

# Acceptance and Understanding

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**Liam:** Hello, Ted. It seemed about time to check in with you. Some ruminations have been occurring, and a note to you seemed necessary. Here's hoping you've been doing very well!

Regarding self-actualization, in the videos, the statement, "You're fine just how you are. Don't worry about changing anything," seems to not ring true, especially in the light of the importance of values and *sadhana-chatushtaya-sampatti*.

**Ted:** Both perspectives are true, relatively speaking. What James is getting at when he says to simply accept yourself as you are and not worry about changing anything is that before you start hacking away at the personal demeanor and *vasana*-driven behavior of the apparent individual person you seem to be, you need to accept that pseudo-self for what it is, as it is. It is not beneficial to self-inquiry to either deny or condemn the apparent individual person's character and inclinations. In the former case, the *vasanas* inspiring the apparent individual's preferences and consequent behaviors will simply lie in a state of dormancy within the causal body until an opportunity for their expression inevitably arises and the apparent individual's concentrated effort to keep them in check slackens, for ultimately only knowledge of the incapacity of the object to offer lasting fulfillment will permanently lay the desire for and pursuit of the object to rest; in the latter, one's cultivation of non-dual vision is compromised by one's indiscriminate rejection of certain forms awareness has seemingly assumed.

Regarding the advice that one should accept the apparent person as is, it is first of all important to recognize that you (i.e. the apparent individual person) didn't choose the *vasana*-bundle associated with and finding expression through your mind-body-sense complex. Moreover, the first step in addressing, managing and perhaps amending any tendencies that might run counter to your goals of assimilating and actualizing self-knowledge (i.e. realizing your true identity as limitless awareness as well as understanding what it means for you, limitless awareness, to live as an apparent individual person within the context of the apparent reality) is to admit and accept their existence. In this way, the acceptance is provisional. Once you have admitted to and embraced your *vasana*-determined demeanor, values and consequent behavioral tendencies, you can then make an honest assessment of the effect they are having on your ability to engage in effective self-inquiry. Any tendencies that you then determine to be disturbing your mind and distracting it from the introverted focus required for self-inquiry can be dealt with through various *yogic* practices, while those whose influence is not interfering with self-inquiry can be left alone.

The full assimilation of self-knowledge of course renders the improvement of the apparent individual a moot point. The *jnani*, one who knows his true identity to be limitless awareness, understands that he is not the apparent person he appears to be and thus sees little point in rearranging the furniture in a cardboard house, so to speak. Moreover, *adharmic* (i.e. unethical) actions are not an issue for a *jnani*. A *jnani*'s binding *vasanas* (i.e. compelling likes, dislikes, desires and fears) have been neutralized by the knowledge that he is already whole and complete as he is, and thus he will not be compelled to transgress *dharma* in order to acquire or avoid some object that he knows will know is incapable of either enhancing or diminishing his

essential nature.

**Liam:** Swami Paramarthananda in his Chapter I discourse on *Panchadasi* says that if the knowledge is not fully absorbed, it indicates the presence of some obstruction which needs to be cleared prior to full actualization (that's my paraphrasing). How to resolve this? I ask because it seems to be the case here. The knowledge seems clear but the full benefit does not seem to be present. There are some indicators of integration but when one hears of "the penny dropping" and other statements along this line, it seems there is something preventing freedom which self-examination has revealed.

**Ted:** If self-inquiry has revealed that your true nature is freedom (I'm assuming that is what you meant), what is the problem? You say the knowledge is clear, so what seems to be the problem? Why don't you accept the fact that you are free?

The only obstacle to your assimilation of self-knowledge is your continued identification with the apparent individual you seem to be. If the knowledge were clear, then you would know that you are the awareness in which the apparent person is appearing.

Don't feel bad or beat yourself up about this. *Avidya*, ignorance of our true nature, has been deeply ingrained in us through lifetimes of reinforcement. Just as behavioral habits don't instantaneously change upon our desire to change them, so our mental tendencies and belief systems most often require quite a bit of time and patient effort to remold, even after we've seen their erroneous nature and deleterious effects. Just as gold ornament requires some time to melt down and some patiently applied will to remold into another ornament, so our limiting thought patterns require time to soften and be reconfigured even after their initial exposure to the fire of self-knowledge.

**Liam:** Perhaps this indicates some lack of patience and the *sadhana* just needs to be continued?

**Ted:** Yes. Keep listening to, contemplating and applying the teaching of Vedanta, and even, as James often says, "Fake it till you make it." Though this advice may sound as if you are being encouraged to lie to yourself, such is not the case. Rather it is simply a playful way of encouraging you to season your practice of self-inquiry with *shradda*, faith in the teacher and the teachings. Not blind faith, mind you, but faith pending the results of your investigation into the nature of reality through a thorough analysis of your own experience. Because Vedanta is a tried-and-true, time-tested science, you can trust that it will inevitably bear the fruit of self-realization, which will ultimately enable you to stand with unshakable conviction in your true identity as whole, complete, limitless awareness. It cannot be otherwise, for Vedanta only reveals that which you already are.

**Liam:** Swami P. also talked about *akasha upasana* as a technique for increasing subtlety of the mind for reception of the knowledge. Are you familiar with this? Unfortunately, he didn't elaborate.

**Ted:** To be honest, I am not familiar with *akasha upasana* as a formal meditation technique. I do know that the meaning of the word *akasha* is “space,” and the meaning of the word *upasana* is “meditative adoration” (i.e. focused meditation on a particular symbolic object). Bearing these meanings in mind, my thought is that *akasha upasana* is a method of meditation in which the meditator fixes his or her attention on the space (or perhaps even “silence”) in which the entire array of objective phenomena, both “outer” and “inner,” arise. If such is the case, then the technique might be very similar to the meditation technique James describes in the chapter on meditation in his book *How to Attain Enlightenment*. Some of the *upasanas* prescribed by and described in the scriptures, however, are quite elaborate and precise practices that require years of concentrated effort to master and reap the benefits of. If the *akasha upasana* to which Swami Paramarthananda refers is such a formal technique, then I have to admit that I do not know the particulars that comprise its practice.

**Liam:** At the risk of sounding impatient, the *karma yoga* attitude is relied upon as much as can be maintained but the people I work with as ignorant *jivas* sometimes are very trying; self-referential conversation, bla-bla-bla-ing in the workplace, as James Swartz calls it, identifying with the “work stresses,” etc. Socializing seems to fit into the same category. Presuming you are in the same situation in your workplace, can you give some advice?

**Ted:** As much as possible, avoid gratuitous social interactions that extrovert the attention and distract the mind from its focus on the self. When such situations cannot be avoided, simply watch the drama unfold and play the character you’ve been assigned. Self-inquiry does not require your removal from the world but simply your dis-identification with the character and contexts with which you, awareness, are associated. Ultimately, the assimilation of self-knowledge enables you to play the limited (i.e. *vasana*-conditioned) character as which you’ve been cast by *Isvara* while simultaneously standing in your true identity as the limitless consciousness illumining and enlivening that character.

**Liam:** Thank you, Ted. Happy holidays to you!

**Ted:** Back atcha, my friend.