

Accept the Person You Appear to Be

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Curtis: Hi, Ted. I hope all is well.

I thought I would give you an update, as things have been a little crazy recently. To cut a very long story short, just before Christmas I decided I could “loosen the reins” a little and just let the *vasanas* burn themselves out, as ultimately I have no control anyway!

Ted: Ironically, the one saying he has no control is exerting control by making the decision to “loosen the reins.” Non-doership is a subtle understanding. Ultimately, it has nothing to do with the actions (and decisions are mental actions) of the apparent person. It is the understanding that even the conscious intentions of the apparent person are only the consequence of the function of the mind, which is only imbued with sentiency by virtue of its being illumined by awareness.

This understanding does not preclude the apparent person from acting on the intentions that arise in the mind – or to put it more simply, from making decisions and executing actions that accord with the apparent person’s values and goals. The apparent person simply understands that he is not the one who put the thoughts and desires – or for that matter the thoughts concerning how to best deal with the desires – in the mind in the first place. Everything is *Isvara*’s will, and that includes the apparent person’s use of free will. Thus non-doership is not something someone does by (1) acting, (2) not acting or (3) acting but not taking responsibility for the action. Just as the “location of objects” analysis reveals that, despite the appearance of duality, reality is nothing other than non-dual awareness (in much the same way as the seemingly dualistic reality of the dream world is nothing other than the dreamer’s consciousness), so despite appearances to the contrary the doings of the doer are nothing other than actionless awareness conditioned by *maya* to appear as though it is doing something.

Non-doership is rooted in the understanding that limitless conscious existence is by nature all-pervasive, perfectly full, a partless whole and impersonal. Because awareness is all-pervasive it has no “arena” in which to act and thus no background against which any movement or change, which is the hallmark of action, could be measured. Neither does it have any place outside of itself to which it could move or any change that could be brought about to its essential nature. Just as the essential nature of water remains unchanged by the appearance and activity of waves, so the essential nature of awareness remains unchanged by the appearance and activity of objects. Moreover, because awareness is both perfectly full and wholly impersonal, it has no motivation to act.

Curtis: As you can imagine, things got very messy very quickly, and three months went by in a very hedonistic haze!

Ted: As you discovered, wanton indulgence of the *vasanas* is not the right approach. It only reinforces the little brats. It is best to restrain those desires that do not serve the purpose of

purifying the mind and gaining self-knowledge – assuming, that is, that self-knowledge and ultimate inner freedom are your goals. This doesn't mean that you can never indulge a craving again, but every time you refuse to act at the behest of a *vasana* you weaken its hold on you. It is also vitally important to indulge *vasanas* mindfully. If you're going to do a deed, then use it as vehicle for inquiry. Delve into the desire; investigate why it is so alluring. What did you expect to get from it, and did it deliver the goods? What you'll find is that no object ever provides lasting happiness. You might feel temporarily relieved of the pressure the *vasana* was exerting on your mind. But as soon as the satisfaction wears off, the same old tendency will mount another attack. Moderation is the key. As Swami Chinmayananda used to say, sin intelligently. Maintain resistance to the degree possible, moderately indulge to the degree necessary, and monitor results to a degree sufficient for spiritual growth.

Curtis: That chapter has now passed, and I'm back meditating, contemplating, reading and listening to James, and reading your *satsangs*. I'm getting the very choppy waters as calm as I can, so I can see the full reflection of the moon!

Ted: Good choice.

Curtis: However, a deep-seated issue has once again raised its head, one that I have run from and even tried to use, "spirituality" as an excuse to not deal with, and that is sexuality. I have battled with the fact that I am gay for a long time, and have hidden in a number of heterosexual relationships, even getting married, now divorced.

Now, ultimately I know I am awareness (I've even tried to use this an excuse to not deal with it), but from the *jiva's* point of view I must act out my "programming" and be "true to myself." As I haven't been doing this, it has caused a great deal of deep-seated mental agitation, which in turn affects my inquiry. So am I right in thinking to fully assimilate the knowledge "I am awareness" such issues need to be truly resolved? As you can't clean with a dirty cloth!

Thanks once again.

~ Curtis

Ted: Your understanding is sound. It is important to accept yourself as you are – provided the "as you are" bit isn't an excuse to transgress *dharma*, which in this case it is obviously not. The degree to which you don't accept the person you appear to be is the degree to which you don't accept *Isvara* and, moreover, the true self (i.e. pure awareness), for the entire apparent reality and all the conditions obtaining within it are essentially nothing other than awareness. You can't very well accept the non-dual nature of pure awareness if you can't even accept all aspects of the apparent person.

Given your propensity for indulgence, I would caution you to wade gently into these waters and not use acceptance of your true nature as an excuse to suddenly catch up on all the gay dating and sexual rendezvous you missed out on during the years of denial – provided, again, that your goals are the cultivation of mental purity and the gaining of self-knowledge. But by all means be true to the apparent person you seem to be while at the same time acknowledging the self that is

your true identity.

All the best, my friend.

~ Ted