

The Low-down on *Vasanas*

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Cathy: Hi, Ram. I was looking at another of your *Self Realization* DVDs and that chart you have up (I would love a copy of it to put up on my wall) is very interesting. Between the self and the bodies there are the *vasanas*. So the more *vasanas*, the more darkness; the fewer *vasanas*, the more clarity (of the self). So the object of study, it seems to me, are the *vasanas*, as they are the ones causing the darkness.

Ram: For all intents and purposes, yes. But it is not the *vasanas* per se, because there are many good *vasanas*. It is attachment to the belief that acting out a *vasana* can produce happiness. Yes, if you act out a helpful *vasana* it will produce a pleasant experience and this will have a beneficial effect on the mind. But the effect will not last. And if you act out an unhelpful *vasana* it will agitate the mind. Of course, this will not last either. You will only act out a *vasana* if you think it will benefit you in some way. But since there is no lasting happiness in *vasana*-generated experiences, it is a waste of time to act out your *vasanas*.

Implicit in this situation is the understanding that you are free to act them out or not. A binding *vasana* is one that you cannot help but act out. You have no choice. It is on you without warning and you find yourself doing something or saying something that may cause unwanted *karma*. If you do not act out a *vasana* – a helpful one or an unhelpful one – you will not have the experience that the *vasana* is about to produce. If you have a *vasana* – a desire – for sex and you have sex, there are consequences, sometimes good and sometimes bad. If you have a *vasana* but you do not have sex, the only consequence is that you will feel frustrated until the *vasana* leaves your mind. And you will have reduced the pressure of the sex *vasana* a bit because you did not reinforce it by having sex.

If you only act out the *vasanas* that are necessary to maintain life – food, clothing, shelter, etc. and forgo gratuitous *vasanas* – entertainment, self-improvement, power, etc. – your mind will become very peaceful and introverted, and inquiry will happen automatically. If you develop the *vasana* for inquiry and you have the good fortune to have a teacher who can, with the aid of scripture, help you, you will get self-knowledge, that is to say, your ignorance of who you are will be removed. This leads to the second issue that your email brings up.

In fact the *vasanas* do not cause the darkness. You have it backwards. Darkness, ignorance of the nature of the self, causes the *vasanas*. You cannot remove darkness by action, unless that action is inquiry. You can only remove ignorance by knowledge, i.e. understanding. What is that understanding? That the self is whole and complete. You neutralize the *vasanas* in one go when you get that. If you think the self is incomplete, you will keep generating *vasanas*.

Cathy: My computer has been attacked by a virus that I can't seem to get rid of, but I guess that is the nature of viruses, right? The same as *vasanas*, they have their nature. So when John and I argue, it is really the *vasanas* that are arguing. The selves (self) cannot argue. And the reason why it is so hard for John and I to get on is that our *vasanas* are so different and they are all fighting for survival. Is this correct?

And when I am with him my *vasanas* get stirred up by his *vasanas* and vice versa. Right?

Ram: Got it in one, Cathy. A gold star for you. Go to the head of the class! You are now the official teacher's pet.

Cathy: I am spending a peaceful Christmas day by my self, listening to your DVDs and contemplating the truth; it can't get better than that!

Ram: Good for you, Cathy. Merry Xmas.