

# Sorrow and Discrimination

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**Steve:** Hi, Ted.

I had my first clear experience of allowing the logic to work. I was flummoxed (had to look that one up) by the unfolding about the illegitimacy of grieving in Swami Dayananda's *Bhagavad Gita Home Study Course*. After rereading it and letting it incubate overnight, the logic came through loud and clear. If sorrow comes from *atma*, it is my (permanent) nature and it makes me happy. If it comes from *anatma*, it has nothing to do with me and is therefore of no concern. I had a sense of listening and understanding rather than figuring it out. Because of the logic, there was no need to figure out which one it was. Does this sound correct?

**Ted:** Sorrow doesn't come from *atma*, however. Swami Dayananda says that if sorrow came from *atma*, it would be part of our nature, and thus we would not try to get rid of it. We only try to get rid of something that isn't natural. Swamiji is making a joke by saying that if sorrow were natural to us, then we would be happy feeling sorrow.

You are correct in your understanding that sorrow has nothing to do with the self. Pain and pleasure are and always will be experiences had by the body-mind-sense complex. But sorrow is eradicated through the assimilation of self-knowledge. When the mind knows that the pain and pleasure it experiences don't actually enhance or diminish awareness itself, then the mind (i.e. the apparent person) doesn't suffer, because the apparent person knows that his/her true self is always okay no matter what happens within the context of the apparent reality.

**Steve:** One of my very long-term issues surfaced today: jealousy. I felt vengeful, lonely, etc.

In the effort to apply Vedanta, I reminded myself that I am whole, complete, ordinary, non-dual, actionless, ever-blissful, unborn, unconcerned awareness.

The feelings have persisted (it happened a short while ago), but at least intellectually I know that I am not being affected.

**Ted:** Good. That understanding creates some space between you (i.e. the self) and the apparent person you seem to be (i.e. the body-mind-sense complex with which you are associated), and that space affords you a buffer zone between your essential nature and the experience of the body-mind-sense complex.

**Steve:** I have withdrawn (in a positive and a negative sense, which was difficult, maybe impossible, to not do). I brought to mind the necessity to practice forbearance to the extent possible and not retaliate or blame the other person.

I also thought of it as a mini exam of how I am able to connect to my awareness.

The upset and feeling of alienation is already easing as I write this. The problem has gotten a lot better since the old days.

Any comments or further suggestions about how to handle these situations?

**Ted:** No. The discrimination between *atma* and *anatma* is the heart of Vedanta. The only suggestion I make is to really pay attention to how, despite all the changes that take place in the body-mind-sense complex, the awareness that illumines those changes never changes. Everything – every object and experience – only appears in awareness. The objects and experiences change, but notice how awareness itself never changes.

An analogy that might help you digest this fact is that of the experience of sitting next to someone in a car that is traveling 70 miles per hour as opposed to standing on the curb and seeing someone speed by in a car traveling 70 miles per hour. When you are seated next to a person in a car that is traveling 70 miles per hour, the person appears to be still because you are traveling at the same speed. But if you are standing still on the roadside and someone seated in a car traveling 70 miles per hour speeds by, you experience the person moving really fast relative to your stationary position. Just so, if the self were changing along with the mind, it wouldn't be able to detect the movements and modifications of the mind. Only because the self is still is it able to recognize, so to speak, the movement of the mind.

**Steve:** Thanks a lot. By the way, I made a \$75 donation at your website.

**Ted:** Thank you for your generosity.

~ Take care, Ted