

Depersonalization

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Premananda: Hi, Sundari!

Thank you for the Skype chat a month ago! I would have emailed earlier, but being the *karma yogis* we all are, I haven't had the chance to really sit and collect my thoughts until now. I realized immediately after our conversation that all I needed was the confirmation that I knew I was the self. And it is just a confidence issue because when you know that there is no enlightenment – because the one who knows fullness and emptiness obtains – and that I have been free the whole time, all that is left to do is reorient the mind to knowing that it is whole and complete, ordinary, actionless awareness. But, and here's the real kicker, the one who knows that the mind needs to reorient itself... me, awareness... is already oriented, being the essence of everything, and all that is left is the undeniable truth that I have, will and will always persist as the self. This is the beauty of knowledge.

It is so simple really because it is just a simple object-subject discrimination (*sat-asat-viveka*) regarding who I really am. The world and everything in it is just a thought appearing in me, awareness. The thought is awareness through and through. Where is there a thought in I? Therefore I, the subject, am free of the object. The object is wholly dependent on me. That is, the world exists because I do; I am free of the world.

And this feels like nothing... except knowing that you're the self; the whole spiritual seeking thing is done. All that's left is self-actualization until every last bit of ignorance is gone. But what Vedanta showed Premananda is that even if ignorance is there, I still am and always will be pure knowledge, free of ignorance. How can a reflection bite the person?!

Sundari: Yes, indeed self-knowledge does not feel like anything, as it is not an experience. 😊 Good to hear from you! You are like a stream that is so crystal-clear; you cannot see the stream at all. You left no stone unturned; we were both so honoured to meet and chat to you, an undercover *rishi* living in Nebraska, householder and *sannyasin*. We bow to you in deep joy and much laughter, may your life be a magic carpet ride and in the words of Ram's beloved Abhedananda, take it easy!

Premananda: Your words are sweet and were the perfect mirror to who I really was. It is all you, which is I. Thank you again. The funny thing about knowledge is that I have always taken it easy. Premananda has had ups and downs and surely will, but I won't, because I'm not an object of *karma*. All of this knowledge is because of what you and Ram cemented in this old brain – I in movement.

I have a few small clarifications that I want to ask of you, which you can answer when you find the time (because I'm not going anywhere!). Enlightenment is knowing that there is no one there to enlighten because a thought is already illuminated by me. Also, by definition, it is (an apparent event of) the non-binding of *vasanas* and the negation of the doer. Okay, so I know I'm not a doer. I shine on the

field and action occurs. Premananda's reaction to the *karma* in the field can become *vasanas* (or not)... but they don't/never have/never will touch the I. Enlightenment doesn't have to be an event, just the knowledge at play all the time. I say this because events don't define I. Is it safe to say then that the non-binding of *vasanas* (not the removal, because that's impossible) is through the knowledge alone that I am unattached to all? Therefore Premananda may have his binding *vasanas* – and some might even be a tad naughty – but it is the knowing that they will never affect the I that immediately negates their bindingness, and not any kind of action. If so, then Premananda can be exactly as Premananda is, warts and all – even with traces of ignorance – because he is another inert thought in me, like chair, art or a typhoon. Is this thinking correct?

Sundari: Yes, this is correct. Chinmaya had some not-so-fabulous *vasanas* (taking snuff was one); many other *gurus* and iconoclastic Vedanta teachers have had them too. As long as it does not cause injury to yourself, others or contravene *dharma*, it's fine. It is even okay if the ego, aka Premananda, never gets "on board" and realises his nature as the self. This sounds like such a contradiction, but as you already know, it is only an apparent contradiction, not a real one, as the ego is not real, only the light of awareness that shines on it is. Therefore *vasanas* are not a problem once ignorance of your true nature is removed, even if they are binding! As long as you cannot not act on them, they are no longer a problem. Once the self is realised, there is more often than not *prarabda karma* that still has to work itself out, "the blades of the fan," etc. As awareness, you are fine with it. You are the knower of it all and untouched by it all.

Having said all that, James and I are big on the *gunas* as the main tracking device to see where you are hooked into the *vasanas* and the doer still has a foothold. They govern the creation of the *vasanas* and colour absolutely everything. They will condition the subtle body until such time as they are known for what they are and the doer is fully negated. Also, it is impossible to understand *Ishvara* without a thorough understanding of the *gunas*, because they are the three "forces" in creation. The three *gunas* all have very predictable emotions/actions/thoughts that arise with each one; they all work together, although usually one is dominant at any given time. The only way for them not to condition the mind is when they are understood and all doership is dropped. Then you can work with them by either allowing them to run their course or use one to get out of the other. For instance, if Premananda is very *tamasic*, do something physical; if he is very *rajasic*, quieten the mind with meditation, prayer or whatever works; if Premananda is stuck in *sattva*, get real and have a good laugh at yourself, take a bite of a reality sandwich. The *gunas* are the only way to get a permanent handle on Premananda's psychology and whatever mental/emotional issues still hold Premananda back from living free as a *jiva*. Remember that *moksa* is for the *jiva* to enjoy peace of mind; whatever stands in its way is an impediment to that. So you will make the changes necessary to your lifestyle, diet, the kind of people you hang out with, activities, work, etc. Once ignorance of your true nature has been removed, you are free to choose whatever *jiva* you want to be – and you will either do or not do actions to achieve that. This very much depends on whether or not the knowledge is firm. If the knowledge is firm, you are free to allow the *jiva* to be what it is, "warts and all," and you are free to transform the *jiva* according to your idea of purity. But if the knowledge is not firm, then there is still "work" to be done to remove vestigial ignorance of your true nature and firm up the knowledge. This may involve the application of the *yogas* to the subtle body.

Premananda: I say this because lately there has been an excess of *tamas* in the form of being lackadaisical in applying the opposite thought (apparently removing ignorance). This laziness is because I inquired for so long and Premananda doesn't want to fully root out ignorance so that his mind is fully in line with the knowledge. I know it takes a while to get Premananda on-track with reality. Or is it that Premananda can have ignorance because once the thought of its reality appears in awareness then the knowledge more or less negates it... even if it's after the experience... the mind being what it is.

Sundari: Yes, this is very good discrimination. You are right that once the knowledge is firm whatever appears in the mind is known and therefore automatically negated. So the *vasanas* are really not a problem anymore. An enlightened person can have the thought that they are unenlightened because they know that they are the knower of the unenlightened thought. They may also exhibit *rajasic* or *tamasic* behaviours.

Premananda: Lastly, *moksa* doesn't feel like anything. I don't immediately love things completely and equally all the times. I love them now for being non-separate from me, but my head's not up in the clouds. Premananda has his likes and dislikes, *mithya* obtains, but their reality is negated through the knowledge that I am *satya*. Is this correct?

Sundari: Yes, this is absolutely correct. One of the big obstacles to the knowledge being made firm is the expectation that things will be different from before or that there should be a grand feeling attached to it. In fact the ego can get royally pissed off because it HAS been searching for so long and then it says, "You mean to say this is IT? Are you kidding me?!" We have another young man, your age, whom we have been coaching since early this year, and he just got it as well, and he said the same thing. His ego was really pissed. It's okay, let it be pissed, so what? What makes self-realisation scary for many (and I believe this is THE main obstacle) is that one becomes totally disorientated towards objects. You "lose your centre," so to speak, which of course is the body-orientation. It feels a bit like a gyroscope going crazy; you are watching the body and all objects and they are all appearing in you, but there is nothing that really "connects" them to the body anymore. It feels like they are all floating away and if you try to grab onto them it is like grabbing smoke, diaphanous, insubstantial. You, awareness, know yourself as the container of everything. I felt that quite acutely. I left my business, my home, my daughter, my work, everything - and went on the road with the great Ramji 😊 and it feels empty at times, like nothing REALLY matters anymore, except that I know that I am the knower of the emptiness, I am the fullness. And there is great bliss in that. I am the source of that bliss, the bliss of knowledge.

The real irony is that only from this place can the mind really enjoy the objects, knowing they are not real and having no expectation from them to deliver anything. They are known to be value-neutral and actually can be a lot of fun!

I hope this helps! We are in the process of writing a whole treatise on the *guna* teaching, bringing in the psychological aspect, as no other teaching can clear up these issues permanently. Ramji is the only teacher who has really expounded on the *guna* teaching.

Premananda: This is fun. Ram, I am ever grateful for your teachings, especially your books. Sundari, I am also indebted to your time and consideration in answering questions that have plagued Premananda for years. Thank you. I hope we meet soon, but I am already there anyway, so it's up to *Bhagavan*.

~ With love, I and Premananda

PS: You both are always welcome in my home anytime. Let me know if I can help in any way. Thank you again