

# A Simple Shift in Perspective

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**Daniel:** Dear Ted, I am a student of Ram and Sundari, and a great lover of Vedanta.

I started with Maharishi Mahesh when I was a kid (16). It was a good start and it lit the fire. Though my destiny was to have a big family, the fire never died. I am 60 now. I still do a daily *sadhana*. I've had several other teachers but meeting Ram was like an explosion. Everything opened up.

That's some background info for you. I got your email from the last ShiningWorld newsletter, and would like to ask, are you available to help me clarify my understanding? I have decided not to engage Ram and Sundari because they no doubt have their hands full. I have never had one-on-one coaching with them, but I have benefited tremendously from sittings, here in Portland for the last two summers, in Trout Lake and in India last year. I don't have a lot of questions. It's more like fine-tuning. But it's very important to me.

I have a number of considerations but will start with just these at the moment. Feel free to direct this inquiry in any way that might be helpful.

1. If one sees that awareness stands prior to – and is present for – all experience, and that all objects arise, have their existence and disappear in awareness, can one continue to suffer psychological pain? Is it due to *vasanas*?

**Ted:** I'm not sure exactly what you mean when you say "suffer psychological pain" but if you mean that even with said understanding negative thoughts and emotions can still arise within awareness, then the answer is yes. And again, yes, they are due to the *vasanas*. Once you know who you are, you cease to identify with the limited person whom you had taken yourself to be, and that effectively closes the *karmic* account for that person, assuming that the knowledge is hard and fast and that it has canceled the doer and neutralized (which is different than eradicated) the *vasanas*. The caveat, however, is that your *prarabdha karma* (i.e. the actions your character is still scripted to carry out and all the preferences that have been programmed into that character due to the *vasanas*) still has to run its course. A good analogy for this is a fan. After having unplugged a fan, the blade does not come to an immediate standstill. It takes some time to wind down. It is the same with realizing the self. Once you know who you are, which your comments seem to indicate you do, the old thought patterns and emotional reactions will continue for a time. As you witness them you will find that their strength gradually dissipates until they drop away altogether. The key to peace of mind is to understand that they have nothing to do with you.

**Daniel:** 2. And if suffering continues intermittently, could this be feedback that the understanding is not firm?

**Ted:** I think the previous response pretty much covered this doubt but if it did not, let me know

and I'll address it then.

**Daniel:** This also brings up the risk of self-deception, of having the understanding intellectually but not fully owning it. To me this is one of the big dangers on the path of knowledge.

**Ted:** Good point. Here are the ways you can tell if you're bullshitting yourself.

First, if you still believe you are a person. When you are fully confident in who you are as pure awareness, you will cease to identify yourself as the mind-body-sense complex that you have always taken yourself to be. This doesn't mean that your body will disappear in a blaze of white light or that you won't feel like there is a body that it feels like you can operate and a mind with which you can make decisions or that you won't carry out your daily duties just as any normal person would or that you have to start referring to yourself (i.e. the Daniel on your driver's license) in the third person or any such daffy shit as that. It simply means that you know that you are the awareness in which the mind-body-sense complex and all its functions as well as the entire created world appears. It is both a subtle and dramatic shift. Everything will appear the same but you will know it for what it really is instead of what it appears to be. It's like a mirage in the desert. Once you know it is a mirage, it doesn't cease to appear, you simply won't run after it believing it to be a reservoir of water at which you can slake your thirst.

Second, if you still want things. When you are fully confident in your identity as whole and complete, limitless, non-dual awareness, you won't want anything, because you'll know you already have everything. That doesn't mean you won't still have preferences or that you won't need to eat or bathe or exercise or want to participate in various activities or enjoy various experiences. It simply means you'll know that you don't need any of these things to complete you. You'll know that no matter what happens, nothing can enhance, diminish or change you (i.e. you as pure awareness) in any fundamental or essential way. You as awareness are untouched by experience. For this reason you can enjoy your true nature as happiness within the context of experience but you won't seek joy from the experience.

Only you will know when you are no longer bound by these two things. You just have to be honest with yourself. As mentioned, *vasanas* will still arise, but *vasanas* themselves are not really the problem. They are only a problem if they get in the way of you knowing who you are and reveling in your true nature as whole and complete, limitless, action-less, non-dual awareness.

**Daniel:** The fact of the matter is, after 40-plus years of spiritual practices (and psychotherapy at times) I still have a pretty *rajasic* mind. It's gets very fiery and passionate. By *Ishvara's* grace most of the binding *vasanas* seem to have subsided. I live a *dharmic* life. But inwardly the mind continues to spew up grumpiness and general negativity... which brings up self-doubt. This is probably the main reason I've stuck with my *sadhana* all these years (morning and evening *Agnihotra* and meditation).

**Ted:** That sounds beautiful, Daniel. It sounds to me like you know who you are. Relax a bit, perhaps. Witness the *vasanas*, and remain vigilant in not allowing them to push you around. Other than that, keep on keepin' on. If you don't feel you have "popped" yet, then just keep

steeping yourself in the teachings and applying the knowledge to each and every situation and trust that realization will become solid sooner than later.

**Daniel:** I want to also clarify my understanding of the unity of subject-object relationship.

The fan analogy you used is one that I sometimes pondered through this whole process. It made good sense. The seeking came to a halt when I met Ram. I finally could acknowledge this only recently. It happened so naturally that I barely noticed. But this inner fire has continued burning.

Thus some confusion persisted. And you can imagine after 45 years of seeking! But... even though I realized the seeking had stopped, and with this came the understanding that there really is no such thing as “personal” effort anyway, still I was not confident in who I am.

**Ted:** True, there really is no personal effort in the ultimate sense, but until you are standing with rock-solid confidence in the knowledge that you are whole and complete, limitless, action-less, ordinary, unborn, non-dual awareness, you need to keep exposing yourself to the teachings, practicing *karma*, *bhakti*, *jnana* and *triguna vibhava yoga* as well as meditation and applying the knowledge in every situation of your life. Of course you, as Daniel, are not doing this but on the other hand, you as Daniel should maintain a focused effort. It doesn't have to be a stressful, agitated effort that is so lauded in the Western world; it is simply a calm vigilance that serves to slowly erode old fallacious thought patterns and erroneous identifications.

**Daniel:** Having said this, I am not convinced even now that I am firm in the knowledge of who I am. Here's why. It's interesting that in the first pointer you gave about how to tell if you're bullshitting or not (i.e. still believing you are a person)... this was exactly what I wanted to discuss with you right off the bat. But I chickened out. I was gonna wait a little while. So let me just say this: I still feel very human. All the normal emotional responses are intact. In fact I am probably much more sensitive than the average male. And I feel very much alive and curious about things. So the reason I myself wanted to bring this very issue up is that Ram brought it up with me in India last year. It was in a large group question-and-answer session. I confessed to him that there was just no way I could admit to being the doer of my actions, that when I look back at my life, and right up to the moment, I don't feel the slightest responsibility for anything. It's all just happening and being operated by some force beyond me. I didn't even decide to become a seeker! It just happened! He looked at me attentively, as he has before, and said, “Then you're enlightened.” And I retorted, “No, I am not, because I still feel like a human being!” He just shined it on, like he always does, and continued taking questions. But what happened inside me is that I began to wonder if perhaps it was just my perception of myself, or concept of myself, that needed to be adjusted.

**Ted:** Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! You've got it, Daniel. It's a simple adjustment, a shift in perspective, that's all. The sky is not going to fall or burst into flames nor are you going to dissipate like a cosmic smoke bomb, you simply see from the perspective of who you really are. You still have a body that feels sensations (actually, it's the mind that perceives such, but...), a heart that feels emotions and an intellect that thinks. That's the consequence of the residual *vasanas* that need a vehicle through which to express/exhaust. In one sense, you won't cease to feel like a human being, but in another sense, you will know you are not one and will cease to identify with the

feeling.

**Daniel:** And so this is what I wanted to address with you. But I felt it was just too deep to discuss immediately. Anyway, you brought it up! Thank you.

The second thing you mentioned probably ties in here: there's no more wanting anything. Yes! This I can relate to. Desires continue to arise (which is why I still feel human) but there's no sense that their fulfillment will add anything to me. I don't seem to hanker after anything. I still enjoy certain things... but never from a feeling of lack or the hope or thought that they can add anything to my life. I don't have the slightest thought that anything or anyone has a thing to offer as far as this goes.

**Ted:** It sounds to me that the response Ramji offered you in India was spot on. Only you can answer this for yourself, but if my previous comment allays your doubt about whether you can still "feel human" and be enlightened, and your previous comment about the degree of dispassion you feel toward objects is true, then you're done. I'll be happy to discuss any further doubts that may arise for you, but you should really look at yourself and take an account of what you know to be true about who you really are despite what the old tapes recorded (or I guess I should say, "the old CDs burned," to be in keeping with the modern world) by the ego when you were mired in ignorance are continuing to say.

**Daniel:** So this second one I can relate to without a doubt. The first one I just have to sit with.

And one other thing: I definitely have the sense that the whole world, even universe, is born out of my awareness. Sometimes I am amazed. It's a feeling of wonder and vast curiosity and surprise. And I don't do anything! There's absolutely no effort in this whole operation. Ted, you've got me going here; I feel like I am making a confession.

**Ted:** Good for you. Maybe you're finally just being honest with yourself.

**Daniel:** I still want to address the thing around the knower and known being one. Is this because both share the same source in consciousness, or awareness? And is the knower here consciousness? Or is it the mind, as in the mind being an instrument of knowing for awareness? Anyway, if you could clarify this for me I would appreciate it. Feel free to comment on anything discussed so far.

**Ted:** The realization that the knower and the known are one can be understood in a couple of different ways. The first is that which you mention. If you take the knower to be the individual person (i.e. Daniel), then the knower and the known are one because they share the same order of reality. That is, both the person and the thing known are objects in and are essentially constituted of awareness. The second way of considering this issue is with the understanding that in a non-dual reality, which this is, there is only awareness. BUT while the entire creation is awareness, awareness is free of the entire creation. That is, the entire creation depends for its existence upon awareness but awareness remains ever independent in that it requires no object

for its existence. The self is self-dependent and requires no object in order to know itself. Despite how it seems to the mind, in the total absence of objects the self still remains fully aware of itself. This is why you enjoy deep sleep. The mind thinks it knows the self but actually the mind is inert and knows nothing. It is simply a machine that functions and produces thoughts and whatnot when illumined, or enlivened, by awareness. The bottom line is that there is only awareness, so either understanding simply serves to help one reconcile both its manifest and unmanifest forms and to appreciate that it is the witness of both and remains essentially unchanged by any appearance it assumes and that seems to take place within it.

**Daniel:** I was very vulnerable about starting this process with you. But I am so grateful now.

**Ted:** I'm glad you feel more comfortable now, Daniel. I enjoy dialoguing with you, so feel free to contact me any time you wish.

**Ted:** Thank you for the clarity.

I'd like to refer to a statement you made: "The mind thinks it knows the self but actually it's inert and knows nothing."

This is a good lead into another consideration.

Scripture and *guru* teach me (with the instrument of intellect) that I am not this time-bound, experience-bound, helpless and inadequate *jiva*, that in reality I am unbounded, unconditioned, unlimited, pure awareness, the very source of all life and life eternal. Somehow, through my inquiry I manage to accept this. I recognize that indeed this awareness that I am seems to be without qualities, yet it must be full because I observe countless objects arising out of it. And it's unlimited in the sense that nothing defines it; no matter how big an object (like the sun), awareness always outshines it. Awareness depends on nothing yet everything depends on it. Finally, my inquiry reveals to me that this must be who I am. Awareness is always with me, the one constant in every bit of experience, even sleep. Such intimacy do I feel with this awareness that I come to the conclusion that "I Am That"!

Now, this conclusion was arrived at through the intellect, I think. Or was it?

**Ted:** Yes, the conclusion was arrived at through the intellect. Make no mistake, enlightenment or realization is for the intellect. The self already "knows" who it is, so it doesn't need to be enlightened, for indeed it is the Light. And it doesn't need Daniel to realize it either, because Daniel's ignorance really has nothing to do with it. Ultimately, the realization is that there is no Daniel and never has been. Daniel is simply a bundle of *vasanas* (i.e. desires based on a collection of likes and dislikes formed out of the impressions of your past experiences) that are presently seeking expression through the mind-body-sense complex that has been labeled "Daniel" and serves as a lens or holographic puppet with which you (i.e. the self, or awareness) identify when under the spell of delusion or ignorance.

**Daniel:** At some point what began with an intellectual understanding became direct experience.

Maybe “experience” is not the right word.

**Ted:** Experience works as long as you realize that the experience of yourself is not an experience of an object. You don't experience yourself because you can see, hear, taste, touch or smell it. You know yourself because you are yourself. You know you exist because you exist. It is direct knowledge, which requires no means by which to be apprehended.

**Daniel:** But the understanding shifts out of the head into something that is embodied. Perhaps we could say it moved into the heart. Can you speak to this?

**Ted:** You are on to something here, but look carefully again at your “experience” of yourself as awareness. Does your knowledge of yourself really shift out of the head into something that is embodied? If you look attentively, laying aside all assumptions about and conditioning concerning how experience happens, you will notice (1) that you are not in any way separate from your understanding (for knowledge take place in and is made of awareness), (2) that knowledge (i.e. awareness) was never encapsulated in the head at all (for awareness is not an organ like the brain, not to mention the fact that, though it might seem tangible, is nothing but awareness itself) and (3) that the knowledge hasn't therefore shifted from one confined location labeled “head” to another confined location labeled “heart.” Knowledge/awareness/you (these are synonyms, a fact with which you should become comfortable and an understanding in which you should stand confidently, by the way) is not ever embodied in the sense that it is attached to or confined by a body. Due to ignorance, awareness (i.e. you) identifies with the limited vessel of a particular mind-body-sense complex but it is never confined solely within that apparatus. Given that awareness is all-pervasive, it is more appropriate to say that the body, the head and the heart all appear within awareness. Look and see. Verify this through your own experience and tell me if it isn't true. That said, you might say that metaphorically the knowledge moves to the heart in the sense that it is recognized as the unconditioned, attributeless “core” of your being, which is at the same time the vast ocean of awareness within which Daniel-the-body appears.

**Daniel:** Regarding your statement about the mind being inert, would this also not apply to the intellect?

**Ted:** The term “mind” was used in that statement as a reference to the entire *antahkarana* (i.e. subtle body). Vedanta does distinguish between the mind (which carries out the functions of perceiving, cohering/integrating, doubting and emoting) and the intellect (which carries out the functions of perceiving, deliberating, discriminating, determining, deciding and directing, not to mention that technically the ego's notions of being a separate, independent, limited doer and enjoyer fall under the jurisdiction of the intellect as well), but I was simply referring to what we might call the whole “thinking machine.” So in answer to your question, yes, this applies to the intellect also. Just as the gross body is nothing more than a cohesion of the five elements and is in itself inert (one look at a corpse will verify this), the intellect is nothing more than a cohesion of inert subtle matter.

**Daniel:** Can the intellect ever know the self? It seems not.

**Ted:** Well, yes and no. This issue is pretty subtle and a bit of a mind-blower, so get ready for a bit of a wild ride. As mentioned, the intellect is nothing more than inert subtle matter, so technically it can't/doesn't know a damn thing. This sounds crazy, I know. Truly speaking, the entire *antahkaranah* (i.e. subtle body) is nothing more than a subtle machine whose function is to think. It kind of takes the piss out of the star, doesn't it?

But here's why it seems like the intellect is so intelligent. When awareness illumines it, the mechanism of the subtle body is set into motion and the functions referred to earlier that we assign to mind, intellect and ego simply happen, because that's what the machine is designed to do.

Unromantic as the notion is, it is little different than plugging a computer (the subtle body) into a wall socket through which it is "enlivened" with electricity (awareness) and then functions according to its design (mind, intellect and ego perform their various tasks). It seems like the intellect thinks on its own but it is totally dependent upon awareness for its existence and ability to execute action (i.e. think). From the individual *jiva*'s perspective it seems like the mind and intellect and ego are carrying on at the behest of their own volition, and that free will is alive and well, but the truth of the matter is that the *antahkaranah* is simply a well-oiled machine that is managed by the *vasanas* and governed by ignorance, or the will of God (*Isvara*, or the *dharma* of the field of existence).

**Daniel:** But somehow there is recognition.

**Ted:** Yes, indirectly. The reflection of awareness appears in a pure (i.e. *sattvic*) mind. This is you recognizing yourself through the instrument of the intellect.

**Daniel:** And there is peace for the *jiva* that follows, a sense of separateness is removed, the weight of doership is lifted. I am no longer defined by objects. Is this all that is meant by *moksa*, liberation?

**Ted:** Yes, provided this understanding cancels the doer, as you say, and neutralizes the *vasanas*. Then the *jiva* is no longer dependent on objects for happiness, not to mention the fact that the apparent entity realizes he is not a person though he still seemingly inhabits a person's mind-body-sense complex and will continue to seemingly do so until his *prarabdha karma* is exhausted and there remain no more *vasanas* requiring a body through which to express.

**Daniel:** When I make the statement "I Am That," where is it coming from? Is the *jiva* making this proclamation from the knowledge gained by the intellect?

**Ted:** Again, yes and no. Who is the *jiva*? Contemplate this.

**Daniel:** And in the recognition here, it surely must not confer the same status to the *jiva* as the self or we would be supermen!

**Ted:** Be clear about this: the *jiva* is the self but the self is not the *jiva*. In other words, the *jiva* depends upon awareness for its existence but awareness is completely independent of the *jiva*. Consider deep sleep.

When the *jiva* has completely disappeared in deep sleep, awareness remains. If it did not, how could you report upon waking that you slept soundly? There is, however, a distinction between the *jiva* and awareness as *Isvara*. The *jiva* is an *upadhi* (i.e. a limiting adjunct). That is, the *jiva* is a limited “lens” with which awareness identifies due to the power of ignorance. As long as it identifies with this “lens,” its vision/experience is limited by the scope of that “lens.” And though the *jiva* can awaken to the knowledge of its true nature, such knowledge doesn’t allow it to break free from the limitation of the “lens,” for the *jiva* is nothing more than the assumed identity of the “lens.” If awareness were to actually “expand” beyond the “lens,” the *jiva* would “break,” so to speak, and cease to exist as a *jiva*, and therefore would no longer experience itself from that point of view, which would in effect nullify the question because there would cease to be even an apparent *jiva* to put it forth. Whew! Quite wordy but hopefully you get the picture. In short, self-knowledge won’t afford the *jiva*’s limited mind-body-sense complex the same universal powers as those wielded by *Isvara*. The drop will know its nature is the same as that of the entire ocean, but that doesn’t turn the drop into the entirety of the seven seas.

**Daniel:** Thank you for this clarification.

This understanding pertaining to the relationship between *jiva* and awareness is extremely helpful. And also the layout of the subtle body, which, if my understanding is correct, is all programmed. Awareness shines on the subtle body and it kicks into gear, the “I” notion arises, along with a sense of doership and all other mechanisms.

What is the connection between the subtle body and the causal?

**Ted:** The subtle body is a product of the causal body. From a macrocosmic perspective, the causal body is the universal ocean containing all the *vasanas* that sprout on a subtle level as the universal subtle body replete with all its machinations. From a microcosmic perspective, the causal body contains amidst the universal ocean of all *vasanas* the particular “package” that sprouts as the subtle body of a particular *jiva* when awareness identifies with that *upadhi* as a result of ignorance.

**Daniel:** And the causal with *Isvara*?

**Ted:** The macrocosmic causal body is *Isvara*. *Isvara* is the anthropomorphic identity we assign to awareness associating with or illumining and thus “wielding” (though paradoxically it is not a “doer,” and has no desire-driven volition) its power of ignorance to both create and govern the universe. The set of impersonal physical, moral and spiritual laws by which the vast machinery of the universe runs is referred to in Sanskrit as *dharma*. It should be understood that *Isvara* is not an entity residing in some astral realm who creates the universe and doles out positive results and negative consequences for actions performed by individual *jivas* based on the purity of their intent. As mentioned, the concept of *Isvara* is simply a personification of the impersonal set of

laws which govern the functioning of the vast machinery of creation. If one acts in accordance with those laws, that is, if one acts in a manner that is timely and appropriate in terms of gaining a particular desired result, one is more likely to get the result desired. The ego struggles to assert its dominion over *dharmic* law, but the *jiva* has no more than a sliver of influence concerning the consequences of its actions. So many factors influence the outcome of any action executed that it is impossible for the individual *jiva* to control them all in order to ensure that he will get what he wants. To the *jiva* therefore it often seems as if any attempt to get what he wants is a crapshoot. But from the universal perspective, the entire field of experience is seen as a well-oiled machine churning out the appropriate results of a complex yet predictable chain of cause and effect.

**Daniel:** And if the causal body is the storehouse for the *vasanas*, what is their origin? Where did they come from?

**Ted:** The *vasanas* originate from ignorance. In terms of the macrocosm, awareness for some unknown reason apparently forgets its true nature and apparently succumbs to the influence of ignorance, which causes awareness to apparently believe it is incomplete and to therefore apparently create (by means of its assumed apparent identity as *Isvara*) an entire field of experience in which it might find fulfillment. Concerning the question of why *Isvara's* *vasanas* are what they are, Vedanta says there is no answer. The design of the creation is just what it is. In terms of microcosm, or the individual *jiva*, the *vasanas* are basically preferences based on the residual impressions of pleasant and unpleasant past experiences. These *vasanas* too are rooted in the individual's ignorance of his true nature as whole and complete, limitless awareness. Because the individual feels incomplete and inadequate, he seeks fulfillment through objects, and his preferences for which objects are seemingly worth pursuing and which are seemingly better to avoid and what actions should be executed to obtain or avoid those objects, are based on past experience.

**Daniel:** And how do they inform the subtle body?

**Ted:** The way the *vasanas* inform the subtle body is best described in terms of the process through which individuals interact with the field of experience. This process begins when the sense instruments come in contact with their respective objects (i.e. the person hears, feels, sees, smells and/or tastes something). The sense organs, which are actually located in the mind, perceive these sensations and immediately the mind registers this data. The mind then "wants" to make sense of this object. We refer to this initial response as "doubting" because the mind has a doubt about what the object is and how the person should respond to it. In order to clarify these issues, the mind sends the collected data on to the intellect, which is in charge of discriminating and deciding. During its deliberation concerning the object, the intellect seeks a way to resolve the issues before it by consulting the causal body, which is the record of past experience and serves as the storehouse of all the *vasanas* formed from those experiences. The *vasanas* basically tell the intellect what has been done before when an object such as the one currently under consideration was previously encountered. Based on this information, the intellect then decides what should be done and directs the ego to mobilize the active organs to respond accordingly.

**Daniel:** Our dialogue has led me to want a deeper understanding of *Isvara*'s role in all this and where he resides. Is he also programmed?

**Ted:** *Isvara* is not a programmed entity but the program itself. Residing in (i.e. constituting) the macrocosmic causal body, *Isvara* is a personification of the *dharmic* law that governs the entire process by which the machine of the universe operates, and as such is not limited to the locus of the causal body but is more accurately defined as the entire creation or field of experience.

**Daniel:** And my wife asked such an innocent question: Who created *Isvara*? Our children asked a similar question long ago! I came up with something for our kids but for her I said that I didn't know, but that I bring it up with you.

**Ted:** *Isvara* was not exactly created in the sense of being an entity that has been brought into being. *Isvara* is the name given to the creative force that results when awareness associates with and wields its power of ignorance, which admittedly is a somewhat perplexing way to describe this subtle phenomenon, since awareness and ignorance, ultimately speaking, are not two different things. Ignorance is a power within awareness. Paradoxical as it may seem, awareness has to have the power of forgetting itself, for if awareness did not have this power it would not be unlimited and all-powerful. And yet ignorance cannot be said to share the same order of reality as awareness, for while ignorance depends upon awareness for its existence (i.e. something has to be aware of ignorance in order for ignorance to exist), awareness is completely independent of ignorance and all of its apparent effects.

**Daniel:** So when through the intellect I consult the causal body to inform a decision I need to make, I am essentially consulting *Isvara*. Is this correct?

**Ted:** Yes, this is correct. But that doesn't mean that you just do whatever arises from the causal body. Remember, *Isvara* is everything that is, both subtle and gross. *Isvara* is not some cosmic life coach who gives personal consultations. *Isvara* is *dharmic* law. "He" is the set of rules that govern the entirety of the apparent reality that serves to maintain its overall balance, well-being and harmony. The closest we come to receiving personal guidance from *Isvara*, you might say, is through the built-in sense of *dharma* that we all have, which is reflected in our conscience. For instance, all human beings know that it is *adharmic* (i.e. not *dharmic*) to inflict harm on another. Though it is impossible to avoid injuring others entirely (i.e. on all levels of being and to any degree whatsoever), but when we do hurt someone we feel guilty. Another example is the act of thievery. No one believes deep down that stealing from another is a justifiable action. Even thieves lock up their stuff to keep it from being stolen. If they didn't think stealing was wrong, why would they care? *Dharma* is a complex topic because, as you could probably tell from the first example, it is impossible to uphold or adhere to the ideal principles that constitute universal *dharma* in all situations. For instance, it is *adharmic* in principle to verbally abuse someone, but what if harsh words are the only way to get the person to listen to the hard truth concerning some issue, and their attendance to that issue will be beneficial to the person or what is best for the whole in the long run? It is *adharmic* to hurt someone physically but if a rapist is advancing upon

a potential victim, should the person not use the pepper spray at their disposal against the attacker? These are kind of “no-brainer” examples but if you carefully contemplate many situations with which you are confronted in life you can begin to see that the adherence to and application of *dharmic* sensibility is a rather tricky issue. Essentially, there are two kinds of *dharma*: universal and relative. Universal *dharma* consists of the ideals that govern which serve as our guiding light within the field. Relative *dharma* is our interpretation and application of the universal principle within the context of a specific situation with which we are faced.

The point of this mini-lesson in *dharma* in relation to your comment is that messages we receive from our causal body cannot be taken as the word of God, so to speak. The causal body is the storehouse of all *vasanas*, and within that huge arena there exists a small file box for each *jiva* that contains that person’s “personal” *vasanas*, which are the cluster of *vasanas* that are playing out through the *upadhi*, or mind-body-sense complex, that is recognized as that particular individual. Many of these *vasanas* were formed in past lives, some of which are being reinforced by present actions, and new *vasanas* are being created in this lifetime. It is this collection of *vasanas* that is being “consulted” when the intellect must make a decision.

Some of these *vasanas* are beneficial in terms of one’s goal, which for us would be self-realization, and some are detrimental, or what we call “binding.” Binding *vasanas* are those *vasanas* that are so powerful that they compel us to act at their behest, often in ways that serve only to veil our vision of our true unlimited nature and keep us bound to the wheel of *samsara*, or suffering. That is, they keep us seeking joy in objects rather than resting in the knowledge that we are already whole and complete. Obviously, the nature of such *vasanas* is not conducive to freedom. The bottom line then is that the intellect shouldn’t just indiscriminately follow whatever advice, guidance or orders it receives from the causal body. The *vasanas* should not be considered mandates. This is where free will enters the picture. One has to take into account what one’s goal is and then act in the way that will be most helpful in reaching that goal. If after careful consideration the course of action “suggested” by the *vasanas* seems beneficial, then one should seek to fulfill that desire; if not, then not.

**Daniel:** Technically, it sounds like there is no personal causal body.

**Ted:** I think we’ve covered this point.

**Daniel:** When it comes to the subtle body, it appears at least, that I have my own subtle body. Astrologers read people’s *karmas* registered in the subtle body. Each chart is unique. So this seems to imply different subtle bodies. But I am also not sure if this correct. Perhaps there is only one subtle body as well, with different data pertaining to different mind-bodies? I am unclear. What is the proper view for inquiry?

**Ted:** Since this is a non-dual reality, there really is only one universal subtle body. As with the causal body, however, this one great subtle body gets apparently divided among the innumerable *jivas* inhabiting the gross and subtle planes of existence. An analogy that might help is to think of the apparent reality as a giant ocean and each of the *jivas* within it as singular aquariums. This analogy would work even better if you could consider even the glass walls of each aquarium to be somehow made of water. At any rate, though each aquarium is nothing but

a small piece of the same ocean, each might contain different fish or seaweed or rocks or garbage or whatever. The apparatus of the subtle body is the same for each individual but the appearances generated within it are different for each.

In any case, the most important thing to remember in terms of inquiry leading to *moksa* is that while the bodies are you (i.e. awareness), you are none of these bodies and are ever untouched by the appearances that arise, abide and subside within them. You are always free.

**Daniel:** The intellect cannot know the self, not as an object. But somehow a shift happens and we get identified with self. I experience this as a stable ground, an inner detachment or lack of concern for events happening around me. I still get pricked by things but the pain does not last. Is it accurate to say that the intellect is resting on the self? Is this what is meant by “resolute intellect”? I believe I’ve read this statement in the *Gita*.

**Ted:** Because your understanding is at a very advanced stage, I’m going to nitpick here. Yes, it’s true that from the apparent individual’s point of view that an apparent shift happens. BUT in the non-dual reality that is you, what is shifting to where? And who is it that is experiencing this “where” as a stable ground?

I get what you mean, and you as an apparent individual are expressing it as well as it can be expressed by a limited individual using the limited mode of expression that language is. HOWEVER, it is important that you as awareness start to own yourself and stand with confidence in your true identity.

I’m not of course suggesting that you walk around talking about yourself in the third person and enacting all the bullshit behaviors associated with what we call “enlightenment sickness.” I’m just clarifying a subtle point with regard to the “inner” shift, or shift in perspective, that you are experiencing.

So now you see – or if you don’t already, this is the next step – Daniel get pricked by things and feel Daniel’s pain but you no longer identify with being the one getting pricked and feeling the pain. Daniel is an appearance in you but you are not Daniel. Daniel is a program that will continue to play out according to its design and you will witness and, given the genius of the “*Isvara* Holographic Sense-Surround Home Entertainment System,” even experience Daniel’s dramas. But you will know that you are untouched by whatever appears on the screen of your consciousness.

Along the same lines, a second nit worth picking is that of the intellect resting “on” the self. Neither is there any object other than the self that could rest upon it nor is the self an object upon which anything could rest. You yourself are both the apparent “rester-uponer” and that which it is resting upon.

Again, I get what you mean, but the use of language for you is crucial at this point. It would be more appropriate to say that you as awareness are abiding in your true nature. To the degree that this is an experience, you would say that you are seeing/experiencing the reflection of yourself in a pure mind. But when you understand who you are then it no longer matters what appears “in” awareness, for you know you are the ever-present, all-pervasive awareness that is the substratum of the appearance, just as the rope is the substratum of the apparent snake.

Perhaps you meant that the intellect is focusing attention on the self rather than on apparent objects. In this case, the same comments hold true, but yes, that focused attention is what is referred to as a “resolute intellect.” It is concentrated and remains unfettered in the face of any apparent disturbances. Moreover, the knowledge informing it allows it to resolve both itself and all objects appearing within it into the pure awareness that is its true nature.

**Daniel:** It seems to me that this whole process is quite subtle, as if something that was always in the background is shifting more into the foreground... When I was young I remember being aware of this “me” inside that never got any older.

**Ted:** I totally get you. This was exactly my experience.

**Daniel:** And it was always with me. I tried to tell my parents about it, with the understanding that this must be true for everyone. When I started Transcendental Meditation this became even more evident. Is this also what is referred to as the “I Am”? Is “I Am” same as *atman*? Ted... ha, ha, a few more questions for you!

**Ted:** Yep, this “I Am” is the *atman*. Notice how Daniel is it but it is not Daniel. Notice how Daniel began at some point (i.e. he appeared within awareness, or *atman*) but *atman* was already “there” in order to notice his beginning. Notice how you are that *atman* and that that *atman* is not over there somewhere but is the you that is noticing yourself, that knows yourself, that is yourself.

Finally, notice how you don’t have to try to be yourself. You are *atman*. And you couldn’t not be if you tried. In fact, don’t take my word for it. Try it. See if you can not be yourself as awareness.

**Daniel:** I’m contemplating on it... it stops the questioning dead in its tracks.

It must be *Isvara*, or grace, that gives the final nudge, because at this moment there’s just nothing more to be done... I’ve been done. I can acknowledge I am awareness. But it sounds funny and totally unnecessary to say it. I would be very hesitant to ever say it aloud, like saying, “I’m alive.” Or telling someone face to face that I’m white. It would be silly. Does there come a point where one says, “This is It”? And when you say enlightenment is for the intellect, does this mean *jiva*? *Jiva* is the whole package of individuality, yes? It seems like realization for the *jiva* simply means canceling of doership and relaxation. This comes through simple understanding of me as awareness, correct?

**Ted:** *Isvara* does give the final nudge, but who is *Isvara*? And what is grace? Grace is both the effort Daniel put into his *sadhana* and the fruit of self-knowledge that he is now enjoying. Grace is earned from Daniel’s perspective; from your’s it is your very nature.

Along these lines, it might be more appropriate to say that Daniel has been done. Or even more to the point, Daniel is done. Though that is not exactly true either, for Daniel never began. He was only a mask you donned and then identified with so strongly you forgot who you were. But you were the one illumining the puppet and watching it play out its *prarabdha* the whole time.

And on that note, yes, it is completely unnecessary to announce enlightenment. Truly speaking, to whom would you be announcing it? There is no one else. And also truly speaking, none of the other apparent entities really give a rat's ass. They are too busy running on the hamster wheel of *samsara* to give any value to such a subtle understanding anyway unless they could figure out a way to market it. Hey, ever thought about going on tour? Just kidding.

This is not to say I don't appreciate hearing about it. I'm thrilled that Vedanta has chalked up another happy customer. It is truly an infallible means of knowledge for those, like Daniel, who are qualified.

Enlightenment is for the intellect, the *jiva*, the whole package of individuality, because you, awareness, already knew who you were all along, didn't you? True, the mind didn't know, Daniel's mind didn't know, but you knew. Nothing has changed except that – depending on the perspective from which you view it – either Daniel knows who he really is or you know you are not and have never been Daniel. Either way, it boils down to the knowledge “I am whole and complete, limitless, actionless, ordinary, unborn, non-dual, every present, all-pervasive awareness.”

So Daniel will carry on but you can relax.

If the knowledge is hard and fast and you stand firmly and fully convicted in the knowledge “I am awareness,” then this is it.

**Daniel:** Ha, ha... aye, aye, aye...

The *jiva* is simply *atman* under the influence of ignorance. And this ignorance, being rooted in the intellect of the *jiva*, needs knowledge to correct the mistake. It basically boils down to this. I've read this and heard this many times but I seem to be grasping it freshly. I am a bit embarrassed to need your validation (and clarification) because you have been saying the same thing in every dialogue from different angles. I feel stupid, like running around looking for my glasses, when I am wearing them! But there is a refinement happening here. And tremendous gratitude.

**Ted:** Please don't feel stupid at all. This is the process. We all go through it. It takes hearing it over and over and over again. It's so simple, on the one hand. The conditioning is so strong, on the other. Just keep vigilant, keep applying the knowledge, keep refining. Remember, as James often reminds people, Ramana sat in the cave for 20 years after he got it and then spent the rest of his life reading scripture in order to refine and revel in the understanding.

**Daniel:** It's amazing, concepts I've carried after all these years that turned out erroneous. Despite all my previous study I still assumed this enlightenment would be marked by some significant life-changing event out front in time. It turns out it is simply correcting the intellect and making obvious what has been present from the get-go. When you wrote the other night that the *jiva* (Daniel) was simply another object in awareness and that he is dependent on awareness but awareness is never dependent on it, everything opened up. Of course doership is neutralized. How much, say, does a water molecule have in determining its direction? The *jiva* is basically just along for the ride. I've actually felt this for a few years at least.

**Ted:** You said it, brother. I kept waiting for the goddamned Blue Pearl to show up, envelop me and then explode and bathe the universe in blue light, and only God knows what then. Then one day, lo and behold, I realized that would just be another object – and I already had enough objects. I was a collector with a warehouse – hell, a whole world, in fact a universe – full of 'em – and that moreover, the “I” I took myself to be was another one among the millions (oh, but what an important one – ha, ha) – and then pop went the weasel.

**Daniel:** Feel free to adjust my thinking if needed.

~ Love, Daniel

**Ted:** You are right on the money, Daniel. Just keep up the inquiry. Indulge that *vasana* until it withers away from its own exhaustion. And feel free to keep in touch.

And love to you.