

“Your” Self Is *The Self*

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Tatiana: Well, thank you. This letter of correspondence has brought up and elucidated a *vasana*, I believe. Last night I had a dream that I had to pay admission to get into church. The sanctuary was outside and covered with snow. I lay down and fell asleep in the snow and when I woke up after the service, I was exhausted. Right after was the real church service, an art class where I was being evaluated based on my participation, but during the critique could not remember the name of an artist that a student’s work reminded me of. Ironically, I studied art formally and have a detailed knowledge of it, but could not in that moment remember the reference, because I was so tired from the freezing and expensive outdoor service. I had also forgotten to bring my own portfolio to class, so would be graded very poorly for the entire session. The feeling associated with this dream was anger and frustration that I was being judged unfairly.

Ted: The imagery in this dream suggests that the apparent person has lost access to her true self. Now she has to pay to get “in” and even then the sense of separation continues to make the experience of worship, which could represent spiritual practice in general, an unpleasant one during which she feels exhausted and reaps no fruit from the service and the effort she put forth to attend it. The art class is an extension of the service or, as you say, the real service in the sense that while the service represents the spiritual teachings, the art class represents the implementation of those teachings within the context of your daily life – that is, to what degree your actions express the truth of your being. In a more general sense, art itself could represent the manifestation itself. Given that the self in the form of *Isvara* is the “artist” of the manifestation, the fact that you cannot recall the name of the artist could indicate that you feel you have forgotten the true nature of the self. The fact that you have forgotten your own portfolio suggests that perhaps you don’t feel like you “walk the talk” or are not adequately or appropriately expressing the truth. There also seems to be a definite feeling of inadequacy and impotence in the face of much harsh judgment concerning your “progress” toward spiritual growth and self-realization.

I’m going to go out on a limb here, but given that you are most likely still suffering the effects of some unhealed emotional wounds from your prior study under the guidance of Andrew Cohen, as well as harboring what I’m guessing is a fairly fierce *vasana* for self-deprecation, which is what predisposed you to such a violent approach in the first place and provided the basis of the rationalization that allowed you to put up with the harsh criticism and abuse that characterized his “teaching” style, the dire conditions of this dream are understandable.

Please know that Vedanta is not characterized by such harsh judgment and criticism. Vedanta says you already are that for which you are searching, that the seemingly ordinary awareness that illumines the mind and simply enough allows you to know what you know and what you don’t know is the same extraordinary Supreme Cosmic Consciousness that is the fundamental reality of all that is. How could it be otherwise? There can only be one fundamental reality, and therefore one’s own self must be the self. The only task at hand, so to speak, is to prepare the mind for the assimilation of this truth. You are not actually going to get anything from Vedanta. The teachings of Vedanta simply serve as a means of removing the ignorance that is currently

obscuring your appreciation of your true beauty.

Tatiana: I know this is ego and the expression of my limited space-time body-mind “person,” and that’s fine. Welcome to the wonderful world of *vasanas* colored by *tamas*!

Ted: It’s awesome that you can recognize this fact. That is a huge step.

Tatiana: I am just really impressed by how the self/me can patiently show me/itself this material in sleep. And how the self in the form of Ted can get the ball rolling in the first place.

Ted: Just remember that while the material is the self, the self is not the material. That is, the material is the self in the sense that due to the fact that reality is non-dual, the self is both the “substanceless substance” of which the entire manifestation in both its subtle and gross aspects is made and the intelligence that informs the entire manifestation, lends sentiency to those beings with a subtle body and is the “light” in which all objective phenomena stand revealed. The self, however, is not the material in the sense that no discrete objective phenomenon or even the entire collective of “creation” can comprehensively define, describe or delineate that whose nature is limitless, edgeless, all-pervasive. Moreover, while the existence of the entire manifestation depends on awareness, the existence of awareness is entirely independent of objective phenomena, a fact that we glimpse a reflection of during the deep sleep state. Whether objects are present or not, awareness always is.

Tatiana: In any case, my “*jiva*” has suffered from this *vasana* for a lifetime, and I think I was getting reactive about your responses because of its presence.

Ted: Yes, any strong emotional reaction is an invariable indication that a binding *vasana* is rearing its ugly head.

Tatiana: Again, I am new to Vedanta, but really do get the concepts for the most part. I think they are designed to be pretty “user friendly.”

Ted: They have to be. The only point of Vedanta is to alleviate suffering. If the teachings weren’t both reasonable and practical, then aside from any intellectual titillation they might offer, they would be worthless.

Tatiana: The language is new to me, so the use of Sanskrit words in your responses was creating confusion and then reactivity.

Ted: I’m sorry to hear that. I like to use Sanskrit terms in order to show that the concepts expressed in my comments have a scriptural basis and hold true to the methodology preserved by the *sampradaya*, the teaching tradition, rather than being my own philosophical conjectures.

When I do use Sanskrit terms, I always follow the first use of each with a clause defining the term, as I did in the preceding sentence. If you prefer, I can refrain from using Sanskrit terms – except in certain instances when no English term can suffice to convey the concept – in our dialogues.

Tatiana: When I went back to the charts and looked at the material, I could pair the words with what we were talking about in the last letter. Thanks for your suggestion to do that. Also I read *Tattva Bodh* with James' commentary. It is magnificent and will be something that I go back to again and again.

~ Much love, Tatiana