

What Gets Destroyed with Self-Knowledge?

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Diana: With enlightenment *vasanas* get destroyed, so the *vasanas* associated with that apparent person don't take birth again as a new body. But I ask, what gets destroyed? Is this only then answerable from *paramartha* view? As well, there is no "unique person" existing inherently apart from its *vasanas*. So the apparent person is a formulation of *vasanas*, not the *vasanas* formulated BY the apparent person. Can't have an apparent person without *vasanas*. They are synonymous?

Arlindo: *Vasanas* do not get destroyed by self-realization and enlightenment – what happens is that with self-knowledge the *vasanas* are rendered impersonal and therefore non-binding. *Vasanas* remain there, but the *jivamukta* does not claim them to be "my" *vasanas*, "my" thoughts, "my" actions.

Once the *jiva* owns what belongs to *Isvara*, he is trapped in the apparent wheel of *samsara* and the thought "I/me/mine" will have a strong hold on *maya*'s impersonal phenomenal experience. The delusional thought "I/me/mine" is what reincarnates – it is also what constitutes *jiva*'s erroneous identity as an apparent separate and independent individual.

What gets destroyed is only the ignorance of one's true nature/identity, as well the ignorance of the non-dual nature of reality. The whole manifestation is a product of *vasanas*. If there are no *vasanas* (the causal realm), there will be no subtle realm, and no physical creation in which the individual erroneously personifies *Isvara*'s experiences.

Manifestation of *vasanas* (creation in its causal formation) is a play of *maya/Isvara*. *Jiva* is only a superimposition on *Isvara*'s mysterious "subject-object" phenomenon called "experience." Self-knowledge will interrupt *jiva*'s sense of ownership of *vasanas*-thoughts-actions, and therefore chances are that the "*jiva*-thought" will not gather enough energy to pull off another apparent independent birth.

Diana: How is it that some sages still had what appeared to be binding *vasanas*? For example, food, snuff, smoking? Were they just not identified with their actions?

Arlindo: Yes, you have already answered your question. Such *vasanas* belong to the body – it reminds me of Nisargadatta saying let what belongs to the body stay with the body every time people would challenge him about his smoking habit. Apparent *vasanas* belong to *Isvara* first, and to the body-mind second if *jiva* still believes itself to be the thinker, feeler, doer.

As to the self-realized sage, biding *vasanas* will represent a problem for himself and his devotees/disciples, mainly when they are in violation of *dharma* because it will create *papa karma* for the teacher and distrust in the mind of the students. The sexual *vasanas* are the most troublesome. Generally speaking, a firm self-knowledge together with a mind purified to a certain extent will dissolve or at least turn binding *vasanas* into non-binding ones.

That is what we call *moksa*, or freedom, but in truth there is no such a thing as 100% freedom/purification for a *jivamukta* – some traces of deep and long-lived habitual desires may still surface from time to time. Not a big deal, since the *jivamukta* knows his true nature to be of *nirguna brahman* (free of qualities and attributes). His firm knowledge and his willpower to say “no” to binding *vasanas* not in harmony with *dharma* will determine the degree of his/her freedom.

Diana: Where is the “line of discrepancy,” so to speak? The *jivamukta* finds no concern with “getting involved” to purify, say, smoking *bidis* or drinking an excess of alcohol. Should he merely “witness it”?

Arlindo: It is a fine line, Diana – and pretty much up to the *jivamukta* to look after his mind– if he does not take care of his *adharmic* binding *vasanas*, he will have to deal with the *karma* (the result of his *adharmic* actions). Take the case of Nisargadatta, for example: we could say that his habit of smoking was in violation of his *svadharmas* – and in fact he died of throat cancer. To follow *dharma* is optional for the *jivamukta*, but in any case, he will not escape the *karmic* laws operating here, meaning that if he wants to live a peaceful and happy life he will keep up doing his *sadhana*. Depending on the nature of his mental construct, his dispassion may even induce him to wish to leave the body altogether! ☺