

Living Free of Illusion

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Larissa: Good morning, Sundari. Well, I began composing a note to you yesterday morning and hoped to revisit it this morning but it has disappeared! Oh, well.

I can't say enough about how appreciative I am of your love and support. This is a crazy time of life but it proves an incredible training ground for practicing inquiry. I have been highly *rajasic* and *tamas* has arrived. I love James' practice of "obeying *tamas*"! Yeah! I will indulge, in fact. I am back to seeing clearly and with much gratitude. I know I have some bits to deal with in terms of my role and duties here in *samsara* but I know the knowledge of who I truly am will see me through.

Sundari: You are so welcome, Larissa, it's always a pleasure hearing from you. ☺ Yes, our lives as *jivas* sure are training grounds and all the more so if we know it. *Tamas* can be a very positive energy if it is *sattvic*. Pure *tamas* is hard to take as it is such a heavy, dull energy. It really helps to remember that the *gunas* are always changing and not in our control, so observing them play out in the mind is all we can do. However, as all *jivas* have dominant *gunas*, they can definitely be ameliorated through self-knowledge without manhandling the psyche in an attempt to change it or perfect it, through appropriate actions taken in the *karma yoga* spirit to maintain peace of mind. As you know, freedom requires first identifying "your" conditioning, understanding it in the light of self-knowledge and then dis-identifying with the conditioning – and thus the *jiva* – as your primary identity. Freedom is not about changing or perfecting the *jiva*, an impossible (and unnecessary) task anyway. If the *jiva* is not real, why bother? That said, self-actualisation does not take place unless the binding *vasanas* are rendered non-binding and the doer negated. Understanding the *jiva*'s conditioning in the light of self-knowledge (the *gunas*) is the only way to achieve this.

As it is with all the teachings of Vedanta, knowledge is power. Sadly, many people try to control the *gunas* without understanding them. This can lead to a painful exercise in what is called "will power." When we do things we recognize as harmful, but don't understand the mechanism at work, we make resolutions, trying to manipulate the psyche. Sometimes these resolutions are kept, often they are broken. And we suffer accordingly. As the *gunas* are *maya*, they are illusory. They draw us into the world of objects – including thoughts and feelings – and lead us to identify with these objects. The whole point of identifying the *gunas* (which are also objects) and managing them is to understand the *gunas*, not to be afraid of what is bad or become attached to what is good in the *gunas*. Many people try to make self-knowledge work in situations (like work, relationships, money, etc.) that are unworkable, taking the *karma yoga* approach. But this will not work because your life has to serve the Truth, not the other way around. Truth is impersonal. Neither awareness nor *Isvara* care one way or the other because neither awareness nor *Isvara* have a problem with duality. It is up to the *jiva* to choose peace of mind. This is why we cannot tell people what is right for them. Everyone has to work out their own *dharma* according to their *svadharma* and *karmic* situation.

Larissa: The truth is, I desperately would love to be living on my own; however, I have two kids and a partner who works hard to support us. There are some serious projections that I cast out on him, as his *tamas* is sometimes more than I can bear when the kids and I need his attention (love), but he works long hours in a very demanding job and his lifestyle is not conducive to being clear-minded. I just wish I had more respect and desire for him. I feel far too independent and entrenched in a masculine role (a typical North American-woman disease – as chivalry is non-existent due to women's lib). I seem to work out this love *vasana* in my dreams where a man arrives and I have these strong desires for him! I know that a man will not fix or fill this desire – I have had enough experiences – but it is a romantic notion and I know that true love and kindness exist. Anyway, the dice fall as they may and I enjoy the results.

Sundari: The man/woman archetype is the ultimate duality, and desire for the “other” is the coin of the realm in *samsara*. The fantasy of romantic love is based on the illusion that there exists the perfect “other” capable of filling the feeling of separation, incompleteness. It is a universal *vasana*, very tenacious and resistant to self-knowledge because ignorance, the belief that you are a male or a female, is so hardwired. As long as you recognise your projections to be what they are and do not identify with them, all you can do is let them play out until they don't anymore. Your partner is who he is, and your *karma* is such that there is not much you can do about your situation, it seems. If you are financially dependent on him and he is doing his best to follow his *dharma* by taking care of his family, you need to honour him for this, just as you need to honour your *dharma* as a mother and wife. It sounds like he is a good man. If the momentum of past events is playing out (*prarabdha karma*) and you cannot change it, accept it. Don't resist. Do what you can to ameliorate it with equanimity, *karma yoga* and through *dharmic* lifestyle choices. Know that it is not you and it will pass; this is what *Isvara* is bringing your way as the *jiva* and you must flow with it. Resistance keeps you tied to the person and is a guarantee of more suffering. Sure, being totally turned on by your partner is a definite plus, but there are many types of relationship and not many of them include a true spiritual and physical attraction. Work with what you have, even though at times you must feel like your needs are not being met. Look at those needs in the light of self-knowledge and see if they really have any bearing on what matters in terms of your current life situation – or as awareness. You will find the answer is no to both.

Larissa: The kids and I have worked out our battle and I am enjoying my interaction with them instead of the kitchen sink!

Sundari: Good, I am glad to hear it. The drudgery of daily chores, especially taking care of young children, can most certainly make it hard to feel free. But if you bring love and humility to each action, consecrating everything, like washing the dishes or making a meal, to *Isvara*, you will find the agitation in the mind being sublimated to a higher cause – *moksa*.

Larissa: I thank you again with weepy eyes. I am so grateful. Thank you, *Isvara*, for James and Sundari! I will be rereading your note many more times. It is packed with goodness for me to chew on.

Sundari: We are always here for you, Larissa.