

# A Dialogue Regarding Dispassion

Ted Schmidt

2015-02-26

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/1982>

**Bob:** Hey, Ted, in reply to the last section of the last post, is the knowledge of non-doership kind of like the feeling of relaxed effortlessness when the body-mind entity performs its actions throughout the day, like as though it is performing actions automatically without having my ego consciously will itself (volition) to get things done? It isn't laziness, because I am performing actions, but almost like I'm floating through the dream of life without worry because the body-mind entity automatically performs what it needs to without having my "me" interfere with it.

**Ted:** The feeling you describe does often accompany the knowledge that you, awareness, are not the doer. And the apparent person does seem to float more effortlessly through the dream of life because he is no longer harboring an agenda whose end game is the obtainment of various specific objects/experiences that he feels will complete him or permanently establish him in some transcendental state of experiential bliss. He is happy with what is because he knows that what is (i.e. the circumstances "within" and "around" him) is not the source of his joy (i.e. rock-solid confidence in his limitless and inviolable nature, which does lend itself to a greater degree of experiential happiness). This is not to say that the apparent person will no longer have any preferences and desires and won't act with the intention of obtaining certain objective ends, only that he will no longer feel he has to have what he wants in order to be happy. He can enjoy or at least not be unduly disturbed by whatever is because his natural joy is no longer accessible only when specific objects, circumstances or experiences obtain. The point is that the apparent individual person will still experience emotions and have desires just like any other apparent person (albeit they will be fewer and far less intense and thus cause less psychological disturbance than before), for these phenomena are the stuff of which the apparent individual is made, so to speak. The difference for the one with self-knowledge is that he knows he is free of these phenomena and therefore is not compelled or controlled by them. For the most part, his life will be stress-free but should "inner" disturbances arise his discrimination will allow him to simply watch them arise, abide and eventually subside without getting "hooked" by them.

**Bob:** And is the result of burning *vasanas* meant to lead towards more disinterest in habits or objects one usually enjoys, such as junk food, procrastination, video games, meaningless conversations, chasing women (or men, depending on your preferences), *rajasic* desirous reflexes, etc?...

**Ted:** The result of "burning" or neutralizing binding *vasanas* (i.e. compelling likes, dislikes, desires and fears) is to free one from dependence on objects for one's happiness or sense of completeness and adequacy. When the pressure the *vasanas* is weakened, they no longer control my thoughts, choices and behaviors. When the apparent person is able to enjoy those things he likes and endure those things he dislikes with a sense of equanimity rooted in the understanding that as awareness he is already whole and complete and that nothing can enhance, diminish or change his essential nature in any way, then he is free.

Most likely this understanding will lead to disinterest in the types of *rajasic* and *tamasic* behaviors you mention. But there are no defining behavioral characteristics that serve to define freedom. The liberated one is free to do as he pleases. Invariably, such a one will refrain from behavior that violates *dharma*, or universal ethical law, because he knows there is no point of going to such an extreme to procure an object that will have no essential effect on his nature. But the *jnani*, one with self-knowledge, is under no obligation to act a certain way, nor is Vedanta designed to produce a legion of automatons whose behavior is defined by a particular code of conduct. Self-knowledge is not another cage in which to confine one's self. Self-knowledge sets one free.

**Bob:** ...resulting in viewing objects as empty, typically described by psychologist as "depression"?

**Ted:** The "emptiness" of objects revealed by Vedanta concerns the apparent nature of objects and their incapacity to provide permanent fulfillment. In other words, self-inquiry reveals that objects are wholly dependent on awareness for their existence and thus have no independent nature of their own. All objects are nothing more than holographic projections cast by ignorance "upon" the screen, or "within" the field, of awareness. As such they are only temporary phenomena and therefore cannot provide permanent fulfillment. While this realization can be initially disheartening, its assimilation inevitably leads to the recognition of one's inherent freedom and the unshakable conviction that one is both whole and the whole. In reality, there is no such thing as emptiness, for the substratum of all objects, which remains ever free of their influence, is pure, limitless awareness.

**Bob:** So I assume one is more directed and focused on important life issues that one should perform during that moment.

**Ted:** I'm not sure what "important life issues that one should perform" are, but if you mean that neutralizing binding *vasanas* frees the mind from extroverting tendencies and allows one to more effectively inquire into one's true nature, then yes, burning *vasanas* does effect this result.

**Bob:** Which is dedication towards serving *Isvara* the total rather than the whiny me that needs his stimulants.

**Ted:** If by "serving *Isvara*" you mean keeping one's attention focused on the self and acting in accordance with *dharma* rather than at the behest of one's desires and fears, then yes, burning one's binding *vasanas* does facilitate this approach to life. Be clear, however, that "serving *Isvara*" does not require that the doer undertake a life of selfless service devoted to saving souls, uplifting the planet or changing the world. Doing effective self-inquiry, devoting one's life to the assimilation of self-knowledge, is the greatest service one can offer.

**Bob:** Is what I'm describing the aftermath of continuous self-inquiry, *karma yoga*, surrendering to *Isvara*?

**Ted:** Yes, but keep in mind that self-knowledge is not an experiential phenomenon that is characterized by a particular emotional state or certain behaviors. Self-knowledge does impact experience but cannot be defined by experience. Ultimately, only you know if you are free of binding desires and stand with unshakable conviction in your true identity as limitless awareness. Though the knowledge itself is not you, awareness, for even self-knowledge is a subtle thought obtaining in the mind, it is the clearest reflection of your true nature. Thus when you “know” you are the “light” in which all objects, including knowledge, are known, then you are free.

**Bob:** Thanks.