

***Isvara* Is Not the Boss**

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Larissa: The *vasana* is very old, tenacious and daunting as it recycles through my being now and again. It threads through four generations on the maternal side of my family and has established itself firmly in the ego's lair. The conditioning associated with protecting, nurturing and providing for children alone prompts fear, instigating anger, and the unconscious cloud descends on all. I have experienced it many times before and my *jiva* is all too familiar with the pain associated with "surviving." I know now that my recent unconscious state was triggered by this *vasana*. The ego becomes so fierce that I am resistant to any knowledge and devotion to *Isvara*; in fact I am downright mean and hard-hearted!

Quote from *Meditation: Inquiry into the Self*:

"Because it ultimately spells the end of ego control, devotional practice often generates strong ego resistance. Negativity tends to exhaust as devotion develops, but occasionally negative *samskaras* refuse to yield and require a radical procedure."

I read this snippet this morning as it randomly and very appropriately flashed itself before my eyes as I scrolled through the pages of this book at ShiningWorld. My devotion was non-existent during this period in time. The predominant *guna* was *rajas* to fix the extreme agitation associated with the fear of being on my own to raise the children. The belief that something tragic (which happened in my own family), unlawful (which also happened) or simply not being loved anymore would result in me being alone to challenge the drudgery of householding becomes overwhelming and all I want to do is fight back. I am all too familiar with the nonsense of the story; however, this is where the roots feed from to nourish the unconscious robotic reactions of Larissa when the *vasana* arrives. I couldn't be more thankful to have these insights. I clearly see the impact of this deep groove in my own mother, and it is not an attractive manifestation. The first line of defence is to push the offender away to attempt to avoid the pain associated with the loss. Then I become a frightened turtle, closing up under a hard, impenetrable shield. No one should bother the turtle as it lies nervously awaiting the fall of doom, and if anyone disturbs this frantic state of mind, there is a quick snap.

Ah, yes... fear. So I saw it this time as I have before; however, I know it now. I rarely confide in anyone as I can usually solve my troubles on my own. I know they come and go and I don't like to feed the story or unnecessarily involve others. I asked for your help so that I might understand this in the light of knowledge. What I am realizing is that the knowledge has not yet comforted the ego's know-it-all position. By asking for help, I feel as though an understanding has been made. As God was a very foreign idea in my mind until I understood *Isvara*, I am still not completely devoted, it seems, particularly in troubled times. I want to consecrate this practice and make it strong as I know this is my bridge. Until Larissa steps down to allow *Isvara* to guide her, she will remain identified with the ego as her protector. So I will ask for help from my teachers, my Self, *Isvara*, and in these desperate moments send the thoughts, excessive energy and foul odours of this old fart back to its source!!

~ Mucho love to you both, Larissa

Sundari: Hello, dear Larissa. What a beautiful email. Thank you for opening your heart and sharing. I am so touched by your complete honesty, so rare and so pure. I read this to James and we both feel you have a career as a writer!

My apologies for the late reply; we have been busy with two seminars in South Africa and have just got to our rental apartment in Durban near my daughter's place. James is very tired and needs to rest before pushing off soon to India in just over two weeks – if *Isvara* in the form of officialdom relents and grants him a visa! We have had two gruelling days facing petty bureaucracy trying to sort this out.

I know exactly what you mean in your email, as I have had similar *samskaras* to deal with. The same *samskaras* that enable you to cope are also the ones that bind you. And like you, I have seldom shared *jiva* problems with anyone for the same reasons you give. I know that the problems are not real problems; I do not want to feed them by talking about them and know that they will pass. This is most often a good thing, except it can also strengthen the ego's position that it can cope with everything, when it really can't. We are so blessed to have self-knowledge to see us through apparent dark times.

Devotion has always been a part of my *sadhana* and a saving grace when times have been really tough, as well as when they have been wonderful. What we don't realise as *jivas* is that devotion and gratitude are gifts *Isvara* gives to us because *Isvara* does not need our gratitude or devotion. It is entirely for our benefit. *Karma yoga* is really *bhakti yoga*. In whatever way we approach *Isvara*, *Isvara* responds. As neither awareness nor *Isvara* have any problem with the way we are as *jivas* because there is only the self, when we do not pray or respond with devotion *Isvara* assumes we are happy with the way we are. Like James says, the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

What is really important to understand is that, when it comes to how we relate to our environment, to live free one must do so from the point of view of the subtle body, not from the causal body, i.e. not from the point of *Isvara* or the *gunas*. It is only through the subtle body that self-knowledge can purify the mind which then thinks and acts in accordance with the values that belong to the self. If this does not take place, one can mistakenly believe that *Isvara* is in charge – which is true, up to a point. The *jiva* is part and parcel of its environment and so subject to *Isvara's* universal laws. But the *jiva* is really *jivatman*, so free of *Isvara*. And *Isvara* is really *paramatman*, so free of *Isvara* too!

Isvara is not the boss, the self is. There has to be a cognitive shift in your understanding (i.e. in the subtle body) and actions need to flow from that shift to establish a new pattern in the causal body and allow *Isvara* to flow through the new patterns in the subtle body. *Isvara* does not add or subtract value. It simply facilitates *karma* that the *jiva* creates. The *jiva* is in the driver's seat as far as *karma* is concerned, as *Isvara* is *karma phala data* – an impersonal mechanism for delivering the results of actions. *Isvara* does not condition the self, and though the self is passive, it is unlimited and has the power to act. Therefore the self rules *maya*.

Remember that *Isvara* is awareness plus *maya* and *jiva* is awareness plus the five sheaths. So if you are awareness you can override *Isvara*, i.e. "your" programming. You can say "NO!" to *Isvara*. It takes great discipline and determination to live this way on the *jiva's* part. Binding *vasanas* or *samskaras* are not going to go away by saying that they "belong to *Isvara*." This is a mistake many spiritual people make in the erroneous belief that they must "surrender everything to *Isvara*"

or believing that everything that happens or does not happen is *Isvara's* will. This stems from thinking that *Isvara* is like a Big Daddy meting out instructions for every action. *Isvara* is an impersonal force and does not care one way or the other what the *jiva* does or does not do. *Isvara* does not have a will. *Isvara* is just the rules playing out. One has to evaluate what it means to say something is *Isvara's* will. If one does not adjust the mind to think and act from the point of view of the self, *Isvara* does run everything for the *jiva*. That's called ignorance, or *maya*. Both *Isvara* and *jiva* are *mithya*. One cannot impose *satya* on *mithya* if freedom from suffering is one's aim.

If you are assessing opportunities that *Isvara* presents, you have to consider what you want do you with them. If you are just observing, that is one thing. But you are assessing because you want to make a choice. There is no surrender involved. There is only action or non-action either as the self unconditioned by *Isvara* or as the apparent self conditioned by *Isvara*. Surrendered or not, it makes no difference to how *Isvara* works unless there is self-knowledge involved. Then one "surrenders" to *Isvara* because one understands one is *Isvara*. Surrender is a consequence of knowledge, not an action. It all depends if you are looking at things from the point of view of the self or the apparent self. If you are the self, you cannot surrender to the self. If you take yourself to be the *jiva*, you surrender to the self as the only teacher until such time as self-knowledge is firm.

It is always a basic lack of clarity about the self. If you are looking at this topic from the point of view of the *jiva* who knows about the self, the *jiva* then understands *Isvara* and the self as objects, i.e. indirect knowledge. When you understand that the *jiva* is the self, then you can act as the self and control *Isvara*, not be under the control of *Isvara*. This is functioning from the self's point of view rather than from the *jiva's* (*Isvara's*) point of view.

This is self-actualisation.

If you have not read this on *samskaras*, read it and let me know if it helps:

Samskaras take time to go away – they will fade more quickly when they are fully seen and understood. Deep-seated *samskaras* will keep reappearing until they are fully negated. *Isvara* has no qualms about dredging up from the depths our deepest, darkest and least fabulous tendencies and is sure to do so when we like it least. Anxiety is a constant companion when we have work to do to clean up the mind, and we are very likely to forget the knowledge and contravene *dharma* when these destructive patterns arise in the mind. One has to catch the pattern very quickly and apply the opposite thought, which works because it objectifies the anxiety – if one can remember to think it when one is stressed and in the grip of a *samskara*.

Karma yoga is perfectly designed to destroy *samskaras* and works when worry/stress/fear/blame is there – if applied. However, the nature of *rajas* is such that the *tamas* (denial, blindness) that accompanies it causes one to feel that one does not have "time" to deconstruct the desire/fear/blame on the spot! *Rajas* is synonymous with time, as time is another word for desire.

When in the control of *rajas* and *tamas*, the doer forgets that it is now an inquirer and that it is supposed to free the mind of worry through self-knowledge, not to get the object in the world, whatever it is – like improving Larissa, for instance. It thinks that the results of the actions it takes will free the mind – which they will, temporarily – leaving the *samskara* carefully concealed and intact, however. When *rajas* is strong, the mind cannot observe itself. It is caught up in the future, the thought that things need to be different, so the mind acts to correct

the situation, usually in negative ways. The mind does not act to correct itself because *sattva* is covered by *rajas* and *tamas*.

When *tamas* predominates, the mind is too dull to discriminate; it is prone to denial and avoidance. *Rajas* and *tamas* always work together. Where you find projection (*rajas*) you will find denial (*tamas*). When *satya* (the true nature of the mind) predominates, the mind becomes clear and one is able to see the natural order of creation. Then every action taken will be with the right attitude.

The key to most *samskaras* is the word “time.” Time represents the pressure of the *samskara*. The ego either wants what it wants the way it wants immediately – or it believes that it needs “time” to resolve issues and get what it wants. Either way, it employs distraction because what it is really after is maintaining the status quo. When ignorance is operating, the thought/word “time” is meant to refer to something real, something substantial. But all it refers to is “I want.” We know what is behind that – “I am small, I am insecure, I am afraid, I am unworthy, I am incomplete” – etc.

If one is vigilant and can identify the *rajas/tamas* cycle in time, one can ameliorate the effect of a *samskara* very effectively by dismissing the present thought, by taking the line of reasoning it represents to its logical conclusion thus defusing the power of the *samskara* in the moment.

But then the doer/ego will immediately try to prevent this alternative because doing is the key to the maintenance of its identity as someone in control of his or her destiny – see the fear, again *rajas*. This is the problem in relationships too. If one really surrenders to the relationship, you lose control.

Renunciation of *karma* and the results causes another problem for the doer. It presents the scenario it was trying to avoid in the first place: no control, which is fear-based too. If the doer actually analyzed the root thought in the light of self-knowledge – which is: “I need this result because I am incomplete, small and afraid” – the whole problem would go away instantly.

But if the *samskara* is doing the thinking (which is usually the case for the doer) that is the worst alternative. “What if...?” – and off it goes worrying. Fear is meant to be very smart. At some point in the life of the doer, worry is self-validating. It equals love for the doer. It means “I care about myself.” But it is a purely *samsaric* value. If one encounters a terrible fear of any kind, dismiss it immediately. Reaffirm the opposite thought: “No bad result, I am awareness.”

Fear is hard to love.

Samskaras are never about what they purport to be about. An unnamed fear lurks behind them all. No matter what you do or don’t do, it is there attaching itself to an action. One needs to be sick and tired of the mind it creates. Yes, one can walk away from various situations relatively easily, but one cannot walk away from one’s conditioning other than through self-knowledge, it follows you wherever you go, just like your shadow does. Walking away from the belief that worldly results are necessary for peace of mind is the real (and only) renunciation because it amounts to renunciation of the doer itself.

The best *mantra* is “Nothing can go wrong.” Nothing ever went “wrong,” because life is not about me getting what I think I want. It is about the me that does not want. The only cure for a bad attitude is a good attitude.

There so many good thoughts available to remove the stress in any situation, but attachment to the doer make them all unpalatable. Negative thoughts then rush in taking over the mind, making it impossible to see clearly. The renunciation thought is particularly difficult for the doer because it indicates a failure to get what it wants the way it wants it when it wants it. It can't stand that thought, because the "I am the self" thought does not actually sustain it when it is faced with various everyday situations that involve loss or the fear of loss, as you have found. This is indeed very frustrating!

You are doing great, Larissa. This email you wrote is written as the self observing the life of the *jiva* unfold. Its truthfulness is the self talking with a clear and dispassionate voice. You are beautiful.

We are here for you. James sends much love and big hugs, and so do I.

~ Blessings to you, Sundari