

Pure Objects and Distorted Objects

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Henry: Dear Ted, I hope the retreat was enjoyable.

Ted: Thank you. It was wonderful.

Henry: I've been wondering about this for a couple weeks now. James said, on *Panchadasi*:

“You (*jiva*) ‘create’ a reaction, an interpretation to the objects presented to you. The *jiva* is not experiencing what is actually there, the *jiva* always only experiences its own projections, likes and dislikes (*vasanas*). That is the reason why the *jiva* has such a problem, because our *vasanas* distort reality. We perceive reality based on our beliefs and opinions.”

So my *jiva* is provided a “pure object” by *Isvara*, but my *jiva* misinterprets that pure object and then suffering occurs? *Isvara* provides *jiva* the *vasanas*, but *jiva* projects the *vasanas*?

Ted: From the ultimate perspective, *Isvara* is responsible for providing what we might call *vasanas*-as-such. In this sense *Isvara* is the intelligence that contains the knowledge that constitutes the intelligent design of all objective phenomena. Based on this intelligence, *Isvara* is able to project the *vyavaharika satyam*, the transactional or empirical manifestation, which technically speaking includes *pratibhasika satyam*, the subtle *guna*-rooted, *vasana*-based, *raga-dvesha*-influenced interpretations and evaluations that the *jiva* projects or superimposes on the *vyavaharika satyam*, or “surrounding world.”

Henry: And what is the appearance of an “undistorted object” *Isvara* provides? I feel I'm missing something here.

Ted: The object itself doesn't necessarily look (or sound, feel, etc.) any different – though sometimes the *jiva*'s projections can make the object appear to be something other than what it is, such as in the case of the rope that is mistaken for a snake. For the most part, the distortion is a matter of opinions, evaluations, interpretations, meanings, etc. having been superimposed upon the basic fact of its existence. For instance, getting fired from one's job is a fact. That such an occurrence is bad or unjust or indicates that the person is dumb or that the boss is an idiot and on and on it goes and where it stops nobody knows distorts the object. Facts are simply issues to be dealt with, whereas distortions create problems – and almost invariably problems that **belong to or are the responsibility of** (or, as is often the case, **the fault of**) the apparent individual. Distortions most often serve to fortify the ego's sense of ownership, doership and enjoyership, and hence are a fundamental aspect of suffering.

Henry: Is there nothing solely of *jiva*'s interpretation apart from what *Isvara* gives or doesn't give?

Or the “I”-sense that *jiva* believes is truly “his” that is not connected to *Isvara*?

Ted: The answers to these questions were explained above.