

Stuck in *Sattva* = Pride and Ignorance

Tan

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Jeff: Dear Tan, thanks again for your earlier reply and the opportunity to write again.

Again, “I,” or “me,” is just a character, not my true self.

When I read the line in your first response about superiority and pride I felt the anger rise within me – always a sign of something useful, I reckon.

Tan: Yes, it seems like a jackpot. Anger arises if the mind does not get what it wants.

So the question is: What did the mind want, blessings from the “enlightened” that you are perfect? You are perfect (the real you) and you (the person) will never become perfect. The person Jeff is perfect with his imperfections. Even his pride is perfectly beautiful ignorance created by *maya*.

Jeff: In my first email, I avoided recalling my past, as I wasn’t sure it mattered and, as you say, so many teachers would tell me it’s just a story. I have also moved on and do not consider myself a victim in any way. I actually find it hard to recognise the person in the story I relate, so far removed am I.

Tan: That is a good sign. Jeff is *samsara*, meaning constantly changing based on his *vasanas*.

Jeff: But it seems that my attitude to other people is actually a major stumbling block.

Tan: Yes, of course because the other people are the *dharma* field, the other people are *Isvara*. If I behave as arrogant, prideful and like a know-it-all (which I personally was guilty of many years ago), *Isvara* will bless me with the appropriate response: people who do not like me, criticize me or shun me.

And this will not lead to a peaceful mind conducive to self-inquiry leading to *moksa*.

Jeff: My childhood was one of unease and a constantly threatening atmosphere, no one seemed to like each other and everyone seemed so unhappy. At a very young age I could make no sense of why this was and thought that adults all seemed very foolish and unhappy. I became a pacifist and a peacemaker at a very young age, and wondered why people all just couldn’t get along.

Tan: Well, the mind seems to have chosen a seemingly perfect action from its point of view: “If I cannot get peace at home, I will make the world peaceful by force.” ☺

Jeff: At school this sense of injustice continued and I would be sent out of class for out-arguing teachers whom I felt were hypocritical and unfair. More importantly, I felt they were morally and intellectually inferior and it made no sense to look up to them or heed their wisdom.

Tan: Well, this is an interesting combination of having a very *sattvic* mind but also quite some portion of *rajas/tamas*. I have a friend who seems similar; her mind is very clear at times due to *sattva*, but due to her *rajas* she wants everyone to be peaceful and ideal. She behaves quite arrogantly, pridefully, and is disappointed with people if they do not live up to her high standards. After months of *rajas* trying to save the world and believing she is better than the world, her mind becomes very *tamasic* and moves into a longer depression, believing that she is not worthy of the world.

The *sattva guna* gives the mind the clarity to out-argue, but the *rajas/tamas gunas* prevent the mind from understanding that this world is perfect in its imperfection. In the duality of this world no one can win and no one can lose. There is no limitless freedom and peace in this world. There is only limitless freedom in you. Or more correctly, you are limitless freedom.

Jeff: I could also detect sadness in people, including my teachers. For example, I was suspended at the age of ten for calling a teacher a fascist, which he was!! 😊 My parents were horrified. I felt sorry I had upset him afterwards, though even though he deserved it at the time, I felt, so guilt mixed with a feeling of intellectual superiority too, but not even superiority, just logic, fairness and sanity!

Tan: Logic, fairness and sanity are expressions of *sattva guna*. Feeling superior because of these intellectual qualities is ignorance, since it is *Isvara* who provided you with these qualities, and not you.

Jeff: Anyway, the “rebel without a cause” attitude (as one adversary, or should I say, teacher, called it) got me nowhere. I could make no sense of the world or the people in it, and I discovered alcohol and drugs at a fairly early age. By the age of twenty I had some kind of epiphany/breakdown where everything became unreal and dissociated (with panic attacks and anxiety), and with no doctors able to help, I self-medicated and became a chronic alcoholic for fifteen years, culminating in five or six stays in a mental hospital for severe depression and suicidal tendencies. At this point I also discovered heroin and along with prescribed tranquilizers got into a bit more bother. 😊

However, all this time (and also in childhood) there was always a feeling of watching myself do all this, even when out of my head on various substances. I used to describe it as a small white light in the back of my head that knew that everything was actually fine. A “knowing” observer and protector, if you like.

One day, ten years ago, after a couple of false starts, it all stopped.

Something switched and I left it all behind. I am a very determined customer, and apart from the odd bout of depression, I have felt no need or inkling of returning to this desperate state.

I mentioned my foray into the world of spiritual things in my other email, which of course started almost immediately upon the onset of sobriety and sanity purely by circumstance, not by seeking them out at all.

As I said though, your mention of superiority cut to the bone.

My expectations of others are way too high and have been my Achilles heel all my life. I have never been able to understand why others are sometimes so foolish, unreliable, thoughtless and lacking in insight. "I would never dream of behaving like that, so why do they?" kept occurring. Now it seems I am even questioning famous teachers for what I see as hypocrisy and attachments.

Tan: It is good to be suspicious about teachers and to question them if their teaching is unclear and their actions are against *dharma*. On the other hand, once you have found a teaching that is clear to you, then trust into the teaching (*sraddha*) is an important qualification for self-knowledge. My remark was more about the fact that your sentences sounded as if you feel superior.

You are consciousness, they are consciousness. On that level there is no up or down. And on the level of the *jiva*, all *jivas* are imperfect, since they are an appearance in duality.

Jeff: My strong will and morals are what got me out of the mire, whilst most of those around me are now either dead or in prison, but now it seems that what helped me survive is now a hindrance to self-realization perhaps.

Tan: No, not at all. Your strong will and morals are based on *sattva guna*, which is important for self-realization. Living according to *dharma* (morals) and strong will and desire for freedom (*mumukshutva*) are important qualifications. It seems more to me as if there is a lack of compassion for the imperfection of others.

So why not start with compassion for yourself by accepting and loving the imperfect areas of yourself, your pride and your arrogance?

If you can truly accept yourself as a person with all those imperfections - then maybe it will be easier to accept the imperfections of others.

Accepting yourself as you are is another important qualification: *svadharma*.

This does not mean to look away when there are actions against *dharma* and they are really hurting others.

In a way all of us people are puppets of *Isvara* - you and all these great teachers (e.g. Mooji, Eckhart Tolle).

Jeff: These *vasanas* are pretty deeply ingrained, and in fact I was probably born with a certain element of them.

I am not an arrogant person, actually pretty humble and shy these days, but just very aware and insightful of all that goes on around me. I observe in minute detail.

I find myself helping others with my words and life experience, and have been called

“wise” by some.

I like to support others going through difficulty and usually seem usefully insightful, but even now I get frustrated at how foolish and weak they can seem.

Karma yoga helps with this. Maybe I have taken dispassion too far and my heart is now closed.

Tan: If you get frustrated at “how foolish and weak others can seem” then this actually seems like a lack of dispassion. Why get frustrated about something that is beyond your control? See below the verses from Chapter III of the *Gita*, spoken by Krishna.

33. “It is wise to act in harmony with your own nature. Because all beings follow their own natures automatically, what use is control?”

So there is no need for you to get frustrated about other people, because these people follow their *vasanas* (e.g. their nature). Understanding that they are programmed to do this and have no choice but to be the puppets of *Isvara* creates room for compassion. It does not mean you should allow people to hurt other people (including yourself) or hurt general *dharma*, but understanding the truth about their lack of choice creates a calm mind. This is what we want in Vedanta as a qualification of the mind.

35. “It is better to die imperfectly performing one’s duties according to one’s own *dharma* than to live performing the *dharma* of another well. The *dharma* of another is fraught with danger.”

Here the *Gita* warns about trying to change other people directly. If you try to change other people by persuasion or pressure or do-goodership, you are trying to fulfill their *dharma*. But instead of living your own *dharma* you are trying to live theirs while preventing them to live their *dharma* with all the seemingly good and bad consequences.

Jeff: I know that’s what my wife believes. She tells me to open my heart, but I find this difficult, and the “love” she talks about seems a mental, attached love, not the one that is true and unconditional that I feel I should be seeking.

Tan: Well, it is difficult to judge what “open my heart” is supposed to mean. It is a vague expression, and we just know that open heart surgery is not meant by it. 😊

Did she mean having emotions towards others? You experience anger and frustration about others, so there are emotions. In that sense your heart is open.

Did she mean “to show compassion towards others”? Real compassion only arises if you understand that the other is you. Since you love yourself and the other is you, there can only be love.

“Made-up type of compassion,” what you seem to mean in the sentence above with “mental love,” can only work as long you have the energy to make it up. Energy is fickle. Once your mind is exhausted or the energy to make it up is gone, then that compassion will disappear and in a duality “reverse compassion” and the

corresponding feelings will arise – such as aversion, hate or coldness. The world is a duality, not real, but it exists.

If I understand that “I am consciousness” and I see myself everywhere – and I do not fake that thought, but I genuinely know this beyond a doubt – then my thinking will change. Compassion and love will arise towards all the objects which appear in me because they are me and I love myself.

Jeff: All this of course is observed and is not my true self but seems to have a mind of its own.

How does one control or change a mode of thinking or behaviour when one can see one is the observer, not the doer?

Tan: That sounds like “I want to have my cake and eat it too” (“I want to be enlightened and also control my thinking and my behaviour”).

If you really see beyond a doubt that you are not the doer, then the question of control does not make sense anymore.

All acting is apparent acting. *Maya* seems to create doers with *vasanas*. And the doers act based on their *vasanas*. See text in the *Gita* above as well.

If the mind of the doer is freed of the notion to be a doer, then doership is negated and the “I-notion” points towards the consciousness which is everywhere.

The mind will work based on truth, which is “I am whole, complete, actionless and limitless consciousness, free of any need,” and not under the idea “I am a small little worm who needs love and security and must work in the salt mines to get what I want.”

I am what I want.

This change in the mind will change modes of thinking and behaviour.

So a mind operating based on self-knowledge will change gradually automatically, no action needed.

Jeff: They seem disconnected in this experience.

On the one hand, I am confident in the true nature of reality; on the other, totally insecure on an emotional world level and where *this* jiva stands in it, by what life and other people have shown me.

Tan: You do not seem always to be sure and confident about who you are. Here you talk about the “true nature of reality,” which makes consciousness an indirect object. Also, you say “what life and other people” have shown you. This “you” is the *jiva*.

You are consciousness. You are full, complete and whole. You are what you want.

Life and other people have shown something to the *jiva*, not to you. You are

consciousness, which is aware of the emotional insecurity. If you are aware of it, can you be it? No, you are neither emotionally secure nor insecure. Different emotions of security or insecurity arise and disappear and are known to you. You remain constant and unchanging. You are the Truth that cannot be negated. You, consciousness, are free of feelings of security and insecurity

Jeff: I spend a lot of energy trying to see the good in people.

What can one do to soften the heart and quell pride and righteousness in this world of pain, foolishness and duality?

Tan: As Jeff you can accept what you see as being what the world is and what Jeff is. The world may be foolish and full of pain, but also full of beauty and wonder. Jeff may be full of pride and righteousness, but he is also full of love for knowledge and truth.

That is what duality is. You can neither win nor lose in this world.

Accept that the world is a zero-sum game.

Jeff: I actually have *Value of Values*, but put it to one side after reading some of it. I will persevere with it.

I have skipped a few dire experiences, but that's the crux of it. It's difficult to share all this, as I usually keep all this to myself and not many people know about my past at all.

Tan: Reading *Value of Values* is good. It is introducing the values of a Jeff, of a *jiva* that is qualified. It is a good read.

Jeff: To answer your question, "What do you mean with 'the doer, the seeker in me subsided'? Do you think that the doer has to disappear for freedom?," I simply mean I have stopped looking outside of myself and for actions to find the truth.

Tan: If you have stopped looking outside of yourself and for actions of truth, that could still mean you are "stopping to look," which is still an action. You have to clarify that for yourself.

Seeking stops when the mind has understood the futility of seeking joy and fulfilment in objects and experiences – which includes "worldly" objects such as girlfriend, money, acceptance, respect, but also spiritual objects such as *samadhis*, *satoris* and enlightenment.

Seeking stops when you understand that no action can bring you to where you already are. Nothing can enlighten you, because you are the light that enlightens everything.

Being a doer stops when you understand that it is the *vasanas* that produce action, and not you. There is no such thing as a doer except the thought "I do" or "I do not."

These mental modifications claiming authorship of actions are the “doer.” They come and go.

So also during the day the “doer” thoughts come and go. This also means that they are not real, as all thoughts are not real. Real means in Vedanta “without end (*ananta*).” But thoughts begin and end, so they exist, but are not real.

Understanding that truth without a doubt equals the “negation of the doer.” The doer is negated – which does not mean that actions end. Doing continues, with a “doer” which is known not to be real.

~ Love, Tan