

Feelings Are Indicators, Not Truth

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Françoise: Hi, Sundari! I hope you are well.

I want to ask about feelings and *dharma*. I have heard James say that one should listen to the feeling when it comes to *dharma*, what to do in regards of choices in one's life.

But the general point of feelings seems to be one should not be bothered by them and negate them as objects, because they are perishable and change all the time.

Sundari: Feelings are not a reliable means of knowledge, exactly because they are always changing. However, they can be good indicators of what is true for the *jiva*, even if they are not THE truth about the *jiva*. What this means is this: how you are feeling, whether the mind is peaceful, agitated or dull, is a very good way to discriminate how the *gunas* are playing out in the mind. All the *gunas* have very predictable thoughts and corresponding feelings associated with them; all feelings start off as thoughts.

The main value to be pursued for self-inquiry to work is peace of mind, *sattva*. *Sattva* is experienced in a purified mind not conditioned by the *gunas*. When *dharma* is contravened for whatever reason however trivial, the mind will not be peaceful (*sattvic*), because *rajas* and *tamas* will be conditioning the mind. Most people feel bad (guilty/uncomfortable) when *dharma* is not upheld. This is why we have a "conscience." Unless you are a psychopath or mentally ill there is no way to avoid this mechanism, because it is built-in by *Isvara*.

Therefore feelings cannot be denied or suppressed – they must be acknowledged and understood – in the light of self-knowledge. The problem comes in when the mind identifies with the feelings and relates to the world around it through feelings. When feelings are in charge of the intellect, the mind is in a very bad place and discrimination is impossible.

Françoise: If one cannot trust gut feelings when making choices, what can you trust?

Sundari: Self-knowledge is the only trustworthy means of knowledge, there is no other. Nothing in the apparent reality is what it appears to be – and on top of that, everything the *jiva* experiences will be experienced through the filters of the *vasanas*. Hence James' other favourite saying: "Don't believe what you are thinking and feeling!" There is no such thing as unchanging truth in the apparent reality, because of *maya's* power to delude.

Feelings (subtle objects), as with all other objects, are based on perception and inference, as with everything in the apparent reality. These are the only means of knowledge available to the *jiva* under the spell of ignorance. There is no "real" world "out there" or "in here." There is no here or there for awareness, because there is nowhere you are not. Without awareness, there are no objects to perceive, no

thoughts or feelings.

Françoise: Or is the only way to totally negate the doer to let choices happen by themselves? That is a point one comes to sooner or later, isn't it? Sometimes I understand I'm not the doer, and things are being done very easily.

Sundari: You are still not clear on the distinction between what constitutes the *jiva* and what constitutes *Isvara* and their common identity as awareness. *Isvara* is the only doer, although not a doer in the sense the *jiva* understands doing.

If you think you are the doer (the person, or ego), you have limited free will in that you are seemingly free to choose one thing over another, according to your nature or conditioning. The *dharma* field operates according to certain laws, and if they are understood and followed, it is possible to achieve success from the standpoint of the *jiva*. If that were not the case, *moksa*, or freedom from the apparent reality, would never be possible. The apparent reality is not real, so it is possible to "take action," i.e. self-inquiry, to be free of it. If it were real, no one would ever be free of it. So if one applies this rule and takes the appropriate action at the appropriate time, desired results are usually, but not always, achieved. There are no guarantees in the apparent reality, because *Isvara* runs the *dharma* field and takes care of the needs of the total first.

The other side of this is that the choices that people make, although they seem to be volitional and individual, are usually pretty predictable and repetitive. This is because most people, who have no or very limited self-knowledge, behave like automatons, although they don't know that they do. They think that they are doing the choosing, but actually their conditioning (*vasanas/gunas*) is doing the choosing. Still, it does look like one has free will, and in a way, the person does. From this platform free will gives the person the choice to "make the best" of their lives, and relative success is thus possible in the apparent reality.

When ignorance has been removed by self-knowledge and you know that your true nature is whole and complete non-dual awareness, what is there to choose? It is all you, awareness, and it is all good. This means that the doer has been negated and the binding *vasanas* rendered non-binding. *Samsara* then no longer exists in "your" mind, and you see everything from the perspective of the self, which means that you have non-dual vision and see everything as non-different from you. At this point, the *jiva* no longer projects its creation (interpretation of its environment) onto *Isvara*. This is what you are referring to, if I understand correctly what you are saying. The *jiva* surrenders to *Isvara*, as it understands how futile it is to resist, because *Isvara* is "making everything happen" whether the *jiva* knows it or not. Just think for one moment how many things need to be in place for anything to happen - even getting out of bed in the morning. How ridiculous it is that the *jiva* thinks it is doing anything!

The only thing the *jiva* is capable of creating is its own subjective reality (*pratibhasika*) - and it only has knowledge of the objects it has contact with - whereas *Isvara* has all powers and all knowledge, and is the cause and substance of the creation, without ever being modified by it.

When self-knowledge is firm the *jiva* still functions as a *jiva*, or person, in the "world," but it knows that the person and the world are only apparently real. As

awareness you will know that everything arises out of you and depends on you, but you are always free of everything and depend on nothing. As a liberated *jiva*, you will have understood that the *dharma* field (or *Isvara* wielding *maya*) is made up of the *gunas* and it runs the way it runs whether you are enlightened or not, for the good of the total. *Isvara* does not care if you are enlightened or not. *Isvara* sees you as whole and complete, non-dual awareness.

As the self, you are *trigunaatita*, which means that you are beyond the *gunas*. *Isvara srsti* (individual or subjective creation) continues as before, but the *gunas* no longer condition the subtle body (mind) in the same way. The *gunas* still operate and always will, but as a liberated *jiva* you will understand what they are, how they play out – what thoughts, feelings and actions predictably arise with all of them. And you will know that it has nothing to do with you, awareness. You will automatically follow *dharma* because you value peace of mind (*sattva*) over everything else, so your choices will be in harmony with that. Non-injury in thought, mind and deed will be your first priority in every situation.

The *dharma* field is like a computer game: all the possible moves are programmed into the game before you play it. Although it appears as if you are making independent moves and playing the game to win or lose, but in actual fact it is already predetermined, as you can only make the moves that are already in the programme. *Isvara*, or the *dharma* field, is the game and is playing the game.

That is why *karma yoga* is such an important teaching and the only way to negate the doer. It is the most sensible way to live because it relieves the pressure of getting the “right” result or any particular result, for that matter, because you understand that the *dharma* field is out of your control; only *Isvara* has knowledge of all objects and controls the field. You get the results that are best for you at any given time. There is no way to step out of the *dharma* field. And as a *jiva*, you never do, other than through *moksa*, which is liberation from the person, not for the person. This is why we emphasise that *nididhysana*, the “final” stage of self-inquiry, never really ends for the *jiva* as long as it is alive and relating to its environment (*Isvara*), which of course is always changing. The only constant is the observer of the environment (*jiva* and *Isvara*), meaning you – awareness.

Françoise: It seems like a jump to take, from the identity of a doer-person to awareness. And is that also as easy as understanding and then making a choice? Taking a stand in awareness as awareness, so to speak.

Sundari: It is a jump to take, if you are identified with being a person, because *maya* makes it appear that way. Discrimination is not about making a choice, but it is about understanding that there is no such thing as a “chooser.” See the explanation above on choice and free will.

Duality is superimposed onto non-duality (awareness) when *maya* is operating, making it seem as if awareness is something other than you. Taking a stand in awareness as awareness means that you look at everything from the point of view of awareness first and second as the *jiva*. To be self-actualised means that you see both the non-duality and the duality simultaneously, discriminating yourself, awareness, from the objects appearing in the mind (thoughts/feelings = duality) in the moment.