motive, I refrained from writing the article.

James: Oh, that never occurred to me. I was thinking of it as a service to seekers.

Jimmy: Notwithstanding this insignificant little event, it's been quite apparent that my ego never left: neither before, during or after our 2 week encounter. In fact, I think I recall you mentioning in your last book that enlightenment can occur with or without the loss of the ego. (Correct me if I'm wrong).

James: That is true. Enlightenment is not ego death. How does the ego stand in the way of the self? It is the death of ignorance which in the long run will affect the ego's behavior in the world, but it takes time for the knowledge to filter out...integrate is your word...into the life.

Jimmy: Getting back to the unknown author, he skillfully illustrates all the elaborate ways the ego can eventually get its way. Maybe I'm wrong to compare Jimmy's ego with someone else's but, if I do, I surely fail the test (if I entertain the possibility of having lost the trickster that keeps hiding in the shadows).

James: There really isn't a Jimmy ego as opposed to a Ram's ego. Ego is just a universal principle that functions in similar ways in everyone.

Jimmy: The one thing that remains is that I still know I'm awareness, and that is what is conscious of all of Jimmy's apparent ego trips and shortcomings. The best I could say is that I'm aware of the one who sometimes feels miserable because of all the warts. Or, the one who feels miserable is happening within Me. Then again, the best way I could sum things up so far is ... that I'm neither enlightened nor non enlightened.

James: Yes, indeed. It's enlightened to say that you are neither enlightened or unenlightened since these terms only apply to an ego. When you have self knowledge you are simply aware of what you may not have been aware of before.

Jimmy: In any case, I'm bringing up these questions in the (above) context of integration, coupled with a certain ambiguity that has always characterized the "enlightened" world, so to speak. This seems to be the problem. My teacher - The Guy who created Avatars to begin with - wrote the book of books on the question of enlightenment; he skillfully describes throughout the book how the constant and natural lifestyle of both the aspirant and the *jnani* is to cultivate a *sattvic* mind. Yet, simultaneously, he as well as other teachers take a kind of subtle detour when people confront them about questions concerning desires, *vasanas*, etc. I'll give you an example: In one of his satsangs (shiningworld.com: Stages of enlightenment, level confusion) while responding to the question of recurrent *vasanas*, he writes "The stuff is always there. It is just a matter of you wanting it to be different stuff. The desire to have it different is the problem (...) But you are already stuff free. It is you but you are not it. So pack it in on getting rid of your stuff." In another recent satsang (new section) concerning celibacy, sex and relationships the Great Ramji writes "To the self it is all the same, as long as *dharma* is not violated and, oddly enough, **even if it is**" (very interesting satsang by the way... again, you take the words out of my mouth, even if the last part in bold is what I'm unclear about).

James: That the self is OK with *adharma* just means that it is always beyond *dharma* and *adharma*. The problem with that statement...even though it was made by none other than the wonder that is me...is that it makes the self seem like a doer. But the self is just awareness. It is not 'OK' with anything because there is nothing other than it to be 'OK' with. It sees *dharma* and *adharma* and knows that both are only concepts that apply in Maya. In Maya there is no hard and fast line between *dharma* and *adharma*. Like love and hate, day and night, heat and cold they are really just different ways of looking at the same thing.

James: In the same vein, in a youtube satsang with Dayananda, an aspirant has a question about the incessant drive of desire, even after all the latter understands concerning awareness.

The Swami answers something to the effect that when one is free, one is also free to have desires (I'm paraphrasing).

James: Sure. Why not? In the Gita Krishna says, "I am the desire that is not opposed to dharma." Is it adharmic to have a drink? I had two gin and tonics the other night at the local bar while watching the NBA playoffs. I got drunk and enjoyed myself immensely. Am I unenlightened? Am I morally corrupt? In the end, only you know what constitutes a violation of dharma and only you know if that violation is a problem for you. Sometimes I tell white lies and a guilty feeling appears and sometimes I tell white lies and it feels very good.

Jimmy: Anyway, you get the picture. I guess this also sort of rhymes with Chinmaya's statement, "If you're going to sin, then sin intelligently" (even though not in the same context). Problem is, very few people are able to accomplish this (sin in a moderate fashion).

James: Most reasonable, *sattvic* people are not pushed around by their desires. It all has to do with how much inner strength you have.

Jimmy: I guess this letter is also coming down to the question of a very brief discussion we had just before you boarded the bus for the airport. Could you once more explain (though if you've got the time in a more detailed manner) how liberated people like Chinmaya and Nisargadatta could still entertain binding attachments to tobacco?

James: Maybe they were not attached to the attachment. It was just observed like any other thought. Maybe they did not feel that they were attached. Or maybe they thought the pleasure outweighed the pain. Maybe they thought that the body was going to die of something and took the pleasure and pain as Prasad. Who knows? They were not habits that injured anyone else. I never asked Swamiji because it had nothing to do with me. He liked it and why not? No habit stands in the way of the self. If you take yourself to be limited, then habits meant to compensate for that sense of limitation will evolve. But no action is real. Action seems to be real but on analysis it turns out that nothing ever happens. So are *vasanas* a problem? It depends on who you are.

Jimmy: If memory serves you also met Trungpa. For one, do you think he was free? If so, how can such a binding *vasana* or *samskara* as alcoholism (among other abuse from what I've read) go hand in hand with *moksha*?

James: I did not engage him on the topic of his *vasanas*. It depends on your definition of *moksha*. He certainly had a liberating effect on many people, but who is to know? Others said they were injured by his behavior. But were they injured because he was injuring them or did his behavior conflict with their idea of the behavior of an enlightened person...and this caused them injury? In which case, was he at fault? Many are burned by fire but fire does not set out to burn anyone. He did have sex with women but did he use deceit or power to get them in bed...in which case it would be a violation of dharma...or was he honest and just accepted the opportunities that were afforded him as a result of his position or his personal power? In the

last analysis only you know what troubles you and you either deal with it or not. I wasn't much bothered by overeating...until I was. When I was, I lost weight.

Maya is a duality. It is light and dark. The part of the self that is in Maya is going to be subject to duality with its pleasures and its pains. You have a certain degree of control of *Maya* and what you can't control you can deal with by denial or by understanding. Yes, self knowledge inclines the ego toward *sattva* but how a particular ego relates to so-called negative conditioning is up to the ego. I have a friend who smokes one or two cigarettes a week and enjoys it. If I had one or two puffs I would not enjoy it. Even the idea is a turn off. You can define *moksa* as freedom from all *vasanas*, from binding *vasanas* only, or as the nature of the self. If it is the nature of the self, it has nothing to do with *vasanas* at all. This problem is only a problem when you think that there is an invariable link between the self and action. There is an apparent link but in fact there is no link. So am I the self or am I a person who knows or does not know the self? Both? Neither?

Jimmy: Yes, I get that one can still be conscious that all these addictions and compulsions are happening within Awareness. Or is it just that such cases as Trungpa make for bad examples to emulate (i.e. lousy teachers).

James: I think that is right. In the end, you do not want to emulate anyone or anything. Spiritual life is not about living up to a certain ideal. You have to make decisions every minute of your life about everything. It is totally up to you. You never know how things will work out...whether your choices will cause pleasure or pain for you. And there is no 'right' or 'wrong' choice. It depends on what you are trying to accomplish, what your values are and how you see yourself. A choice is just an apparent event in the apparent reality that has apparent results...or not. Who is to know? Maya is inscrutable because it is neither real, nor unreal.

Jimmy: As well, in The Real and the Apparent (Miscellaneous) *satsang*, you mention that inquiry continues until the body drops. Seems I read elsewhere that you used the thorn analogy (throw it away when its no longer useful) when talking about inquiry. Well, which one is it? To think I once thought *sadhana* was done when *moksha* arrived.

James: Inquiry into your identity stops but inquiry does not stop. Inquiry is the nature of the self in so far as there is an apparent reality for it to inquire into. Being conscious, being intelligent implies inquiry. The self is always questioning things, learning things, discovering things. I spent two days inquiring into why a certain software would not install correctly on one of my operating systems. I quit trying to figure out who I was forty years ago.

Sadhana ends for whom? Yes, when you are working on yourself, it is because you think you are a doer. So there is *sadhana* for you, even though it is the *gunas* causing the actions and you are taking responsibility for them. But when you see the nature of reality you realize there is no doer, so who is actually doing *sadhana*? Even if the sense of doership persists after you know who you are, *sadhana* would not be directed at knowing, only at undoing unhelpful *vasanas*, assuming the doer felt that certain *vasanas* were unhelpful. In fact things change all

the time whether the doer does, or the doer does not. When you know who you are, you are happy with the changes that take place or don't take place. If you are waiting until certain *vasanas* are gone to be happy you will never be happy because you are not in control of the *vasanas*, only in what you define as an unhelpful *vasana*. But who is defining anything? It is always a doer because for the self everything is fine as it is. As you can see, this issue always ends up being about who has the problem.

Jimmy: Finally, I'd appreciate if you could give me your view on how to integrate *moksha*, the ego and *vasanas*... I know I'm asking a lot of questions and that it will take some time to answer, so put me at the end of your list (better answering people who are in need I would imagine). Thanks so much once more for everything (I'm really enjoying your Aparokshanubhuti dvd; and there is still much material I haven't even accessed yet on your website).

James: I am not sure what you mean by 'integration.' Integrate what into what? The self is the self and the *vasanas* are the *vasanas*. Is there a connection? *Moksa* is discrimination, not integration. It means you know what the self is and you know what the *vasanas* are and you don't mix them up. Vedanta is not theory and practice. You will not make self knowledge work for Jimmy, make his life better, because who is Jimmy apart from the self. He is only an idea, a name and a form which you may or may not lend reality to. *Moksa* means that if there is such a person, he is fine as he is warts and all.

You see, Jimmy, at what point are you 'integrated?' Even when you are highly *sattvic* and things are going on very nicely, there is always more to do if you see yourself as a doer. It never ends. This is not to say that one should not necessarily try to 'improve' one's life, but when is the work over? When are you integrated? From the self's perspective everything is already integrated. Life is one seamless partless whole. From the individual's point of view, there is always something to be done.

Furthermore, what values cause you to believe that the way things are in Maya should be different from what they are? Yes, if you are angry or depressed you can see what kind of thinking is causing the anger or depression and you can change your thinking. Is this what you mean by integration? I was irritated at a friend recently and I saw that the irritation came from my desire to have him respond differently, so I let go of the desire and the irritation left. Is that integration? Maybe. I think of it as wisdom in action.

Anyway, it is good to hear from you. I think about you often and wonder how things are going. The interesting thing about *moksa* is that everything changes but nothing changes. Plus ca change... Keep in touch.

Love,

Ram

